

Factsheet on the expert brief

Multifaceted design of local integration of EU migrants **There's more to life than work**

In the past few years, migration from other Member States of the European Union (EU) has accounted for the largest portion by far of the overall immigration into Germany. At the same time, however, the highly heterogeneous group of EU migrants receives little attention in the context of local integration work when compared to other groups. The lack of integration offers, in fact, poses an obstacle in the desire of those persons wishing to stay in the country. However, rural regions in particular stand to greatly benefit from long-term intra-EU mobility as it has the potential to counteract the increasing shortage of skilled workers, demographic change and the population drain of predominantly younger persons, who are moving to other, mostly urban, areas.

Core questions of the expert brief

- Outlining the scope of action of municipal authorities in reaching EU migrants and fostering their integration
- Potentials of and obstacles for measures which, on the one hand, aim to address the individual participation of EU migrants, especially those from countries in South-East Europe, and, on the other hand, to promote social cohesion.



Tips for employers

If the aim is to attract skilled workers, permanently fill vacant positions, prevent a high fluctuation among employees who are EU migrants and to create a constructive work climate, the social participation of EU migrants must be strengthened. Employers can make a valuable contribution in such efforts:

- By working together with local primary and volunteer integration actors on advice and information offers
- By actively engaging with employees who are EU migrants to signalise respect and appreciation, and to identify needs
- By creating opportunities for social interaction and exchange with the aim, for example, of supporting engagement with the local population and other employees in the company within the framework of joint recreational activities
- By offering language courses through the company which are tailored to the employee's everyday work

Challenges and recommendations

Challenge: Little contact between integration actors and EU migrants

Solution: Taking to the road! Seeking contact with EU migrants

Many integration actors have no knowledge of where EU citizens live and work, go to school, undergo vocational training or take part in social/sports associations. In order to reach EU migrants, it is indispensable to go to their employers. Other key institutions in this regard are schools and kindergartens/day-care centres. The same applies to religious groups/communities and associations that are in contact with EU migrants. In all of these cases, it is necessary to identify EU migrants that can serve as multipliers in their place of work or their social environment.

Challenge: Little knowledge about the needs of EU migrants

Solution: Giving everyone a seat at the table! Bringing together different actors in a variety of networks

To gain access to EU migrants, to document their needs and to develop concepts for offers tailored to the various target groups, it is vital to identify and bring together all the relevant actors. This must also be done with the involvement of the target groups themselves in all their diversity. Furthermore, volunteers working in direct contact with the target groups, as well as representatives from the institutions named above must also be involved in this process.

Challenge: Difficulty reconciling language acquisition efforts and employment

Solution: Bringing language to the fore! Tearing down language barriers and promoting dialogue

Access to opportunities to learn German is essential also for EU migrants. Offering language courses at the migrants' place of work and at times that do not conflict with their duties as employees, is a pivotal component of the integration process. As long as people working in key positions in public administration or private businesses in many places are not native speakers or multilingual, a possible solution could be using language mediators, who can act as multipliers in different communities.

Challenge: Low priority on the political agenda

Solution: Securing political backing! Involving political decision-makers as early as possible

Approaches to the integration of EU migrants have the greatest chances of success when they are supported and championed by people at the top of public administration in the districts and the municipalities belonging to the districts. In order to better sensitise political actors regarding the needs of EU migrants, they must be actively involved in the relevant processes as early as possible. To achieve this, it is vital to show them that EU migrants are a part of the local community – and even the local voting population – and thus are relevant for many local policy decisions.

Challenge: Negative public sentiments towards some groups of EU migrants

Solution: Communicating diversity! Targeted use of media and public outreach work

EU migrants sometimes feel themselves confronted with prejudice and negative misconceptions on the part of the non-migrant, local population. One important step in counteracting this negative perception is promoting everyday interaction between those groups. This must be done alongside targeted media and public outreach work to showcase the living reality of various groups of EU migrants and at the same time (re-)introduce empirical facts into the emotionally charged discourse surrounding EU migrants.

Challenge: Narrow definition of target groups in existing integration offers

Solution: Let's not reinvent the wheel! Expanding offers to include different target groups

Many municipalities already have a broad array of integration and advice offerings for migrants, especially for refugees. Many of these offers can also benefit EU migrants. Instead of creating parallel structures just for this target group, the already existing offers should, wherever possible, be opened to EU migrants.

Challenge: Constantly changing needs and structures

Solution: Meeting change without fear! Planning for evaluation and needs for adaptation

Long-term projects and processes also need to be constantly evaluated and adapted. In order to be able to identify needs for adaptation quickly and to meet them, it is important to plan in reflection and evaluation phases. These phases of reflection on existing offers should be designed as a participatory and inclusive process that would allow actors from public administration, the private sector and civil society, as well as private citizens and migrants themselves, to contribute their own ideas and express their views.