



Knowledge Sheet

Recognising and valuing diversity to overcome discrimination: Sharing Austrian and Portuguese experiences

Costa Rica V Action



Background

Costa Rica has been praised internationally for its public policies of recognition and inclusion of migrant diversity through the formulation and implementation of its National Integration Plan (PNI) 2018-2022. Building on this experience and paving the way forward to address new challenges, Costa Rica is developing the National Integration Plan (NIP) for 2023-2027, with the support of MIEUX+.

To support the development of the NIP, MIEUX+ organised a series of workshops to present **migration stakeholders from Costa Rica with practices from European Member States, and other actors, on integrating migrants, working toward social cohesion, and recognising the rich and diverse nature of migrant population**. Using a participatory peer-to-peer approach, the workshops stimulated a group process of knowledge exchange and reflection on proposals to respond to the challenges and capitalise on the opportunities of migration and refugee issues.



Based on the exchange, the Directorate of Integration and Human Development (DIDH) of the Directorate General of Migration and Foreigners (DGME) of Costa Rica, has included new ideas for proposals and indicators for National Integration Plan (NIP) for 2023-2027.

This Knowledge Sheet captures the main discussions held during the workshop organised in August 2022 on **how to recognise diversity as means of overcoming discrimination**.



Lessons Learnt - Recognition of Diversity

Costa Rica is a **top immigrant destination country in Latin America**. In recent decades, it has experienced the arrival of migrants and refugees fleeing difficult political and economic conditions from Colombia, Cuba, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. Costa Rica also hosts seasonal and circular labour migrants, investors and retirees, and, migrants in transit to the USA.

Diversity in Costa Rica is an opportunity. Promoting the contributions of migrants to the country can improve social cohesion.

Migrants need to understand potential risks and how to obtain assistance. **Stakeholders should adapt their communication methods** and channels taking into consideration linguistic, cultural or technological barriers.

The fight against racism and xenophobia, requires a whole-of-society response.

Access to rights is critical and being addressed in the new NIP.

Given the potential polarizing political dimensions and attitudes on integration **clarity on key definitions** is essential to align values with action within the NIP.



Actors

The practices highlighted in this Knowledge Sheet present **academic as well as practical perspectives**.

Austria

Danube University Krems

Portugal

Portuguese High Commission for Migration



Good Practices

Knowledge of diversity in society based on data

Like in the case of the city of Vienna with the **Integration Index 2020**, where 104 Viennese organisations, companies, NGOs and political parties were surveyed and evaluated on their ability to integrate, the **Costa Rica NIP for 2023-2027 aims at studying the level of diversity and adapting the existing information systems for the evaluation of quantitative and qualitative indicators**. This adaptation of indicators, like the ones included in the National Information System and Single Registry of State Beneficiaries ([SINIRUBE](#)), will allow studying the evolution of the recognition of Costa Rica's social and cultural diversity (as stated in the Action Plan 2015-2018 'For a society free of racism, discrimination and xenophobia').

The whole-of-government approach is key and local governments play a central role

Integration requires mutual accommodation between established residents and migrants, and **city governments are key actors in supporting migrant integration**.

Local governments have to constantly innovate as they adapt to the needs of new population groups to capitalise on the diversity of their population.

Costa Rica understands the **importance of the whole-of-government approach in migrant integration** and the necessity of collaboration between the different levels of government for the success of integration programs. For this reason, one of the goals of the NIP is the implementation of programmes and projects with the participation of local governments in the integration process. This, along with **the inclusion of citizen participation as a crosscutting theme, is included in the NIP 2023- 2027**.

Intercultural learning to counter discrimination

Promoting diversity in various areas of social life fosters tolerance through intercultural communication and in turn, intercultural learning. **Intercultural learning is an important element in overcoming discrimination**.

For Costa Rica, awareness-raising campaigns on xenophobia and discrimination against migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers (Goal 4 of the NIP 2018-2022) were conducted. The future NIP 2023-2027 will delve deeper into these issues.

Successful integration policies require intergovernmental coordination and interinstitutional collaboration

The experience of the **National Support Centres for the Integration of Migrants (CNAIM) of Portugal**, shows that when institutions work closely together, the response is more likely to be integrated and coherent, and reinforces the support provided to migrants.

In line with a multi-stakeholder and inclusive approach, the knowledge exchange session involved a variety of local and international actors, including 7 Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), 13 public institutions, (from the Women's Institute, the municipalities, the Children Commission as well as the National Institute for Statistics of the Judicial Bodies), and international organisations (IOM and UNHCR).

Organised under the framework of MIEUX+, this exchange showed the importance of decentralization, and inclusion of different actors when drafting solutions for the inclusion of integration and social cohesion into policy and practice.

Likewise, as the CNAIM shows, inter-institutional alliances are critical. Costa Rica has already included these types of alliances in their 1st NIP, and as the large variety of actions included in these exchange workshops reiterated, they will take this into account for future planning.

Adapting and tailoring responses to the profile of migrants and their needs is essential

In line with the “culture and society” axis of the Migration Policy Action Plan of Costa Rica, raising awareness is essential for the future NIP.

Like in the case of Portugal, migratory flows change and evolve. Therefore, in the **National Support Centres for the Integration of Migrants (CNAIM) of Portugal**, as well as in other responses from the **High Commission for Migration (ACM)**, there has been consistent effort to match the services to these determinants.

For example, **identifying intercultural mediators according to the migrant profiles that most use the services; adapting** the forms or schedules of the **service according to demand; designing information materials according to the needs and in the languages that most represent migrant communities** or defining strategies (in the National Plans) according to the identified constraints.



Resource Box

- [Anti-discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion, Council of Europe](#)
- [Integration of cultural diversity and the diversity of cultural expressions in education curricula and research, UNESCO](#)



Further Reading

- Steven Vertovec (2007): Super-diversity and its implications, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 30:6, 1024-1054
- Maurice Crul (2016): Super-diversity vs. assimilation: how complex diversity in majority–minority cities challenges the assumptions of assimilation, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 42:1, 54-68, DOI: [10.1080/1369183X.2015.1061425](https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2015.1061425)



Recognising diversity: The cases of Austria and Portugal



Identified Challenges

Diversity has existed as long as differences among people. Diversity is described in four layers – on the **level of the personality** (e.g. introvert – extrovert), **the internal layer** which is inherent to the individual (e.g. gender, age), the external layer as a result of upbringing and social circumstances (income, education, religion) and the **fourth layer reflects organizational differences** (e.g. seniority, experience).



Good Practices

1. Vienna Integration Index, Austria

A relevant study was conducted in 2020 by “the new Austrian Organisations”, a group of migrant organisations in Austria. **104 organisations and departments were analysed according to the degree of diversity and integration in their respective structures**, with regards to the proportion of migrants in management positions, the degree of multilingualism, existing local integration projects, but also internal and external measures to promote an organisational culture that prevents discrimination.

2. Eurocities: Integrating Cities Toolkit

As European cities are becoming increasingly diverse with the arrival of new migrants, understanding changes in the social fabric and how this diversity contributes to their growth in a variety of ways is key.

In 2010, the **Eurocities network developed a toolkit to support cities in promoting diversity as an instrument to fight discrimination and foster cohesion.**

The project aimed to provide recommendations in four areas to be implemented in any city across Europe, regardless of its specific context. Following an assessment, common challenges and potential recommendations were identified and good practices put forward for local authorities to consider when planning or adapting their future policies and services.

3. National Support Centres for the Integration of Migrants (CNAIM), Portugal

Created in 2004, the **National Support Centres for the Integration of Migrants (CNAIM)** bring together different services, institutions, and support offices for migrants acting as a one-stop-shop.

The **service is carried out by intercultural mediators**, themselves often immigrants, allowing a cultural, linguistic, and affective bridge with users.

The CNAIM represents an **experience of integrated and intersectoral governance** in the humanised and specialised response to the different needs of migrants and in the facilitation of the integration process in its various dimensions, recognised nationally and internationally.

More than five million people have accessed the centres.

In the case of the **National Support Centres for the Integration of Migrants (CNAIM) of Portugal**, the service is close, human, with the purpose of leaving no one behind. On the other hand, there is an attempt to put oneself in the other person's shoes, to identify the appropriate solution. For their performance, they consider it essential to follow the principles of intercultural mediation.

The work aimed at migrants is transversal, so the High Commission for Migration (ACM) has always sought to **establish partnership relationships with various entities** that cover these dimensions, whether established in the CNAIM, or beyond.

4. Telephone Translation Service (STT), Portugal

The **Telephone Translation Service (STT)** aims to **overcome the language barrier**, one of the great difficulties reported by migrants in their relationship with the services in Portugal.

The **format is a telephone conference between the manager of the service institution, an interpreter, and the migrant.**

It is free of charge (the customer only pays for the local phone call).

It includes 107 interpreters and 69 available languages and dialects.

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