



Europe for Citizens  
Programme

## GOAL

### Granting Opportunities for Active Learning

#### Draft Recommendations by the Citizens' Panels on How to Improve the Situation of Migrants in Europe

Groups of citizens from different European countries met in 2011 to discuss the effects of migration on their local communities and draw up recommendations to make the best of the situation. These citizens' panels united immigrants, representatives of local authorities and other stakeholders as well as regular citizens. Organised in six European countries touched by different migration movements, the panels jointly discussed and refined their recommendations.

The following propositions to improve the situation of migrants in Europe and draw full benefit from their potential are the result of these discussions.

The propositions are structured according to different fields in which action is considered particularly necessary:

1. Intercultural Dialogue
2. Administrative Procedures
3. Labour Market
4. Political Participation
5. Housing

In each of the fields, the panels have identified problems, objectives and recommendations how to reach the objectives.

#### 1. Intercultural Dialogue

Successful intercultural dialogue is a crosscutting issue when it comes to the integration of migrants. It is a precondition for their acceptance by the local population and a peaceful and fruitful coexistence.

##### **Problem I:**

*Language is often a barrier to intercultural communication.*

Objective:

**Make instrumental communication possible.**

Recommendations:

- Make sure that immigrants have the opportunity to learn the local language by providing free language courses.
- Provide free language training for officials dealing with the target group.
- Popularise international languages among the local population (esp. English).

##### **Problem II:**

*There is a lack of positive identity and community feeling. Interculturality is seen as a necessity, not as a chance.*

Objectives:

- **Build European identity together, in theory and in citizens mind.**
- **Bring citizens to consider diversity as a value and opportunity rather than a problem**



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#### **so as to enrich all.**

Recommendations:

- Keep supporting or start supporting activities of intercultural communication (positive examples: festivals of poetry, songs, dance, photos, food etc.; debates on topics of common interest such as ecology).
- Build a common perception of European history including the contribution by the migrants.
- Create a Council of Associations of Foreign Citizens.
- Officially recognize the profession of Intercultural Mediator.
- Involve Intercultural Mediators in all official interactions between immigrants and authorities/ other local organisations.
- Provide intercultural training for teaching professions.
- Put a special focus on civic education in primary and secondary schools as well as in life-long learning courses, which should be extended.
- Make sure that second generation migrants can be taught in their mother tongue.
- Encourage the creation of immigrant newspapers and links with the mainstream press.
- Foster interaction between migrant communities.

#### **Problem III:**

*Immigrants are persistently marginalised.*

Objective:

**Consider foreign citizens as active participants in the local and national community.**

Recommendations:

- Involve foreign citizens in the decision-making process of the local community (development planning, design and implementation of decisions).
- Pursue the activities proposed under item 4/“Political Participation”.

## **2. Administrative procedures**

**Problem:**

*The access to health and social services is often not sufficiently guaranteed for migrants.*

*There is a lack of information about laws both by the migrants and the authorities.*

Objectives:

- **Reduce the complexity of topical legal texts.**
- **Improve information about laws in order to provide a clearer picture for administrators, immigrants and citizens of the host country.**

Recommendations:

- Increase competences of civil servants through compulsory training on laws and intercultural dialogue to improve services; this training should follow a single standard.
- Disseminate correct and precise information in the national language and those spoken by the main immigrant communities.
- Organise promotional campaigns on health prevention and sanitary issues.
- Increase migrants awareness of their rights and provide them with information through info points and media campaigns.
- Support presence of cultural mediators in all networks of health and social services.
- Directly involve migrants in public policies and decision making that concern them.
- Increase communication between institutions dealing with migration issues.
- Sustain the main actors of the local community more (NGOs, specific professions and institutions) and increase networking between relevant stakeholders.

## **3. Labour Market**

**Problem:**

*Immigrants are often discriminated in the search for a job and in their work place due to factors such as language skills, racism, lack of recognition of professional skills, right to work and lack of information.*

Objectives:

- **Diminish negative discrimination of immigrants on the labour market.**
- **Encourage the recognition of immigrants' skills.**



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Recommendations:

- Facilitation of the procedures to be regularised and take up a legal job.
- Facilitate the recognition of qualifications acquired in another country.
- Information about the labour market should be easily accessible to migrants.
- Authorities should be more flexible in providing the necessary documents to take up a job or become self-employed.
- Civil society should lobby more to have a stronger impact on authorities and the community.
- Create new job opportunities
- Encourage cooperation between all types of actors involved with the labour market: employers, social services, authorities and civil society organisations e.g. to fight black work and neo-slavery.
- Pursue the recommendations mentioned under “Intercultural Dialogue”, especially language courses.

#### 4. Political Participation

**Problem:**

*Although immigrants contribute to socio-economic life of their host communities, they are excluded from official decision-making processes.*

Objective:

**Enable immigrants to participate actively in the political life of their host community.**

Recommendations:

- Change legislation to provide immigrants with the right to active vote on local level.

Conditions proposed by the panels:

- Set minimum duration of stay in host country (e.g. 3 years)
- Social and cultural stability (knowledge of local language; children enrolled in school)
- Financial independence from the host state (stable employment).
- Create the post of Ombudsman for Migrant Issues.
- Harmonise legislations of EU member states concerning the conditions for political participation.
- Creation of institutionalised, consultative local councils of non-voting immigrants, whose members should be elected with a regular voting system managed by recognized immigrants' associations.
- Increase the use of participatory democracy methodologies (consultations, thematic tables, meeting opportunities, etc.) by opening them to immigrants.

#### 5. Housing

**Problem:**

*Immigrants are discriminated in the access to housing for reasons such as racism and differing attitudes toward maintenance of houses and apartments. Concerning this last point, there is a large ignorance on both sides.*

Objective:

**Make citizens of the host country and immigrants aware of these problems.**

Recommendations:

- Pursue activities encouraging intercultural dialogue focusing on housing attitudes.
- Reserve a certain percentage of unused public buildings for migrants.
- Facilitate administrative procedures and the access to information about them (cf. item 2 “Administrative Procedures”).
- Pursue anti-ghettoisation activities.
- Build an information system for monitoring housing supply and demand encounter, in order to reveal discriminations in prices and contracts.