



Embrace



PARTICIPATORY PROCESS WITH NEWCOMERS IN GUIMARÃES, PORTUGAL

2022-2023



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WHAT YOU WILL FIND IN THIS BOOKLET

This Booklet combines the participatory experience of 17 newcomers and 20 decision-makers from Guimarães, under the project "Embrace", which took place from October 2022 until April 2023.

This document is structured into four main chapters. Chapter 1, titled "About the Project," provides an overview of the Embrace project and outlines the three phases of the participatory process with newcomers: Listening Sessions, Face-to-Face Meeting, and Co-Projecting Workshops.

The second chapter titled "Newcomers' Experiences and Recommendations," focuses on the insights shared by the newcomers during the Listening Sessions and Face-to-Face Meeting about their integration in Guimarães. The chapter is organized thematically, covering topics such as Access to Work and Access to Information. It begins with an introductory text that combines testimonials from the newcomers, aiming to faithfully represent their contributions. The chapter then presents the main recommendations for better practices in bullet point format.

Within this chapter, illustrative quotes from newcomers are displayed in dark red boxes.

Chapter 3, titled "Creation of a Collaborative Solution," highlights the final phase of the process, the Co-Projecting Workshops. After a collaborative decision on the topic to focus on - The Relations between Practitioners and Newcomers -, this chapter showcases the ideation process that led to the co-creation of one solution for an improved experience. This solution was developed collaboratively by newcomers, practitioners, and decision-makers.

The Booklet concludes with a final chapter that presents a selection of "Testimonials from Participants," collected during and after the activities. These testimonials aim to highlight the added value of involving them in decision-making processes.

Overall, the information presented in this booklet serves to inspire decision-makers and practitioners by showcasing the unique perspectives and contributions of newcomers. It also shares significant experiences and recommendations regarding integration, with a particular emphasis on the Relation between Practitioners and Newcomers. This valuable information can be utilized for the development and improvement of policies and programs aimed at promoting the successful integration of newcomers.



ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Participatory Process with Newcomers is part of the European project "Embrace - Empowering Migrants to Be Representative Actors in Community Engagement", funded by AMIF. It has been implemented simultaneously in 11 cities in 6 European countries, in 2022-2023.

Using ComParte's methodology, it aimed at involving newcomers in the decision-making process of the topics that directly affect them and their integration into the country.

This booklet compiles the knowledge collected during the participatory process, in the three main phases presented on the following pages: Listening Sessions, Face-to-Face Meeting and Co-Projecting Workshops.

It intends to be a working tool for decision-makers and practitioners, using the lived experiences of the newcomers to make better-informed and efficient decisions when defining integration policies, aligned with the beneficiaries' real needs.

NEWCOMERS INVOLVED:

16 newcomers, 19% female, from Syria, Eritrea, Ivory Coast, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan, and Afghanistan.

DECISION-MAKERS/PRACTICIONERS INVOLVED:

20 decision-makers/practicioners from: Municipality of Lisbon, Municipality Law Department, Parish Union of the City of Guimarães, CASFIG - Municipality Housing Department, Centro Juvenil de S. José (hosting organization), VOTSF - Venerável Ordem Terceira de S. Francisco (hosting organization), Institute of Work, Employment and Vocational Training, Portuguese Red Cross Guimarães, Municipality Social Department, Casa da Criança (hosting organization for unaccompanied minors), Jesuit Refugee Service (hosting organization).



STEP 1. LISTENING SESSIONS

Listening Sessions are informal moments where, through creative and participatory methodologies, newcomers share their experiences and recommendations for better integration in the municipality. Between October and November 2022, a total of 3 Listening Sessions were conducted, involving 16 newcomers. The sessions commenced with an interactive activity using emojis, where newcomers selected specific emojis to convey their integration experiences upon arrival and in the present. This activity served as a catalyst for detailed discussions that explored their perspectives on what should be maintained or changed for improved integration of future newcomers in the city of Guimarães.

STEP 2.

FACE-TO-FACE MEETING

The Face-to-Face Meeting, held in January 2023, facilitated direct communication between 6 newcomers and 20 decision-makers and practitioners. This meeting served as a platform for newcomers to share their experiences and recommendations in a personal and direct manner. The session fostered dialogue among participants, allowing for the exchange of ideas and clarification of perceptions. During the meeting, newcomers primarily shared their insights, while decision-makers actively listened, asked questions, and provided feedback on how the newcomers' experiences and recommendations aligned with and influenced their work. Taking place in an informal setting, this meeting was an opportunity to create proximity and trust between newcomers and decision-makers.



STEP 3.

CO-PROJECTING WORKSHOPS

The two Co-Projecting Workshops, held in April 2023, brought together 4 newcomers, 5 practitioners and decision-makers for two intensive mornings of collaboration. The focus of this activity was on a challenge identified during the Listening Sessions and Face-to-Face Meetings: Learning the language.

Building upon the tested Participatory Policy Design methodology implemented in several northern European countries, the workshops provided a platform for diverse stakeholders to come together and develop tangible solutions that are meaningful for the beneficiaries.

Throughout the two mornings, participants engaged in a dynamic process, employing practical, fun, and creative tools. As a result of this intensive collaboration, a prototype solution aimed at improving the relations between practitioners and newcomers was successfully created.

NEWCOMERS' EXPERIENCES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

During Listening Sessions and Face-to-Face Meeting, newcomers shared their experiences and recommendations about many different aspects of their integration in Guimarães. The following pages present their contributions, systematized and organized by theme. It starts with an introductory text that combines testimonials from the newcomers, followed by the main recommendations in bullet points, and relevant quotes from newcomers and from decision-makers/practitioners.

ACCESS TO WORK

The first thing for integration is work. But don't just tell us: "If you want to work, go to work". Pay attention to our skills and what we can give. Ask us about what we can do, how we could be useful for Portugal, for ourselves, for society, and don't pay attention only to things we don't know, like speaking Portuguese. Is not only for money, we want to show our abilities, but many times we feel useless.

- Ask us how we can be useful and what we want to do. Look to our skills, don't focus only on what we do not have.
- Social workers should connect us with job opportunities. Knowing people who work in companies helps a lot.
- Explain to us what is written in the work contract we are signing and what are our working rights.

"For a long time, for 5 months, nobody asks me anything about my skills, about how I can do useful things for Portugal, for myself, for society. I should show my abilities."
- Newcomer

"We all want to work. It's true we can't understand Portuguese, but we can speak a little, and we can work in restaurants, agriculture, and other places."
- Newcomer

"When they get us a job, they don't explain what we are signing. They don't explain anything. And, in the beginning, we don't talk Portuguese, so we don't understand."
- Newcomer



ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Sometimes the solution to our problems is right next to us, but we have no idea because the social workers don't explain us. We need someone to guide us. To take us to places for the first time, show us how different services work, explain the social norms, tell us our rights, and answer our questions. We need specific information about different things. If we search by ourselves, it can take months, if you answer us it only takes 5 minutes. When we know things, we can do them by ourselves, explain them to others, and make life easier for everyone.

- Take us to new places for the first time.
- Give us information about the services as soon as we arrive: what and where is the health center, SEF, and bank. Also, explain to us our rights and the social norms.
- Have volunteers that are available during the day and that can take us to services and supermarkets, connect with our family, and with jobs from local people. It is good to have female volunteers for families, it is more comfortable for the wives to talk with other women.
- Have representatives of each culture working in organizations. They can translate, and explain in a way we can understand and make organizations understand us. Most importantly, they know our culture, and they can connect with us through our feelings.
- Prepare a guide with information, in different languages. If someone has a book in their language, they can read it and have access to the information. If we have problems that are not in the guide, we ask the organization.

“What is most important is one organization that gives us information. We don't have a health center in our country, for example. So, they took us the first time to the health center, to SEF, bank, etc.” - Newcomer

“Social workers and other people don't give information about things. Sometimes we need information about specific things. It takes just 5 minutes. Or maybe they can quickly go with me.” - Newcomer



“Now, I have seen life, like living alone with my family, I know when I have some problem, I know where I go. Everything is clear to me, what I want to do, I know the way now.” - Newcomer

“Most of the time, when I have a problem, I have the solution next to me, but I don't know it. So, if you share the information, maybe it's relevant to other people.” - Newcomer

THE ROLE OF PROFESSIONALS

When we arrive in Portugal, many of us are not ok. We had to leave our life, our culture, our history behind. Some of us have psychological problems and the practitioners that are with us need to understand that. It is very important that when we ask for help or make questions that they are available. We hear too many times “Wait”, “later”, and “be patient”. If we see that people don’t do anything, we stop asking for help. We don’t like when people tell us all the time “You are a refugee” as an answer for us not being able to find a job, go to school, get a driving license, and find Portuguese friends. Try to know us not just like refugees, ask us about our countries, why we are here, what we do in our lives, what we eat, how we cook it, things like these. We will ask you the same because people are all the same.

- Help us connect with Portuguese people.
- Don’t tell us “wait, wait, wait” all the time.
- Involve us more in the decisions about our lives.
- Be available when we need help or have a question.
- Be truthful with us.

“I tried to find Portuguese friends, a job, and courses for learning the language, I tried to get a driving license, I tried to find a way to go to university and other facilities but if I ask social workers, they say «You are a refugee».”
- Newcomer

“I always talk with my organization, and nothing happens. For training, jobs, language, SEF. Nothing. I feel abandoned and on my own. They are supposed to be the responsible and willing to help, but when I went to talk with them, they said «be patient».” - Newcomer

“We feel silent because we can’t make anything, we can’t do anything. Nothing belongs to us. The decision is made about us but it’s not in our hands.” - Newcomer

“I first met my organization and they helped. When I need help, when I need to ask a question, they help and explain.”
- Newcomer



LEARNING THE LANGUAGE

The first months are to learn the language. Some of us learned very fast, others have been here for more than one year and cannot speak the basic. This is very bad for us and society. We need to speak Portuguese to find a job. We don't learn a lot in class because they are very formal, they are about using the right punctuation. We prefer to talk in order to learn, we practice when we speak with our colleagues at work. It is better when people ask us what words we want to learn and teach us.

- Talking is a good way to teach and learn the language.
- Don't teach us formal things, like punctuation; teach us words we need to use in our day-to-day life.
- Ask us what we want to learn about, and which words we want to learn.

"The first months are to learn the language. To have good classes and a language course. I had classes of 3 hours. The most important in the beginning is to learn the language."
- Newcomer

"At the reception center, there was a volunteer that talked to me a lot. I learned with her. I like to talk to people. I always prefer to talk, in order to learn."
- Newcomer

"They asked us: what do you want to learn? We said kitchen stuff, because we go to the kitchen, and we want to ask about things. Then, hello, goodbye, and those things. Then, I, you, he, she, it. Then, the verb to be. I don't need the alphabet, I need words about transportation, food, etc."
- Newcomer



CREATION OF A COLLABORATIVE SOLUTION

Post-its, role play, discussions, image theatre, drawings, brainstorming, laughs, creativity, and fun! These were the main ingredients of the Co-Projecting Workshops in Guimarães.

Throughout two very intensive and dynamic mornings, 4 newcomers and 5 decision-makers and practitioners worked together to create a collaborative solution for one of the main challenges of integration in the municipality, identified and decided unanimously upon the Listening Sessions and Face-to-Face Meeting:

Relationship between newcomers and practitioners

At the end of the Workshops, this was the co-created solution that was prototyped by the group:



SOLUTION:

We are building informal monthly meetings called “Chatting”, in which newcomers, practitioners, and local people come, meet in public spaces, eat food, have tea and coffee, listen to music, and share. This is advertised on social media, filmed, and recorded on the local radio. All of this, so that we can get to know each other.

How did the group arrive at this solution?

Identifying the root cause of the problem

Ideating key features and possible solutions for the problem

Prototyping the selected solution

Identifying the root cause of the problem

Throughout the first phase of the Co-Projecting Workshop, the participants identified various problems inspired by personal stories regarding the relationship between newcomers and practitioners. These key features were organized into the following clusters:

- Social norms (lack of information about the country and the social norms, there is knowledge but it's blocked)
- Feelings (useless, alone, dissatisfied, inferior compared to Portuguese, with false expectations)
- Involvement/Relationship (need to show you really care, we need help with everything, professional involvement, protection for all because we don't know each other, need for an autonomy support system, we don't know what they're doing to help)
- Newcomers' constraints (newcomers refuse the proposed solutions, in my home country I was the boss and here I'm not, not knowing social norms lead to psychological problems [feeling isolated, humiliated, useless] and makes it harder to solve simple problems, language barriers)
- Practitioners' Constraints (lack of time to talk directly, too busy with other things, lack of resources to attend the needs, hard to explain when solutions are temporary, boundaries to not getting involved in the others' problems)

Considering all the information shared, the participants were divided into two groups to decide which area they would focus on. Group 1 focused on "Involvement/Relationship" and Group 2 focused on "Constraints". Then, they were invited to create a "How might we" statement to guide the process of creating a collaborative solution.

While Group 2 had a more direct approach, Group 1 explored more the theme, introducing new concepts, such as "Cultural gap (language barrier and not knowing social norms)"; "Psychological Problems", "Losing your own history", "Professionals don't know me, my story, what I want", "lack of empathy". In the end, the two groups elaborated on the following statements:

- (1) How might we deepen the mutual knowledge between the cultures involved so that we can assure newcomers a good quality of life?
- (2) How might we overcome cultural barriers and psychological problems to fully integrate into the community and build a new life story?



Ideating key features and possible solutions for the problem

The participants were invited to explore possible solutions to the problem statements and these were some of the ideas that were shared:

Create informal moments that make people know each other, like podcasts in public places, "talks" in schools, and social gatherings to talk about different themes.

Make a space for cultural dialogue, like a fashion show. A place to talk about each other, dance, party, listen music together.

Make a human knot with color, life, joy.

Creation of self-knowledge groups (with professionals, newcomers, and volunteers). A different service (City Hall, social security) could be responsible for the organization. This would happen in a different place every Saturday. The model of the project "Memory café" could be replicated.

Monthly, different people come together and grab a coffee and talk about their life situation.

When a newcomer arrives, he is matched with a professional from an entity and has every two weeks to grab a coffee with him/her.

TV program or radio that talks about migrants and refugees, gives statistics, and shows what migrant people do in the country and what Portuguese people think about them. Interviews could be done with refugees, professionals that work with them, and other citizens.

Fashion show. Cooking show (Masterchef) in schools. Traditional games. Cultural parade for children in the kindergarten where they would use clothes, objects and other things that represent the culture. The family of the children would be invited to a final moment (a snack time). In the end of the year the parents of the children would be invited to organize a theatre play with the theme «Interculturality».

Have a fashion show about different cultures with typical music. Portuguese people would be dressed by migrant people and migrant people would be dressed by Portuguese people.

Have groups of people that exchange popular sayings of different cultures. Also do role-plays of daily situations and people show how they would act in their country and Portuguese people show how they act in Portugal.

Have food stands and do a contest where a person from a country has to lead a team to do a recipe from their country but cannot touch the food, can only give instructions to their team.

The main key features identified for the solution were the following:

- Informality
- Creates connections between people
- Regularity and continuity
- (External) communication
- It is for everyone (not just newcomers and professionals)
- It is about interaction, and integration. Cannot be about dissolving someone's culture.

Prototyping the selected solution

To prototype the selected solution, the group did a role-play to present the final idea that is - as mentioned before:

We are building informal monthly meetings called "Chatting", in which newcomers, practitioners, and local people come, meet in public spaces, eat food, have tea and coffee, listen to music, and share. This is advertised on social media, filmed, and recorded on the local radio. All of this, so that we can get to know each other.



TESTIMONIALS FROM PARTICIPANTS

"I had things in my heart and mind for a lot of time. It was only in my head, but now I said those things to you. If they will reach other people, I think there will be many lives that will change." (Newcomer)

"It's very important to hear people in person, about what is really a priority for those who are displaced." (Practitioner)

"I had an insight of something practical to change." (Practitioner)

"Thanks for this meeting. It gave me a very good feeling to be able to voice bad things. Thank you." (Newcomer)

"I think the meeting is going to change some problems we have." (Newcomer)

"The perspective of the people who have lived the situation is always best suited than the ones who work for these people." (Practitioner)

All of the newcomers said they felt safe sharing their experiences and opinions in the Face-to-Face Meeting, and 83% stated they had space to talk about things that are important to them, with 95% feeling more motivated to keep on sharing their ideas and opinions in similar processes.

"Professionals were very calm and every time gave me right to explore my ideas; that helped me." (Newcomer)

77% of decision-makers agree that the Face-to-Face Meeting was a constructive moment that allowed them to experience a closer connection with newcomers and that the contributions from newcomers were useful for that work. 80% said that they are satisfied with the ideas produced collaboratively by the group in the Co-Projecting Workshops and 70% feel more confident in their ability to involve newcomers in participatory processes connected to their work.

"They helped me to better understand their needs and how to better reach them." (Practitioner)



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GLOCALFACTORY



PLACE



MECHELEN



ZRC SAZU