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the European Union

TOOLKIT

on the implementation of integration activities



Stakeholder partnerships for the integration of
migrants through innovative strategies



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Introduction

This toolkit has been developed under the INTEgreat project as a knowledge sharing and dissemination tool, with the aim of encouraging migrant support organisations, policy-makers and other actors to learn from our experience and utilise it in the design and implementation of integration activities. It explains how the **INTEgreat Integration Strategy Framework (ISF)** and local **Integration Working Groups (IWGs)** guided pilot projects in Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Italy, and Spain, and provides lessons learned and recommendations from these experiences.

Overview of the INTEgreat project

INTEgreat is a project funded under the EU-AMIF, bringing together seven project partners from five EU countries to develop and implement innovative strategies that promote migrant integration through stakeholder partnerships.

The INTEgreat project has four main thematic pillars, which are the focus of our work: Employment, Training and capacity building, Health & Social Cohesion.

How to use this Toolkit

The Toolkit offers guidance on using the **INTEgreat Integration Strategy Framework (ISF)** for designing and implementing migrant integration projects. The key points are:

1. **ISF & Checklists:** Section 1 explains how to use the ISF and checklists for project planning by stakeholders.
2. **Local IWGs:** Section 2 explains what an Integration Working Groups (IWGs) is.
3. **Good Practices:** Section 3 gives examples of successful pilot project activities using the ISF.
4. **Lessons & Recommendations:** The final sections provide insights and tips from the pilot projects to improve integration policies.

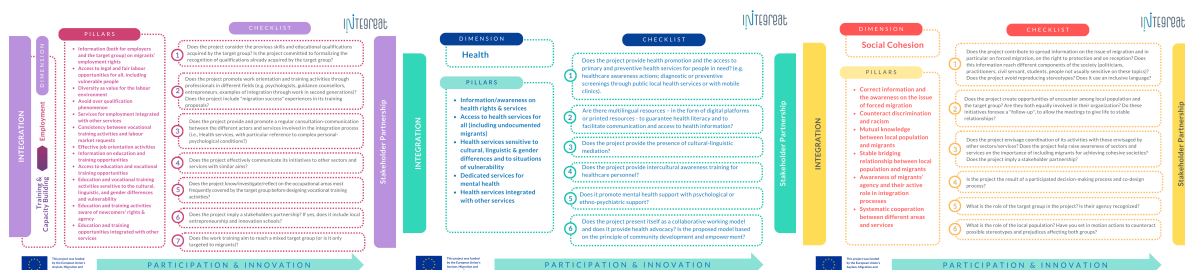
1. Integration Strategy Framework (ISF) & Thematic Checklists

The INTEgreat project developed an **Integration Strategy Framework (ISF)** based on migrant and stakeholder experiences from 5 European cities. The ISF addresses key obstacles to integration identified in four main thematic areas: health, employment, training & capacity building, and social cohesion. To ensure consistency in project activities, INTEgreat created practical thematic checklists organised around three core dimensions—Health; Employment, Training & Capacity Building; and Social Cohesion. Each checklist card includes pillars and questions that guide stakeholders in designing and implementing integration initiatives.

The employment checklist addresses issues like limited access to employment services, language barriers, lack of recognition for foreign qualifications, and gender-specific challenges, particularly for single mothers. The health checklist identifies obstacles such as restricted healthcare access, language issues, and limited intercultural training for healthcare providers. The social cohesion checklist focuses on challenges in fostering intercultural relations, addressing prejudice, creating effective, long-term connections.

These thematic checklists integrate INTEgreat’s conceptual principles: integration, stakeholder partnership, participation, and innovation. They serve as a concise, visual guide to ensure that projects consistently address the critical factors for successful migrant integration in Europe.

They are available for download in four languages on the INTEgreat website's Results page: <https://www.integreat-project.eu/results/>.



2. Integration Working Groups (IWGs)

The INTEgreat project, inspired by the **Integration Working Group (IWG)** in Limerick, Ireland, aims to foster local IWG structures in its partner countries to enhance stakeholder partnerships, resource sharing, and sustainability beyond the project's duration. Established in 2007, the Limerick IWG now consists of over 20 organisations, including public services, community development, and migrant support groups. The IWG is responsible for developing and implementing local migrant integration policy, supported by the Limerick City and County Council, an INTEgreat project partner.

The project has successfully established IWGs in Cyprus, Greece, Italy, and Spain based on the Limerick model, with adaptations to each context. These IWGs act as advisory groups, fostering knowledge sharing and partnerships for better migrant integration. The IWG's Terms of Reference include promoting the integration of migrants (asylum seekers, refugees, and vulnerable groups), addressing their needs and those of local communities. The groups are structured to include local authorities, statutory agencies, NGOs, and migrant groups, aiming for a participatory and inclusive approach to decision-making and sustainability beyond the INTEgreat project cycle.

Establishing Local Integration Working Groups (IWGs)

In Italy, the IWG in Varese has engaged various local stakeholders, including Ballafon, Caritas, and the Red Cross. The group has facilitated practical initiatives such as involving asylum seekers in intercultural events and organising testimony sessions for newly arrived migrants. Challenges included delays in recruitment and engaging stakeholders, but the group has effectively fostered collaboration and shared resources, improving integration efforts in the Lombardy region. In Greece, the IWG, formed by organisations like Social Hackers Academy (SHA), the Greek Council for Refugees (GCR), and Solidarity Mission (SM), has focused on education and training for refugees. The group has collaborated on legal support, job fairs, and educational initiatives to bridge gaps in employability and integration, with future plans to integrate language courses into SHA's curriculum to enhance migrant integration into Greek society.

Both IWGs in Italy and Greece have demonstrated the strength of collaboration and evidence-based approaches in addressing migrant integration challenges. These efforts show the value of shared knowledge and stakeholder partnerships in promoting the long-term inclusion of migrants.

3. Examples of local good practice

Theme: Employment

Activity: Employment Support

Theme: Employment **Country:** Ireland

Activity Overview: In Ireland, the Employment Support activity focused on establishing a weekly group session called the Employment Hub for asylum seekers and migrants. The Hub provided thematic employability workshops, open sessions for CV writing, interview practice, job searching, sector-specific information sessions with employers, computer skills workshops, and talks from guest speakers. Towards the end, one-on-one meetings offered personalised support and external referrals.

Results: 540 people participated in over 60 sessions. **Activities Included:** Weekly Employment Hub sessions, sector-specific information sessions, computer skills classes, and thematic workshops.

Alignment with ISF and Thematic Checklist

- **Co-Design Approach:** The activity was designed with the input of participants, who shared their needs and influenced the development of the activities.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** The initiative involved collaboration with recruiters and professionals, ensuring that participants received relevant up-to-date guidance.
- **Ongoing Feedback:** Regular participant feedback informed the continuous adaptation of the initiative to meet evolving needs.

Strengths

- **Participant Involvement:** Strong participant involvement in the planning and ongoing design ensured the activity met their needs.
- **Peer Support:** The program encouraged peer support, fostering empowerment, friendships, and confidence-building.
- **Addressing Diversity:** Challenges related to participants' diverse skills were managed through small group work and peer-to-peer learning.

Theme: Training and capacity building

Activity: Language courses

Theme: Training and capacity building/Social Cohesion

Country: Cyprus

Activity Overview: Workshops were conducted to teach survival Greek for daily use and professional English for career and educational purposes.

Key Outputs

- 80 workshops on professional English.
- 14 workshops on survival Greek.
- Over 300 migrant participants.

Alignment with ISF and Thematic Checklist

- Co-Design Approach: Incorporation of participant feedback in course design.
- Employment and Integration: It addressed the need for both Greek and English in both fields.
- Coordination: collaboration with other organisations was key to enhance course participation.
- Mixed Proficiency Levels: Tailored to varying levels of language proficiency.

Strengths

- High participation rates and relevant content.
- Effective use of participant feedback for course improvement.
- Successful integration of both languages into the curriculum, addressing practical needs for daily life and professional growth. Some participants did not complete the courses, leading to shifts in class composition.

Theme: Health

Activity: Mental health and gender-based violence information sessions with particularly vulnerable migrants

Theme: Health Country: Italy

Activity Overview: Workshops aimed at improving awareness and support related to mental health and gender-based violence among particularly vulnerable migrants. Sessions included cultural sensitivity, psychological support, and the involvement of linguistic mediators.

Key Outputs: 83 migrant people participated in 14 workshops.

Alignment with ISF and Thematic Checklist

- **Accessibility:** Ensured availability and accessibility to mental health services for migrant people.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Sessions addressed cultural sensitivity and included linguistic mediation.

Strengths

- Enhanced mental health and coping skills among participants.
- Provided emotional resilience and trauma processing.
- Empowered individuals and improved household dynamics.
- Effective use of multidisciplinary support including psychologists, cultural mediators, and social workers.
- Facilitated better communication and integration within the reception centres.

Theme: Social cohesion

Activity: Migrant Forum

Theme: Social Cohesion

Country: Ireland

Activity Overview: The Migrant Forum was established to empower migrant communities by facilitating collaboration, networking, and representation. Its goals included achieving social inclusion, integration, and participation in decision-making processes.

Key Outputs: Over 100 migrant people participated in 9 meetings and 3 community events.

Alignment with ISF and Thematic Checklist

- **Participation and Co-Design:** The forum incorporated ISF principles by involving migrant people in planning and decision-making.
- **Social Cohesion:** Addressed discrimination and enhanced mutual understanding through community events.
- **Stakeholder Partnerships:** Fostered collaboration between migrant people, local authorities, and other stakeholders, contributing to future policy-making opportunities.

Strengths

- Effective co-design and strong ownership by forum members.
- Successful collaboration with Limerick City and County Council and other stakeholders.
- Empowered migrant communities and facilitated significant community engagement and integration.
- Overcome challenges by leveraging community partners to reach diverse groups, demonstrating the effectiveness of stakeholder cooperation.

4. Lessons Learned & Recommendations

The following section compiles common lessons learned and recommendations from INTEgreat project partners on promoting integration in employment, training, health, and social cohesion, offering valuable insights for civil society, community workers, service providers, policymakers, and program designers.

Trust

Building trust with the target group was essential to engage and retain participants in activities, especially when working with vulnerable individuals at risk. Partners established trust through various methods, including cultural mediators, staff from similar backgrounds, or the reputation of the partner organisations within the communities. This process often took time and required multiple attempts, strengthened by participatory co-design in activity planning.

In Cyprus, for example, Synthesis built trust with victims of human trafficking by using a cultural mediator who shared similar experiences, allowing victims to feel safe and in control, including the option to leave workshops as needed. In Italy, Ballafon emphasised empathy, understanding, and clear communication to establish trust with asylum seekers and migrants, facilitated by cultural mediators. Trust is particularly vital in humanitarian contexts, where migrants face vulnerabilities like language barriers, xenophobia, and risks of abuse, making it crucial for effective engagement and support.

Creating safe, welcoming and inclusive spaces

Several INTEgreat partners highlighted the significant impact of community spaces on the success of their activities and projects. They observed that spaces designed to be safe and welcoming played a crucial role in achieving the objectives of their pilot projects. Creating environments where participants felt secure and valued was essential for effective engagement and participation.

Additionally, partners emphasised the importance of child-friendly spaces, particularly for women, including single mothers. These spaces not only facilitated greater participation by providing a supportive environment for women with children but also helped in addressing their specific needs, thereby contributing to the overall success and inclusivity of the projects.

Participatory co-design

All pilot project activities followed a participatory co-design approach, which involved gathering input from beneficiaries through focus groups, surveys, and interviews to ensure the activities met their needs and preferences. This process led to higher participation rates and better outcomes, as it considered cultural backgrounds, personal circumstances, and gaps in local services. In Limerick, ongoing input throughout the 14-month project period, rather than just at the start or end, was key to sustaining engagement and building trust with participants. Challenges, such as low literacy and language skills, were addressed by involving migrant community leaders and social workers to gather input indirectly.

Stakeholder partnerships

These partnerships facilitated the exchange of ideas, expanded outreach, and provided additional resources and expertise, enhancing the implementation of activities. Notably, in Limerick, Doras and the local authorities co-delivered initiatives, strengthening their relationship and supporting the creation of a Migrant Forum, while in Italy, Ballafon partnered with the City of Varese for a successful volunteering project. Building strong local partnerships, particularly with local authorities, helped improve engagement, maximise resources, and bring new perspectives to project activities.

Trauma-informed approach & Cultural sensitivity

A trauma-informed and culturally sensitive approach is crucial in designing migrant integration activities. This involves understanding the life experiences of vulnerable groups to provide effective support, creating safe and welcoming environments, and fostering trust, communication, and empathy. It's important to prevent staff from experiencing vicarious trauma while maintaining confidentiality. This approach should not victimise individuals but remain aware of their complexities.

Cultural sensitivity further requires considering the diverse needs, customs, and perspectives of different cultural groups, involving cultural mediators, and collaborating with migrant community leaders to improve engagement and understanding.

Engaging with local communities

Engaging local communities in intercultural activities posed challenges, as those most in need of social cohesion events were often reluctant to participate. Partners used various strategies to overcome this, such as Doras upskilling community workers through a train-the-trainer approach to promote anti-racism within their communities, and the Open Cultural Centre using art and culture to attract diverse audiences.