

# ELECTED MIGRANT COUNCIL

## TOOLKIT FOR EQUALITY CITY POLICIES AGAINST RACISM



International Coalition  
of Inclusive and  
Sustainable Cities – ICCAR



Co-funded by  
the European Union

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# TOOLKIT FOR EQUALITY CITY POLICIES AGAINST RACISM

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## ELECTED MIGRANT COUNCIL

### THE CITY GETS ACTIVE IN ITS FUNCTION AS A

- **democratic institution**
- rule-maker
- employer
- service provider
- contractor

### ECCAR 10 POINTS ACTION PLAN

- 1 Greater Vigilance Against Racism
- 2 Assessing Racism and Discrimination and Monitoring Municipal Policies
- 3 Better Support for the Victims of Racism and Discrimination
- 4 More Participation and Better Informed City Dwellers**
- 5 The City as an Active Supporter of Equal Opportunity Practices
- 6 The City As An Equal Opportunities Employer and Service Provider
- 7 Fair Access to Housing
- 8 Challenging Racism and Discrimination Through Education
- 9 Promoting Cultural Diversity
- 10 Hate Crimes and Conflicts Management

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# INTRODUCTION

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The Toolkit for Equality is a manual to support cities in implementing local policies that successfully counteract racism and racial discrimination or in adjusting existing ones. The Toolkit provides experience-based step-by-step instructions for implementing concrete policies, starting from the conceptualization and ending with measuring their impact. All content is based on expertise shared by experienced city officials working in European cities.

Our aim has been to give suggestions that are as concrete as possible. We invite you to read the toolkit as the joint expertise of colleagues in other cities and take whatever seems useful for your city.

The realization of this Toolkit would not have been possible without the support of cities and city employees, who shared their experiences, knowledge and time. ECCAR and the editors thank all of the participating cities for their contributions and hospitality, in particular:

- |                               |                         |
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## PREFACE

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The ECCAR Toolkit for Equality includes two chapters dedicated to policies allowing for a minimum of political representation of city inhabitants who are not entitled to vote in local elections due to their nationality.

One approach – presented in this chapter, titled **ELECTED MIGRANT COUNCIL** - aims at establishing a **consultative council of representatives formally elected** by the target group.

Another approach – presented in another chapter, titled **MIGRANT CITIZENSHIP FORUM** follows the logic of a citizen dialogue and takes the form of **participatory forums** to discuss selected topics with interested (migrant) inhabitants.

In order to help you decide, which approach is better suited for your city's context, we summarized the strengths and weaknesses of each approach on the following table:

ELECTED MIGRANT COUNCIL	MIGRANT CITIZENSHIP FORUM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ free to select a topic to be discussed</li> <li>- recommendations submitted to the city, with no procedure/obligation to be taken into account/implemented</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- pre-selection of topics by the cities' officials to be discussed</li> <li>+ clear mandate to develop measures addressing a specific issue; stronger commitment to implementation of the recommendations</li> </ul>
<p>logic of representation: The elected migrant council is based on the idea to “compensate” the lack of right to vote for non-EU nationals living in the city by providing a possibility to elect representatives.</p>	<p>logic of participation: The participatory forum is based on the idea of citizens' dialogue and participation. Every person is considered as most competent for his/her life situation and citizens' every-day expertise is considered valuable to design feasible policy programmes. Every person who feels concerned by a matter is invited to participate in a discussion event. The forum allows for inviting and including a broader spectrum of people.</p>

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# ELECTED MIGRANT COUNCIL

A migrant council is an instrument that allows for a minimum of political representation of city inhabitants who are not entitled to vote in local elections due to their citizenship. In this chapter, we will present a migrant council that is a consultative body, established at the municipal level, with members formally elected by its target group. The establishment of a migrant council aims at strengthening societal and political participation as well as an exchange of expertise in order to work together on a good living together of the city population.

The establishment of a migrant council can never be a substitute for the right to vote. The council is a participatory instrument that a city can use to improve participation as long as the national legislation prevents certain city inhabitants from voting or running for local election.

The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) defines that ***“racial discrimination shall mean any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin [...]”***.

*“Distinction”* means to define a person as different on the basis of “race”, colour, ethnicity, descent, birth, religion or language (addressing biological and cultural ascriptions), justifying differentiated entitlements on a structural level. The opposite of distinction is equality. Equality is meant as a status as well as a process.

*“Exclusion”* means denying access to and enjoyment of human rights. The European Union adopted the term social exclusion defined by the ILO, but widened the definition stressing that social exclusion occurs when people cannot fully participate or contribute to society because of *“the denial of civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights.”* It is indicated in the definitions that exclusion results from *“a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, bad health and family breakdown.”* Participation is a precondition for as well as a purpose of human rights. The opposite of exclusion is *inclusion*.

*“Restriction”* means a limitation of enjoyment of human rights in practice. The positive counterpart is to have “equal opportunities”.

*“Preference”* privileges a person on grounds of “race”, colour, ethnicity, descent, birth, religion or language over another person. Symmetrically, it disadvantages one person compared to another. The positive answer to this formal understanding is “equal treatment”. Policies successfully counteracting racial discrimination therefore need to contribute to the positive counterparts of the four dimensions of discrimination.

**Counteracting discrimination therefore means to increase *equality, inclusion, equal opportunities and/or equal treatment*.**

→ The 10 Point Programme as described in this chapter counteracts discrimination by promoting all of these dimensions.

Article 25 of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights restricts the right to vote and stand for elections to citizens (i.e. nationals). The Council of Europe however promotes participation of foreigners through the Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level. Foreigners in some EU member states have been given the right to vote in local elections. Furthermore, EU citizens are allowed to vote at the local level in other EU member states.

## CONTEXT INFORMATION

The following chapter is based on interviews with different actors involved in the establishment and daily work of the migrant council in the City of Graz (Austria), Athens (Greece), and information provided by the City of Potsdam (Germany) as well as the umbrella organisation of advisory councils on migration and integration in Rheinland-Pfalz (AGARP Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Beiräte für Migration und Integration in Rheinland-Pfalz, Germany)

Germany and Austria are among a dozen European Countries in which third country nationals are not allowed to vote in municipal, regional or national elections. The municipality of Athens accommodates more than 130,000 people coming from non-EU countries, constituting almost 17 % of the municipality's total population.

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## WHY IS IT NECESSARY?

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Every person who permanently lives in a city should have the possibility of participating in the decision-making processes shaping the city. Having the opportunity to participate will increase identification with a city and the feeling of responsibility for becoming actively involved. To ensure a respectful living together the city should speak with its inhabitants not just about them.

### **How does the city government benefit?**

- The advisory council of foreign nationals supports local decision-makers through its knowledge and understanding of the concerns and needs within the migrant population
- The advisory council supports the city through recommendations and counselling for politicians and the administration in its role as an intermediary between the city authorities and migrant population groups.
- The advisory council is a positive signal to city inhabitants excluded from voting rights that their suggestions and their engagement for social cohesion and a respectful living together in the city is welcomed and demanded.
- It is an easy and continuous communication channel between the city and its non-national inhabitants in order to
  - enhance inhabitants' knowledge of the city's political and administrative system
  - enhance the knowledge of local politicians and civil servants concerning its non-voting inhabitants and
  - increase the inhabitants' understanding of and adherence to the city authorities' decisions and regulations
- The advisory council develops practical recommendations for actual implementation of what is probably a more theoretical city "integration policy"
- Getting to know each other on a constructive working basis helps to reduce prejudices within the city authorities against the migrant population and vice versa.

### **How do migrant city inhabitants benefit?**

- The advisory council provides some minimum of political representation for a population group that is otherwise excluded from the political process
- The advisory council raises awareness within the city government about the concerns and needs of migrants.
- The council is an opportunity for the migrant population to express their concerns in a more direct way.
- The council allows for migrants and migrant communities to be better and more directly informed on political and administrative processes and programmes.
- Politically interested individuals can play an active role in city politics
- The advisory council works towards political action through recommendations and lobbying both within and outside the political parties
- The council can express the migrants' viewpoints, proposals and definitions regarding successful integration of the city's society. Their efforts become more visible.

- Migrants' rights are promoted. Migrants become more visible in politics and society.
- The population benefits from programs and projects realized by the council
- The engagement in the migrant council can be a stepping stone into a political career once a person becomes a citizen

## LIMITATIONS

Establishing an advisory council can never be a substitute for the right to vote in regular elections. A migrant council that is a consultative body gives the migrant population a right to be heard, at best. As a consultative body, the council's influence in political decision-making is very limited. The council also cannot offer to the people it represents the possibility of intervention in individual cases; it cannot overcome the bureaucratic barriers migrants might face in a city, but can only work within its limits. Because of those limited powers, council members might be confronted with disappointed expectations from their target group.

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# FOUNDATION

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## PLANNING AND ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS

### 1 STEP Networking

Establish contacts among migrants who wish to push the initiative forward. Establish a network among migrants, migrant associations and local NGOs.

### 2 STEP Political support

Find and engage politicians who are willing to take on the issue.

### 3 STEP Form a working group

Form a working group of individuals who are motivated and have the perseverance to take the process to its goal; who are ready to engage in networking, lobbying and negotiation within the group as well as with the city authorities. Send an invitation to all organized migrant communities to take part.

The working group should include: migrants, migrant associations, relevant local NGOs and local politicians.

The working group should hold regular meetings and develop a concept for the migrant council's specific tasks and competencies

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### RISKS, CHALLENGES

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Different perceptions and views among the working group members; conflicts between migrants and migrant associations

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### MEASURES TO MITIGATE RISKS

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Include members from experienced NGOs into the working group who can act as mediators; Include key personalities who can take on the role of intermediaries



## RISKS, CHALLENGES

## MEASURES TO MITIGATE RISKS

Newly arrived migrants generally have little knowledge and experience concerning the political structures in the municipality and about the rules of procedure

Include migrants who have been living in the city for a longer time and/or have a good knowledge of the local political landscape; Include NGOs experienced in working with city authorities

Fluctuation of working group members

You need to accept this and be prepared for it – the work at hand is voluntary

# DEVELOPING THE CONCEPT

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## STEP Take into consideration the relevant legislation

Legal regulations concerning the city's powers provide the basic framework for the establishment and shape of a migrant council. Pay attention to election regulations.

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## STEP Develop the Council's Statute

Discuss and negotiate the rights and duties that the migrant council should have in the city. Reach a consensus on the purpose, objective and rules of procedure of the migrant council. The Statute should include:

# CONCEPT

## Implementation, rights and duties

Recommended tasks:

- To advise the municipal authorities through analyses, recommendations and statements
- To inform migrant inhabitants about the city's agenda
- To represent the interests of the city's migrant inhabitants
- To promote a peaceful and respectful living together of all inhabitants
- To inform migrant inhabitants about the migrant council's activities
- To publish an annual report on its activities and recommendations
- Underlining the importance of equal rights and opportunities concerning the city's activities

Recommended rights:

The mandate of the migrant council is usually restricted to "matters in the interest of migrants".

**Tip!** Pay attention to that notion, the understanding of the scope of "interests of migrants" will be decisive for whether the migrant council has a representative or just an alibi function. Many migrant council statutes include this term but the interpretation can vary from matters explicitly addressing migrants to practically all matters, as basically all city decisions also affect migrant inhabitants. Mainstreaming the representation of interests is best achieved if possible consequences on the migrant population are taken into consideration in all matters. To give an example: traffic and mobility might not be considered a "topic of interest for migrants" but in reality city districts with a higher percentage of migrants might be disadvantaged concerning transportation accessibility.

- The right to present written statements and suggestions. These inputs have to be taken into consideration by the relevant city authority and must be answered within a fixed time period.
- The right to receive all protocols, minutes, draft legislation and proposals from the municipality
- The right to participate in the city's official committees and working bodies
- The city has to inform the council and consider its opinion when invited to give a statement concerning proposed legislation at the regional or national levels.
- The city administration has to include the council in the development of projects and initiatives.
- Upon request of the Migrant council, the mayor has to present a matter to the city council.
- The right to speak in the city council (at least once a year to present the annual report)
- The right to issue petitions to the city council

### **Voting rights, candidature**

Define who is entitled to vote and to run as a candidate.

The migrant council is an instrument for providing for political participation by migrants who are not entitled to vote in municipal elections. In a narrow sense that means that only foreign (non-EU) nationals<sup>1</sup> can vote and run as candidates in elections to the migrant council.

*Disadvantage:* The restriction of council voting rights to third country nationals may cause difficulties in finding enough qualified candidates. The council also loses more experienced members when politically interested long-term inhabitants apply for citizenship and therefore lose their right to stand as a candidate for the council. Candidates, who have been living in the city for a relatively short time may be less familiar with the city's particular political structures and the contacts and networks necessary for lobbying. Learning the country's language also takes time.

To keep qualified persons in the council, discuss the following alternatives (not exhaustive):

- Right to vote for third country nationals. Right to stand as a candidate for third country nationals and naturalized citizens (otherwise excluded from the council as they are entitled to vote in national elections).
- Right to vote and right to stand as a candidate for all foreign nationals including EU-nationals.
- Right to vote for third country nationals. Right to stand as a candidate for third country nationals and for naturalized citizens / national citizens with a migrant background / the mentioned groups and their children / all citizens.
- Right to vote for third country nationals and for naturalized citizens / national citizens with a migrant background / the mentioned groups and their children. Right to stand as a candidate for third country nationals and for naturalized citizens / national citizens with migrant background / the mentioned groups and their children / all citizens.

The council however should keep its nature as a body of political participation for migrants who are not entitled to vote and therefore keep this target group in the dominant position, e.g. by reserving a majority number of seats in the council for candidates with third country nationality.

### **Bylaws**

The bylaws should clarify

- membership, membership terms and re-election (including to the presidency),
- meetings (frequency: it is recommended that the council meets at least once a month; right to summon a meeting),
- procedures concerning decision making,
- establishment, personnel and tasks of the administrative office.

<sup>1</sup> According to EU law, EU citizens who migrate to another member state have a right to vote in local elections in all Member States. Whether or not non-EU migrants should have the right to vote in local elections is a decision left to the Member States themselves.

It can also be foreseen that experts can be invited as consultative members, in order to provide legal or other assistance to the council.

### **Election day, Election procedure, Election, Election results**

Migrant council elections should take place on the same day as the regular municipal elections and follow the same procedures.

### **Electoral register**

The election authorities need to establish an electoral register.

Tip! The establishment of the electoral register can be challenging due to data protection and/or lack of data. The election authorities usually have data on citizenship but not on the migration background of naturalized or native born citizens. If other groups other than foreign nationals are also eligible to vote, individuals must be required to register in the electoral register.

#### *To do list for the migrant council:*

##### Internal:

- Elaborating a working programme for the period of action
- Regular meetings
- Preparing and maintaining a database of migrants and migrant associations
- Networking with city stakeholders, local NGOs and other municipal councils

##### Addressing the local authorities and politicians:

- Examining and screening of materials (protocols)
- Preparing for city council meetings
- Elaborating statements, proposals and recommendations and submitting them to the city government
- Actively participating in committees, boards and other panels
- Lobbying and networking

##### Addressing the migrant population in the city:

- Networking, visiting and mutual exchange with migrant associations and diaspora organizations
- Gathering recommendations and opinions and elaborating them in statements presented to the city
- Informing members of migrant communities about the migrant council and its tasks
- Develop, organize and carry out projects and events
- Preparing elections, informing about elections and standing as a candidate, election campaigning
- Promoting communities' active participation and coordination of interests

Addressing the general population in the city:

- Public relations
- Publishing opinions and statements in local newspapers
- Informing about migrant issues, projects and events

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### STEP Amendment of existing laws or bylaws

Incorporate the rights and procedures involved in the cooperation between the city council and the migrant council into the city council's laws and/or bylaws.

7

### STEP Complete the budgeting

*Administrative office:* Interviewees reported that you should count on at least one full-time position in the administrative office per 10,000 represented persons (e.g. in a city with about 30,000 migrant council voters 3 full-time job equivalents). This is necessary for sufficient outreach and information activities.

Add about 30% in overhead costs for projects, information material, expense allowances for migrant council members and events.

In addition provide for an office – in an easily accessible location – with computers, telephones and internet access

*Council chairperson:* It is very challenging for the elected members to carry out good political work on a merely honorary basis. A person who needs to earn a living through full time employment (or even overtime, as third country nationals face difficulties in finding a good job) lacks the time resources for political work, networking and important but time-consuming outreach activities to migrant communities. Finance one or two part-time positions for elected council members in order to enable them to engage in the political work.

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### STEP Negotiating

Lobby and negotiate to achieve acceptance of the initiative and the necessary majority to implement the migrant council.

**RISKS, CHALLENGES**

**MEASURES TO MITIGATE RISKS**

Opponents do not want migrants to have an influence in the city

Long-term awareness raising for a broad target group, education

Politicians and local authorities are skeptical or disapprove of the initiative

Engage politicians or local authorities in the working group, who negotiate in their own networks; Inform members of all parties about the initiative to create a migrant council; It should not be the aim to achieve 50+1 votes, but rather to comprehensively convince the local authorities. This is a better basis for the later work of the council.

Counterargument “the city does not have enough resources”

This is a spurious argument because a migrant council can be implemented with a very small budget. The city profits from the council’s expertise. Negotiate for a migrant council’s budget to be a fixed part in the annual budgetary planning.

Counterargument “the city has more urgent tasks and worries”

Migrant community members have a needed expertise and offer to work with the city through the migrant council. Emphasize the strong argument of social cohesion.

# SUSTAINABILITY

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## STEP Legal basis

Have a council decision on the migrant council's implementation.

Sustainability of migrant councils in municipalities is best achieved if the right to form a migrant council is determined by (regional) law. The law should make the establishment of a migrant council obligatory in municipalities with more than 1000 inhabitants who have third country nationality.

### RISKS, CHALLENGES

Local authorities decide to abolish the migrant council

### MEASURES TO MITIGATE RISKS

Negotiate parallel with public authorities at the provincial level (if relevant in your country) aiming at anchoring the migrant council in provincial law. The implementation of the Migrant council at the provincial level secures the independence of the migrant council.



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# PUTTING INTO PRACTICE

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## 10 STEP Instruct the local election authorities

The elections of the migrant council should be connected to the general municipal elections. It should be held parallel and follow the same procedures. Therefore the local election authority needs to be tasked with administration of the council elections. It needs to create an electoral register, officially inform the eligible voters about the election, submit the candidate lists and count the votes.

## 11 STEP Inform the migrant population

For the first election, the working group should be in charge of reaching out to migrants and associations in order to provide information about the election and its procedures, and to ask for the formation of election lists as well as encouraging people to vote as well as standing as candidates. Concerning later elections, the outgoing migrant council should perform this task.

**Tip!** It is preferable to have a variety of candidates, e.g. women and men, younger and older, different origins, religions, political orientations. Actively approach potential candidates and look for the right channels (e.g. a women's association to find female candidates). Provide interested individuals with realistic information

- About the time needed to perform the duties and other requirements and
- About the content of the duties and the limited powers of the migrant council.

Specify the names of people that a potential candidate can contact to discuss details and concerns.

### **Requirements for candidates:**

#### Do I have enough time?

The migrant council holds regular meetings. The meetings however only make up a small percentage of the workload, additional time-consuming tasks are the organization of events, preparation of statements, lobbying and networking activities etc. Events and projects might take place in the evenings and on weekends.

#### What qualifications are required?

Engagement and a willingness to take responsibility; Sociability and openness; Ability to work in teams and be loyal to the other migrant council members; Ability to accept criticism, to handle conflicts in an unemotional way and to make compromises

Candidates should be aware that they are undertaking a political activity and committing to various responsibilities (in particular attending meetings) for the whole election period.

*Additional requirements concerning the migrant council chairperson:*

Political knowledge and skills; Knowledge of the local structures and political landscape; Ability to act as a bridge between migrant communities as well as between migrant council members' different points of views; Ability to present and negotiate the migrant council's positions

## RISKS, CHALLENGES

## MEASURES TO MITIGATE RISKS

Not all migrants living in a city are officially registered

If there is no database available, collect information from community organisations in order to initiate the development of an electoral register.

Data protection issues impact the creation of an electoral register (in regards to the first election)

The election authorities usually have data on citizenship but not the migration background of naturalized citizens or citizens by birth. If groups other than foreign nationals are also eligible to vote, individuals must be asked to register in the electoral register.

The migrant council is not known among the migrant communities in the city

Establishment of a council administrative office that is easily accessible; Outreach work, visiting migrant associations and providing information about the council's tasks

→ Putting into practice

**RISKS, CHALLENGES**

**MEASURES TO MITIGATE RISKS**

Adequate candidates/lists cannot be found

Out-reach work: visit the migrant communities and organizations, motivate them to develop lists and carry out electoral campaigns;  
 Organize workshops in migrant associations to address issues, like “What does it mean to stand as a candidate? What qualifications are needed?”;  
 Candidates should be equipped with: political experience, knowledge of the local political structures, language skills, trust from within the migrant communities

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**STEP Establish the administrative office**

Establish an administrative office at an easily accessible location.

**RISKS, CHALLENGES**

**MEASURES TO MITIGATE RISKS**

Finding qualified personnel for the migrant council’s administrative office

Look for a migrant person who has experience in project and personnel management, organizational skills, and knowledge of the structure of the local political landscape and administration

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13

**STEP Elections**

Elections take place.

**RISKS, CHALLENGES**

Small voter turnout.

Lack of migrants'/communities' incentive to participate, as their requests have not been acknowledged for a long time; People feel that they are wasting their time if they participate.

**MEASURES TO MITIGATE RISKS**

The city: Allocate resources to the migrant council to allow for adequate campaigning and election information. Promote elections via official city channels and ask the migrant council for advice on how to reach the target group (e.g. translation of election information into various languages, dissemination of information material);

The council: Out-reach work, election campaigning, explaining the tasks and potential of the migrant council and the benefits of the elections. Provide inspiration through examples and biographies of migrants who managed to achieve improvements in the city.

Criticism that a small voter turnout is a sign that the council lacks legitimacy

Voter turnout in certain types of elections, like referendums, is often even lower, without these instruments being questioned; The migrant council is an advisory body and as such is a tool for increasing participation, but it is not a legislative body.

Even if a small number of voters participate, this is still a more democratic way of giving a voice to those who are not allowed to vote than the appointment of candidates by persons they have not voted for.

→ Putting into practice  
 Daily work

## RISKS, CHALLENGES

Candidates present strictly ethnic lists

## MEASURES TO MITIGATE RISKS

Try to raise awareness and build connections of interest between migrant communities; Communicate that various political positions will be stronger if they are not attributed to a particular ethnic group but are presented as a common concern. For example, one key common interest is the need to counteract ethnic discrimination and racism.



# DAILY WORK

### Regular meetings

The council should meet at least once a month – it is recommended to have meetings even more often - to discuss all relevant issues arising concerning the integration process, living conditions or other issues related to migrants/migrant communities. It is the chairman's responsibility to lead the discussion towards agreements on proposals and recommendations to the municipality.

### Submitting proposals, recommendations to the municipality

The members agree on proposals or recommendations that are submitted to the city council. It is the chairman's responsibility to lead the discussion towards an agreement.

It is recommended that the council start with limited and realistic goals and initiatives with a focus on producing concrete results (e.g. development of a multilingual teacher's information package to improve communications between teachers and parents). The achievement of more limited goals will contribute to teambuilding among council members, and help in developing mutual respect and trust between city authorities and council members.

It is important that other public bodies engaged in relevant activities are regularly informed about the council's activities in order to provide support. Invest in regular exchange and contact with various public services (e.g. the police), as their support is necessary for accomplishing goals.

## FOLLOW-UP

### Outreach activities

It is important that the council's activities are not restricted to its monthly meetings. Other activities need to take place in between those meetings, in order for its role to be more active.

- Keeping contact with migrants, migrant associations, community organisations, support services etc;
- Visiting migrant associations, taking part in events;
- Providing information on the council and its tasks;
- Organising networking events, conferences and awareness raising activities.

The migrant council should be aware of its duties and role, as

- an advisory board that functions to provide a bridge across varying interests
- a representative of the interests of the migrant population
- an expert board that takes clear positions
- an active council

### RISKS, CHALLENGES

A major challenge that is in the structure of the council as a consultative body is the lack of executive or binding powers. The council has only a consultative function and its proposals are not enforceable. The council's power depends to a great extent on the power given to it by the municipality itself.

### MEASURES TO MITIGATE RISKS

Negotiate the inclusion of the right to speak in the city council and the right to issue petitions to the city council (see part on preparing the concept – implementation, rights and duties).

One positive aspect of only having a consultative status is that the council has full discretionary power to express its opinion freely.



**RISKS, CHALLENGES**

**MEASURES TO MITIGATE RISKS**

Proposals of the migrant council are not heard

Approach individuals of generally open political groups who might support you, then work to convince the group as a whole. Bear in mind that big parties fear the loss of votes, therefore start with suggestions that are easy to implement;  
 Be well prepared for council sessions;  
 Present recommendations that are thought through;  
 Create networks with other advisory councils and present, where appropriate, common recommendations;  
 Be proactive and take the initiative in making recommendations. They should not come only as a reaction to local politics.

Meetings of the migrant council are open to the public but no one participates

Hold the meetings in different locations (to come to an official city building might be a high threshold) e.g. rotating visits in different migrant associations;  
 Keep contact through personal visits in churches, associations, key persons, etc.

The preparation of the working programme

Keep in contact with the target group and ask for suggestions, impulses and ideas to improve the daily living of migrants in the city (e.g. "How is your housing situation? How are your children doing in school? Do you have difficulties in understanding important information, in which situations?")

## RISKS, CHALLENGES

## MEASURES TO MITIGATE RISKS

Resources are insufficient to do good work (e.g. in preparing and drafting recommendations and positions, carrying out outreach work to the community, engaging in networking and lobbying)

The city: Allocate adequate resources to the migrant council to profit from its expertise. High quality work requires sufficient resources. In a city of about 250.000 inhabitants, this requires 3 full-time job equivalents. It is suggested that these be split into 2 fulltime jobs at the administrative office and 2 part time jobs for the elected officials. Grant expense allowances for elected officials.

Knowledge of the local language is not sufficient to understand technical, legal and political texts;  
The elected officials lack experience with the local political processes;  
Bureaucratic challenges.

Inform migrants, associations and potential candidates about the qualifications that are important for a migrant council member;  
Discuss if migrants who become national citizens can still be eligible to be elected (to a minor percentage of council positions);  
Discuss if experienced politicians (e.g. former migrant council members who have applied for citizenship) can be invited as coaches

Underrepresentation of women in the migrant council

Actively reach out to women's organizations and encourage participation

Divergent interests and opinions among the council members who represent different migrant communities.

Networking with other advisory councils to agree on common positions and recommendations;  
Raising awareness among members that a united position is stronger; while at the same time recognizing and respecting that there will be dissenting voices.  
A chairperson who works to bridge the interests of various groups.

**RISKS, CHALLENGES**

**MEASURES TO MITIGATE RISKS**

An imbalance in the power relations between council members; The administrative office takes the lead in decision making

Invite members of local NGOs into the meetings that can take the position of a neutral intermediary and/or moderate the meeting. Develop trainings for the council members.

Migrant council members do not come to meetings

City: Take the migrant council and its recommendations seriously in order to motivate members to actively take part;  
 Migrant council: The chairperson needs to remind the members of their commitment and responsibility

Disappointment and unfulfilled expectations among migrants in the population; Insults directed at migrant council members

Inform everyone about the limited powers of the migrant council; the council is a means for migrants' communities to make requests, not more or not less. Communicate what is realistically possible, and present achievements at various events as well as through direct interactions with migrant associations.

Get in contact with the migrants living in the city

Open office-hours and migrant council meetings that are open to the public;  
 Hold meetings and establish office-hours at the locations of different migrant associations, using a fair rotation system (not excluding any community groups)

## RISKS, CHALLENGES

Facing the growing popularity of right wing parties, political parties might fear that supporting the migrant council costs votes; Political groups want to shut down the migrant council; Political groups argue that the migrant council collaborates with terrorist groups

Strongly divergent points of view among council members, possibly in regard to the migrant communities they represent.

## MEASURES TO MITIGATE RISKS

Lobbying and intensive working together with favourably disposed politicians and political groups;  
Competent, high quality work;  
Making sure that the migrant council is well known within the population, both among migrants and others;  
Making recommendations that can be implemented in a realistic manner

It is the chairperson's role to lead the discussions to agreements on recommendations to the municipality. Make clear that compromises are necessary and the council is usually in a better position when it speaks with one voice. Apart from the cooperation in the council, the represented groups/communities are still autonomous in promoting their individual interests. Again – focus on areas of common interest.

## KEY FACTORS OF SUCCESS

Interviewees named the following aspects as key factors for successful implementation:

- A legally based model defining the cooperation patterns (clarity as to the rights and duties that apply in regard to the city council/local politicians, the city administration and the advisory council)
- The city mayor makes cooperation with the advisory council a top-level issue and in addition assigns one employee the responsibility for continuous cooperation with the advisory board
- Competent council members and personnel in the administrative office
- Sufficient resources to allow for high-quality work
- Regular and frequent meetings (at least on a monthly basis)
- The political will to consider the advisory council of foreign citizens as a municipal, democratic duty and not as an act of charity
- A back and forth flow of information between the municipality, the council and the represented migrants
- Close contact with public services engaged in relevant activities, as their support is necessary for achieving goals
- City authorities need to take the migrant council seriously in order to ensure that council members are motivated to put effort and their free time into this work; Vice-versa the migrant council needs to provide qualified work to be taken seriously by the city authorities.
- Active role of the members involved, in particular an active chairperson

## IMPACT AND OUTCOME

A migrant council promotes the interests and views of the city's migrant communities. Decision-makers are more aware of the population's needs and decisions, and the strategies and programs developed reflect this awareness. Recommendations and suggestions by the migrant council are adopted. Members of the migrant population believe that their interests are better represented in the city and that the migrant council's work has improved their everyday life situation. Within the migrant council and concerning its activities, cooperation of members (and the communities/groups they represent) is promoted.

In order to achieve an impact, "hearing" the migrants' problems and views is not sufficient. The municipality must actually take steps towards listening to those views and solving the problems.

- Migrant council members are taken seriously by the city's decision makers. Suggestions by migrant council members are seriously discussed. The council is asked to give its opinion.
- The council initiates serious and constructive discussions on issues important to local migrants/migrant communities.
- Recommendations by the migrant council are implemented.
- Recommendations of a migrant council lead to effective and comprehensive strategies to counteract discrimination.
- Decision-makers are aware of the effects policies may have on non-national inhabitants. The decisions taken take these effects into consideration.
- Members of minority groups feel represented by the migrant council.
- Voter turnout in migrant council elections increases.
- Migrants in the city experience improvements in their daily lives.
- Equal opportunities have been promoted, increased and/or actually achieved.
- Better cooperation between migrant communities.

It is suggested that impact assessments are carried out, for example, through surveys of migrants living in the city. These should be complemented by surveys of the general population.

## RESOURCES AND EXAMPLES

**UNESCO** Fighting Racism and Discrimination – Identifying and sharing good practices in the coalition of cities

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002171/217105e.pdf>

**EU Fundamental Rights Agency – Toolkit Joined up Governance**

<http://fra.europa.eu/en/joinedup/about>

**Graz (AT) Migrant council**

<http://www.graz.at/cms/beitrag/10025961/414913/>

Rules of procedure (in German only)

[http://www.graz.at/cms/dokumente/10023927\\_414913/585a01e5/GO%20MigrantInnenbeirat.pdf](http://www.graz.at/cms/dokumente/10023927_414913/585a01e5/GO%20MigrantInnenbeirat.pdf)

Provincial Law on the implementation of Migrant councils in the Austrian Province of Styria (in German only)

[http://www.graz.at/cms/dokumente/10023927\\_414913/4eb477e0/Landesgesetz%201999\\_Einrichtung\\_.pdf](http://www.graz.at/cms/dokumente/10023927_414913/4eb477e0/Landesgesetz%201999_Einrichtung_.pdf)

**Leipzig (DE) Migrant council (in German only)**

<http://www.leipzig.de/buergerservice-und-verwaltung/stadtrat/fachbeiraete/migrantenbeirat/#>

**Potsdam (DE) Migrant council (in German only)**

<http://www.potsdam.de/content/migrantenbeirat-der-landeshauptstadt-potsdam>

**Freiburg (DE) Migrant council (in German only)**

[http://www.freiburg.de/pb/site/freiburg\\_mundenhof/node/413950/Lde/migrantenbeirat.html](http://www.freiburg.de/pb/site/freiburg_mundenhof/node/413950/Lde/migrantenbeirat.html)

German umbrella organisation of advisory councils on migration and integration in Rheinland-Pfalz (AGARP Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Beiräte für Migration und Integration in Rheinland-Pfalz, Germany): useful checklists, model statute etc.

<http://agarp.de/index.html>

Other ideas regarding cities as democratic institutions

### **Nantes (FR): Nantes Council for Foreigners' Citizenship**

The creation of the Nantes Council for Foreigners' Citizenship in 2003 was the result of strong political determination stemming from non-EU foreigners' not being allowed to vote in French local elections. The CNCE, which comprises foreign citizens, City councilors and expert bodies, is an important vehicle for citizen dialogue in Nantes. It enables nationals of non-EU countries and recent member states (Romania and Bulgaria) to play an active part in the city's life and to contribute towards its policy of equality, welcome and integration. Strengthening foreign inhabitants' citizenship is a firm objective of public policy

### **Different municipalities (GR): Councils for Immigrant Integration in Municipalities**

A Council operates in every municipality to provide consultation to it on migrant integration in local societies (law 3852/2010 art. 78). It was adopted in 2010 and has been enforced in a different way in different municipalities, in others successfully and in others not so successfully.

### **Stockholm (SW) Human Rights (Swedish only)**

<http://www.stockholm.se/OmStockholm/Politik-och-demokrati/Sa-arbetar-kommunstyrelsen-/Kommunstyrelsens-rad-for-manskliga-rattigheter/>

### **Toronto (CAN) Equity, Diversity and Human Rights Division**

<http://www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contentonly?vgnextoid=d84ae03bb8d1e310VgnVCM-10000071d60f89RCRD>

### **San Francisco (USA) Human Rights Commission**

<http://sf-hrc.org>

### **San Francisco (USA) Contract Monitoring Division**

<http://sfgov.org/cmd/how-comply-equal-benefits-ordinance-0#item%201>

### **New York City (USA) Human Rights Commission**

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/cchr/html/home/home.shtml>

Why is it necessary?
Foundation
Putting into practice
Follow-up

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# SPACE FOR NOTES

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## SPACE FOR NOTES

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