

MIGRANT CITIZENSHIP FORUM

TOOLKIT FOR EQUALITY CITY POLICIES AGAINST RACISM

European
Coalition
of Cities



against Racism



International Coalition
of Inclusive and
Sustainable Cities – ICCAR



Co-funded by
the European Union

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

TOOLKIT FOR EQUALITY CITY POLICIES AGAINST RACISM

MIGRANT CITIZENSHIP FORUM

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

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.

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PREFACE

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 **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.

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

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"> + free to select a topic to be discussed - recommendations submitted to the city, with no procedure/obligation to be taken into account/implemented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - pre-selection of topics by the cities’ officials to be discussed + clear mandate to develop measures addressing a specific issue; stronger commitment to implementation of the recommendations
<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>

MIGRANT CITIZENSHIP FORUM

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MIGRANT CITIZENSHIP FORUM

A migrant citizenship forum is an instrument to allow for a minimum of political representation to city inhabitants who are not entitled to vote in local elections due to their citizenship. In this chapter, we will present the form of a participatory open forum, in order to develop concrete recommendations as to selected issues. The establishment of a migrant citizenship forum 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.

Article 25 of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights restricts the right to vote and stand for elections to citizens (i.e. nationals). Political participation is however broader than the right to vote. The Council of Europe promotes participation of foreigners through the Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level.

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*.

→ A **MIGRANT CITIZENSHIP FORUM** as described in this chapter counteracts discrimination by promoting participation in order to **prevent** discrimination in the enjoyment of human rights.

CONTEXT INFORMATION

The following chapter is based on interviews with different actors involved in the establishment and daily work of the migrant council forums in the City of Nantes (France) and Bern (Switzerland).

WHY IS IT NECESSARY?

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 and meaningfulness of 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 forum is an instrument for dialogue with the citizens. It allows for exchanges between city authorities, non-national inhabitants and all other inhabitants interested in a good living together.
- Migrant city inhabitants have a practical base of knowledge and expertise – due to their biographies, life situation, experiences. The city draws on that knowledge for developing efficient and suitable measures to address challenges in the city.
- Local decision-makers are supported with proposals and recommendations from the people concerned
- Local authorities get answers as to why some city services might not be used by the migrant population and recommendations on how to ensure access to those services for all inhabitants.
- The forum is a positive signal to city inhabitants excluded from voting rights that their suggestions and their engagement for a good living together in the city is welcomed and demanded.
- Better knowledge of city authorities concerning the living situation and needs of its non-voting inhabitants
- Increase in the understanding of inhabitants as to how the city administration works
- The forum develops practical recommendations to actually implement the city's more theoretical ideas concerning an "integration policy"

How do migrant city inhabitants benefit?

- The forum allows for at least some measure of political participation by a population group that is otherwise excluded from the political process
- The forum is an opportunity for the migrant population to express their proposals in a more direct way. Participants can express their viewpoints, proposals and definitions regarding successful integration of the city's society. Their efforts become more visible.
- Politically interested individuals can play a more active role in city politics
- Migrants' rights are promoted. Migrants become more visible in politics and society.
- The population benefits through city policies that better take into account the needs and living conditions of the migrant population

LIMITATIONS

The forum is bound to the pre-selected topics. That is a useful strategy to develop concrete recommendations on those issues, but limits the discussion to topics identified by the city authorities and not by the population in question.

Not all questions are suitable for a citizen dialogue.

FOUNDATION

PLANNING AND ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholders needed for the creation and realisation of migrant citizens forums:

- The municipally elected representatives
- An administrative unit that is responsible and mandated to organise the forums, stay in contact with the participants, and follow-up on the implementation of recommendations developed
- All city departments, to allow for the implementation of measures
- The participants of the forums
- Migrant associations, NGOs
- All associations and services in the city that are in contact with migrant inhabitants
- Immigration office
- All kind of public services and offices in charge of e.g. elderly people, education, health

CONCEPT

The objective of the forum is to 'co-produce politics' by designing concrete measures in a dialogue the city's citizens (inhabitants). The forum is based on the idea of creating a rather open platform, discussing topics that are put on the table.

In the participating cities, the establishment of the forum was also a reaction to the fact that migrants were underrepresented in the existing channels for citizen participation, like district assemblies. The forum therefore aims at increasing participation in order to also take into consideration this part of the population.

The advantage of a forum compared to an elected advisory council is in the opportunity to invite a broader spectrum of people, to renew the circle of participants and to not be restricted to non-EU-nationals.

Non-EU citizens face some particular (legal) issues but most every-day difficulties are similar to those of EU-migrants: access to the national language, access to justice in cases of discrimination etc. Therefore the participating cities chose to open the forum to all non-national inhabitants whether they are EU or non-EU citizens.

Mandate

The city gives a formal mandate to the forum to submit recommendations for measures addressing 3-4 precise questions.

- Example of topics addressed in migrant citizen forums:
- Migrants over 60 years of age: what is the reality? what are their needs?
- Reception conditions for migrants who have recently arrived in the city: what are the difficulties? what can be improved?
- Migrants and media: how are migrants portrayed in local media? how do media producers choose their topics, what are their information channels?

Responsible administrative unit

An administrative unit (e.g. department for integration) is mandated to organize and manage the forum. This task includes among others:

- preparation of the questions to be addressed
- maintaining contacts and networks with all stakeholders
- regular exchanges with the members of the core team (see below)
- organisation of the forums
- documenting the results, formulating the recommendations
- preparing the submission of recommendations to the city council
- negotiating with the departments on the implementation of recommendations
- implementing measures within their own field of responsibility
- initiating and supervising the publication of a newsletter (see below)
- being the contact and intermediary for members of the migrant population, associations, NGOs and services, external moderators, city departments, city politicians etc.

Core team/facilitation committee

Participants are invited to volunteer to be part of a core team/facilitation committee. In addition to taking part themselves in the forums, those individuals become active in order to keep the participatory dialogue going. The team's tasks include:

- helping to organise the participative forums,
- mobilising members of the migrant population to participate,
- maintaining contacts with the intermediary civil servants, including meetings in between the forum events for exchange and preparation,
- helping to summarise the results of the discussions,
- presenting the measures developed to the city council,
- follow-up on the implementation of measures

Volunteers are invited to commit for a period of one year. This team was reported to have about 10-20 members.

Participatory forums

There is an open invitation to all interested migrant city inhabitants and to associations/public services/professionals working in the field to participate in a forum. There is a moderator for the forum; participants work on the prepared questions, give their assessment of the current situation and develop concrete recommendations for improvements.

In the participating cities, the citizen forums are part of political programs addressing the integration of migrants in the city. The city gives a formal mandate to the forum to develop recommendations on a selected topic.

1

STEP Calculate the budget

The budget needs to cover costs for the moderation of the forums, the costs for contributions by outside consultants, facilitators, moderators and artists, production of information materials concerning the forum (e.g. information brochures on a certain topic), and a newsletter published 2-4 times a year.

Apart from these basic costs, more comprehensive measures, establishment of services, publications etc. that are implemented based on the forums' recommendations need to be calculated within the budget of the respective entity (city departments, public service agencies).

PUTTING INTO PRACTICE

DAILY WORK

2

STEP Mandate for the forum concerning a specific topic

Discuss with the core team what issue is to be addressed. (For organizing the first forum: Ask city officials as well as representatives of migrants' associations and NGOs about their view of the most pressing integration issues. Start by working on issues that are brought up by both sides.)

Tip! Focus on choosing a topic that can be addressed within the city's powers and current political/budgetary priorities. Also, discuss if the topic you have in mind is suitable for a participatory dialogue, a topic that can be discussed from a practical perspective. There is no use in addressing a topic that cannot be dealt with by the city.

Examples of topics addressed in migrant citizen forums:

- Migrants over 60 years of age: what is the reality? what are their needs?
Questions addressed: Are the municipal services for older people sufficiently visible to migrants aged 60+ and their families? What is the public's perception of those services? What resources do families use to face the challenges of aging? What needs and deficits are perceived by the public and by those those who are over 60 years old?
- Reception of new arrivals
Questions addressed: How did it work out when you first arrived in the country? What difficulties are faced by new arrivals? What are the strengths and weaknesses in the existing city system? What do you think could be done to improve the system?

Tip! The forum is also suitable for discussion of very local topics that might concern a particular district or neighborhood.

3

STEP Organise the forum event

Consult your networks to see who (what association, service etc.) is involved in the topic to be discussed.

Tip! Make clear from the start that the forum is not about merely discussing an issue but is intended to lead to some results, e.g. a video, recommendations for concrete measures etc.

How to mobilise participants?

Advertise the forum via internet and posters. Work together with your networks and all kinds of associations in contact with the migrant population to spread the invitation.

Choose an appealing invitation message, e.g. "Do you have a problem finding work? Come and talk about it!"

Associations take part in the effort to help the civil servants in charge but also for their own benefit, to strengthen exchanges with the city concerning cooperation, how to report the forum's results to the city council etc.

4

STEP Have the forum take place

Tip! Contract an external person or team (e.g. theater persons, journalists) that is experienced and has dynamic methods in moderating a participatory forum.

It is crucial that the moderator manages to ensure that every person has a chance to express his/her opinion: there will be a variety of participants, highly educated persons, persons who do not know the language very well, people more or less in contact with public services, people of different backgrounds and personalities. The qualities of the moderators in encouraging participation are crucial (there is more required than pure moderation). They need to know how to distribute the speaking time and how to provide for different channels to express one's viewpoint.

Time & Place

Aim for a multiplication of forms. The forum can take the form of evening-meetings after 6 p.m. or involve a whole day event with a side program. In any case, prepare for something to eat and drink, for child care and for interpreters or members of associations who can translate.

Tip! Be flexible in regard to the location and go to the respective location to discuss local topics (relevant for a specific district).

5

STEP Establish a core team/facilitation committee

Participants are invited to volunteer to be part of a core team/facilitation committee. In addition to taking part themselves in the forums, those individuals become active in order to keep the participatory dialogue going.

6

STEP Formulate the results and recommendations

The members of the core team are to discuss the results and recommendations of the forum and decide on how to formulate the recommendations to the politicians, e.g. how to deal with recommendations that are within the municipality's powers and those that go beyond. Even concerning those that formally go beyond, examining if there are nonetheless some ways to address those in issues that are within the powers of the municipality?

7

STEP Present the results to the city's decision makers

One recommendation is that the results should be presented together in order to maximize the political weight of the proposal: core team members having the practical experience and authenticity together with the responsible civil servants having the weight of city professionals. Agree on a joint presentation strategy.

8

STEP Implementation of recommendations

Assign a project manager (a responsible city official) in regard to every measure to be implemented. The challenge for the coordinating unit is to motivate and mobilize city officials in various departments to realize the implementation of suggested measures.

9

STEP Newsletter

Publish a newsletter that provides information about the forums that have taken place, its topics and results, as well as the progress in implementation of recommended measures, up-coming topics and forums. The newsletter can be complemented with articles and interviews on current topics, information about legal matters and present associations and services in the city.

RISKS, CHALLENGES**MEASURES TO MITIGATE RISKS**

Every forum event is different; there is nothing that repeats itself. It is a process that calls for continuous reinvention.

Individuals take part or not; some come regularly, others only once. Numbers of participants can vary widely (reportedly from 70 to 300 participants at a forum event).

Mobilise participants

Maintain an open mind and be flexible. Include moderators and organisers that are open-minded and creative. Stay open-minded concerning the results of forums; do not anticipate results and recommendations.

Organise forums in a central location that is easily accessible (e.g. district centres). Keep in mind that people come after work and may be hungry, have their children with them etc. Multiply the forms to allow participation by as many people as possible.

→ Daily work

RISKS, CHALLENGES

MEASURES TO MITIGATE RISKS

Time-consuming effort

It is recommended that not more than 6 topics per year are dealt with.

There are always the same individuals that monopolize the discussion and take all the speaking time. Others are intimidated and say nothing.

Work together with experienced moderators who are dynamic, flexible and who are capable of ensuring a fair distribution of speaking time.

City departments/services addressed by recommendations are more or less cooperative in the implementation

It is a challenge of negotiation each time. It is recommended that people do not get tied up in specific debates, but focus on the practical point that people living in the city whether they are nationals or foreigners are city inhabitants, and therefore have a right to access to city services and to answers to their every-day concerns. Emphasize the discourses that are more general and not restricted to “foreigners’ issues” such as access to justice, general accessibility to city services and the social responsibility of organisations including the city. Try to find connecting points in action plans and measures, and cooperation already in place.

FOLLOW-UP

10

STEP Further develop the topics to be discussed

Discuss which topics contain specific questions that are relevant to the migrant population and which topics can be dealt with together. There are topics that do not have specific implications for migrants, but are nonetheless of great interest for the migrant population (who however cannot participate in the decision making process in the same way as other inhabitants). Other topics might be treated as topics of general concern – under the premise of not discriminating against anyone – even though they contain aspects that concern migrants in a particular way and there is a risk that it will be neglected under a more general approach. Pay attention to this and ensure that the discussion covers this issue.

KEY FACTORS OF SUCCESS

- Give the process time and let it develop: one does not know in advance what will come out in the end
- An organisation of the process that is capable of adapting changing topics, participants and group dynamics; continuous reflection on approaches as no single forum is identical to the last one
- Very attentive personnel in moderation of the forums. Personnel who are open-minded and able to motivate and mobilise the participants in order to lead the discussions to concrete results
- Capabilities concerning mobilisation, creativity and communication
- Exchange and mediation between those who have the know-how in moderation of forums and those who have the know-how in project management in a city administration (who naturally aim at formalising the procedures, but who also know, how to effectively submit recommendations, what mandate is useful to choose etc.)
- Good knowledge of the networks of local actors and associations in different fields. The responsible city department is not alone in the effort; there are distinguished stakeholders already working on a subject.

IMPACT AND OUTCOME

- Migration specific aspects of a topic are integrated in a suitable manner into broader measures (effective mainstreaming)
- Higher capability of the city to get into direct dialogue with the inhabitants (and not to form only formal experts' groups) and make use of the inhabitants' practical expertise
- Recommended measures are implemented
- Not only the department for migration/integration but all departments open up to a dialogue with (migrant) inhabitants on topics within their mandate
- The forum recommendations are taken up by the competent authorities.
- Recommendations are implemented.
- Recommendations of the forum 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 forum.
- Migrants in the city experience improvements in their daily lives.
- Equal opportunities are promoted, increased and/or actually achieved.
- Better cooperation between migrant communities is achieved.

RESOURCES AND EXAMPLES

Nantes (FR): Nantes Council for the Citizenship of Foreigners

The creation of the Nantes Council for the Citizenship of Foreigners (Conseil Nantais pour la Citoyenneté des Etrangers (CNCE)) 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 councillors 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.

<http://www.nantes.fr/cnce>

Bern (CH): Forum of migrants

The forum in Bern is a yearly event, inviting migrants living in the city to get together and discuss a selected topic. The organizers prepare interactive discussion rounds, including professionals from the selected fields in order to yield exchange.

<http://www.bern.ch/themen/auslanderinnen-und-auslander/integration-und-migration/forum-der-migrantinnen-und-migranten>

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