



# BRIDGES

PROMOTING  
INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

# ACROSS EUROPE

EVERYONE CAN PLAY A ROLE IN THE CREATION OF AN INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY



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# GUIDELINES TO ENGAGE, ACTIVATE, EXPERIMENT AND SUPPORT THE CREATION OF INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

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## OUR SHARED UNDERSTANDING

What does it mean to promote inclusive communities in Europe? Conscious of the complexity of the issue and of the debate around inclusion, integration and Third Country Nationals in the European Union, we do not wish to impose a strict definition, but rather to highlight what we as BRIDGES partners, agree and understand<sup>1</sup>.

### We act to promote common values of inclusion and solidarity in Europe.

We understand that promoting inclusive communities means first of all recognizing that some individuals and groups confront barriers that prevent them from fully participating in political, economic, and social life. Research shows that despite that fact that European societies are increasingly diverse, third country nationals across the EU continue to fare worse than EU citizens in terms of employment, education and social inclusion outcomes.<sup>2</sup> These barriers can be the complex product of culture and language, but also of stigma, stereotypes and discriminatory behaviour. Ensuring that everyone can participate and contribute is not only essential for the future

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<sup>1</sup> These agreements and understandings are part of the ongoing work of the project partners and will be enriched and updated throughout the life of the project. They are also the product of desk research on EC papers and policy recommendations on inclusion and integration in Europe.

<sup>2</sup> Action Plan on the integration of third-country nationals, European Commission, 7 June 2016.

well-being of Europe, but is also an issue of justice and equity of the societies we are building. The acknowledgment that excluded groups face dire inequalities when it comes to accessing resources and rights, was put at the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) a global agenda to end poverty, reduce inequality and tackle climate change in 15 years - with the specific commitment to ensure that 'no one is left behind' and that no goal is considered met unless met for all.<sup>3</sup>

In the pilot areas of the project, Third Country Nationals are a mosaic of different groups with different stories and needs.<sup>4</sup> While some contexts, like Florence (IT) or Tortosa (CAT), have higher percentages of Third Country Nationals living and working in the area and a longer and more complex history of migration, other contexts, like Croatia, have a younger history of migration and mainly see the passage or arrival of asylum seekers, refugees, foreigners with temporary permit and people on the move.

Despite the differences, in all local contexts targeted by our project, we sense the need to tackle the issue of coexistence, cohabitation and inclusion and to open up spaces for

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<sup>3</sup> *Leave no one behind. Delivering on the Agenda 2030 promise. Insights for civil society around the world.* Full report available here: <https://action4sd.org/leavenoonebehind/>

<sup>4</sup> See individual country needs assessments for a more in depth description of the local context with regards to inclusion and integration.



interaction and for the creation of ties between people who are diverse in nationality, culture and values.

In all contexts, the arrival within a short period of time of refugees and foreign nationals seeking asylum, often from extremely traumatic experiences of diaspora and with no family ties or social relations in the country, push us to explore what opportunities exist for them to interact with local residents and to grow their capacity to become active members of society.



**Meaningful dialogue and active collaboration of third-country and host-country nationals can**

**create more inclusive and cohesive communities.**

We believe that to promote inclusive communities we have to work on the system of relations between third country nationals, regardless of their length of stay, and nationals of the communities in which they settle. Our experience and our work have shown us that inclusion and integration actions work best when they facilitate participation and empowerment for everyone in society. When old and new residents of our neighborhoods and our cities can benefit from safe spaces to learn from each other, exchange and find shared solutions to local needs. Spaces in which individuals and groups that confront barriers that prevent them from fully participating in the political, economic, and social life, feel welcomed and allowed to express their potential and to increase their opportunity to lead a better life.

This is why we believe that in our actions and projects we should not engage exclusively Third Country Nationals<sup>5</sup>, but also groups and organizations that are well integrated in the fabric of society, as well as groups of nationals at risk of or suffering from social exclusion, such as the Romani community, who share common traits with third-country nationals concerning difficulties in cohabitation and social cohesion; and the NEETs and other at risk local youth, who

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<sup>5</sup> Third country nationals are nationals of a country that is not a member of the European Union as well as a country or territory whose citizens do not enjoy the European Union right to free movement, as defined in Art. 2 of the EU Regulation on borders - Regulation (EU) 2016/399 Schengen Borders Code.

share barriers with regards to active participation in the life of the community.



**Sports, cultural and social activities are the language that can bring us closer.**

We understand that taking part in everyday activities is a key aspect of social inclusion. As the European Commission clearly indicates: “integration is not just about learning the language, finding a house or getting a job. It is also about playing an active role in one’s local, regional and national community, about developing and sustaining real people-to-people contacts through social, cultural and sports activities, and even even political engagement. (...) Promoting exchanges with the receiving society through volunteering, sports and culture

activity from the very beginning facilitates dialogue and mutual understanding. It can have benefits both on the newly arrived Third Country Nationals (by making them feel part of their new community and helping the understanding of key values and norms), and on the host society, increasing acceptance and helping build a welcoming attitude.”<sup>6</sup>



When mapping inspiring projects and activities for social inclusion of Third Country Nationals through sport, cultural and volunteering activities, we have identified a range of different inspiring activities and events:

<sup>6</sup> Action Plan on the integration of third-country nationals, European Commission, 7 June 2016.





- Local festivals and cultural activities for and in public spaces,
- Solidarity campaigns for the collection of food and school supplies,
- Football clubs that are both intergenerational and mixed with regards to nationalities and personal stories,
- Art projects involving refugees, asylum seekers, people seeking subsidiary protection and the local community to work on community-building, exploration of identity, and healing through art;
- Activities to strengthen social cohesion between host communities and third country nationals (in particular people requesting international protection) by taking care together of the city's common goods (parks, gardens, walls and river banks)
- Peer to peer vocational learning through cultural activities, such as city tours involving teens both local and Third Country Nationals;
- Interactive informal training activities.<sup>7</sup>

What they all have in common: 1) engaging communities at the local level as essential to improve social inclusion of vulnerable groups; 2) creating safe spaces for mutual enrichment, exchange and interaction; 3) the strong participatory

<sup>7</sup> See Individual Country Needs Assessments for more in detail descriptions of best practices.

dimension.



**Everyone can play a role in the creation of inclusive communities in their cities and in their neighborhoods.**

We believe in the direct involvement of Third Country Nationals themselves, as well as of local residents, in the design and implementation of community level activities. Ultimately, it is only through inclusive and active participation that we can promote communities where everyone, no matter where they come from, can contribute with their talents and skills, to change the way we talk about migration in Europe.



Our project is about people and relations and the ideas and solutions that necessity and collaboration can generate. It is based on the conviction that “when confronted with new problems, human beings tend to use their innate creativity and design capacity to invent and realize something new: they innovate.”

In a changing and interconnected world, individuals constantly “design” solutions that can be enhanced through collaboration with others and can be supported by facilitators, experts and institutions to generate unprecedented solutions, converge on common goals and realize larger transformations.<sup>8</sup>

**This is why in our actions we wish to promote inclusive communities by experimenting with the principles, methods and “worldview” of co-design.**

Co-design is a wide range approach with application in fields such as urban planning, public services, community building, that enables all stakeholders<sup>9</sup>, from experts to end users, to participate in the creation or innovation of services, products, projects and activities in order to meet their needs. Everyone can take part in generating ideas, actively deciding what to do and how, and in implementing activities on the ground, learning from each other and contributing with what they wish and can.

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<sup>8</sup> Manzini, Ezio, Design, When Everybody Designs: An Introduction to Design for Social Innovation, Mit Press, 2015.

<sup>9</sup> Everyone who is involved or should be involved: community leaders, local residents, local NGOs and organizations, institutions, etc.

Using co-design as an approach, requires us to:

- Listen to the community and try to understand the local context;
- Reach out to the different groups, engage and invite them to take part in the activity;
- Create safe and hospitable spaces where both third country nationals and local residents can have conversations about what matters most to them;
- Harvest ideas that come from these conversations, connect them with the available resources and help them become a concrete action/event;
- Prototype the action/events to see how it works in real life and to engage other people in the process;
- Reflect together on what you have learned before implementing a new action/event.

Working with a co-design approach at the community level, requires a shift in positions of all stakeholders involved:

=> **COMMUNITY ORGANIZERS**, need to shift from looking for answers to individual local needs, to facilitating different communities to act towards a common solution;

=> **PUBLIC AUTHORITIES** need to shift from deciding what is best for the community to becoming facilitators of local



actions, enabling connections, spaces and events that are managed by local community members.

=> RESIDENTS/LOCAL USERS (WHETHER LOCALS OR THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS) need to shift from waiting for a top-down answer to feeling empowered to act together by asking the question “Is there something we can do together? How can we make it happen?”

The shift does not happen overnight, but is the product of a process (see process design below) that makes everyone feel comfortable in their different roles. A process that at each step creates safe spaces for interaction and exchange, based on respect, equality and the value of diversity.

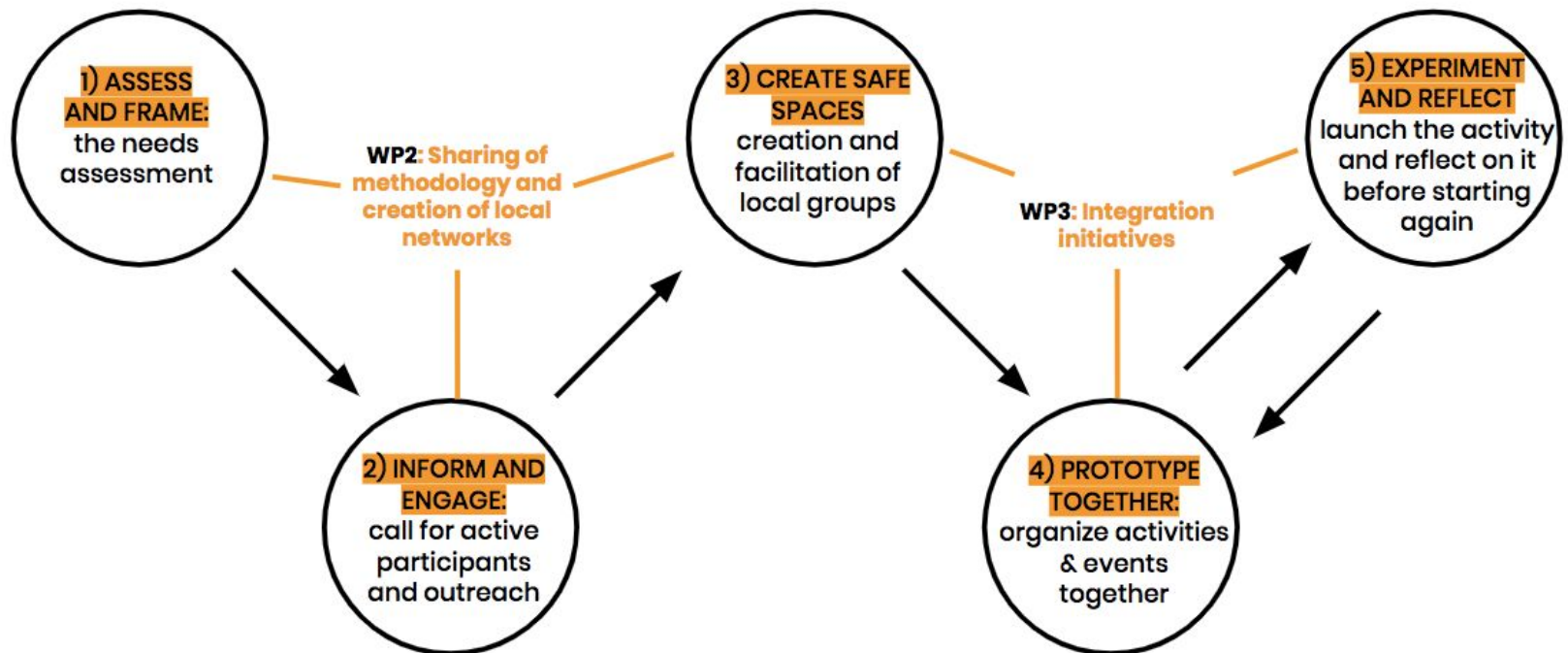
What kind of actions/events can we develop through co-design? You have several examples in the best practices mapped by partners in the needs assessment documents: local festivals, trainings, sports events, community services, awareness raising events, campaigns. They can be one shot events or more structured activities.

Each local network will develop its own integration initiatives to address local needs expressed by the community. Each local network will have the support of community organizers and will be able to use the resources that the implementing partners have to organize such initiatives.





# BRIDGES CO-DESIGN PROCESS



## PHASE 1) ASSESS AND FRAME



In this phase, you analyse and understand the issue and the local context through: desk research, mapping and interviewing different stakeholders; meeting institutional and social actors. Starting with a **needs assessment** allows you to analyse and better understand the local context, existing initiatives and organizations, local population, pilot areas and target groups. Your assessment should be:

- 1) **A work in progress:** your understanding of the context will change during the course of project. Embrace these changes in perception and allow them to enrich your initial assessment and to help you learn throughout the project life.
- 2) **An opportunity to build your network:** local actors are the people you will work with and that will help you make the project happen. They are the ones you should contact and with whom your assessment should be conducted.
- 3) **A way to get inspired:** past projects or successful activities are a source of inspiration and learning that can help you identify success factors of an innovative approach and derive lessons learned. Identify good practices carried out by you or other partners that you find particularly effective.
- 3) **Participatory:** formulate and answer questions through meetings, interviews and exchanges with partners, local authorities, representatives of grassroots organizations, NGOs and CSOs working in the field, native and migrant citizens.

### The Bridges Thermometer



Asking oneself important and difficult questions is a good place to start to understand why, where and with whom to act. We designed the **Bridges thermometer** as a set of questions exploring the perceived relevance of interventions in specific pilot areas, their potential impact, their sustainability and the motivation of partners. The higher the position on the thermometer, the more convincing our choice.

**RELEVANCE:** What presence of third country nationals? What levels of social cohesion?

**IMPACT:** What impact we believe we will have on the pilot area (neighborhood/ community), on the city/town, on Europe?

**SUSTAINABILITY:** Which Networks or partnerships in place? Which organizations to partner with? Which human resources and expertise available?

**MOTIVATION:** What resonates with us? How does it fit with our overall strategy?

HIGH

MEDIUM HIGH

MEDIUM LOW

LOW



## SPACE FOR REFLECTION

Which are the problems preventing inclusion and exchange between people and communities in my city?

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How can I explore these problems without being affected by my assumptions?

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Where do I think my project is mostly needed and why?

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Which existing community resources and skills can I leverage?

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## PHASE 2) INFORM AND ENGAGE



Once you have chosen the pilot location for your action, you should reach out to the local community by launching your information and communication tools (leaflets, website, etc) and by developing different engagement activities to reach different groups and individuals. In order to be inclusive, you should use different channels for different types of participants:

- Community leaders, active citizens, local groups and organizations, local innovators respond well to the launch of a public call for active participants (see box), in which participants are directly invited to take part in the process.
- Local residents and third country nationals that are not active or part of organizations might not respond to a public call. Organizing a community event in a local public space can help you interest those that live in the area and allow them to find out about the initiative.
- Outreach activities in the places where people gather most (schools, places of worship, markets, playgrounds, reception centers for refugees and asylum seekers) can be an effective way to take time to explain the project and involve participants. It is essential that you ask for permission and support of those responsible for these places (religious leaders, cultural mediators, teachers) in order to reach the right people and to be credible.

The most important thing in any outreach activity is trust. You need to take time to build trust and confidence by talking with people, both in organizations and on the streets, by creating simple connections, by presenting the project objectives and by asking how it can be of service to them and their needs.

### Public call for active participants

To design an effective public call for active participants, you should consider:



**CONTENT:** All information should be there: general objectives, motivation, activity framework (time, location of first meeting, deadline for applying, contact information).

**TONE OF VOICE:** Simple and informal, motivated and motivating. Transparent about what you offer (community organizers, financial resources, institutional support) and what they should bring (ideas, willingness to design together).

**FORM:** An online call and form allows circulation on social networks. Promoting the call with offline tools (leaflets, presentations to local organizations / key stakeholders) allows you to reach a wider audience.

**LAUNCH AND CIRCULATION:** the call in itself will not be successful if you don't support it with launch events, presentations, phone calls, emails, site visits, etc.





## SPACE FOR REFLECTION

Who is directly affected and should be involved?

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Who are the key people to help me reach them?

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Which outreach activities can encourage on the ground engagement?

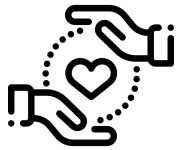
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How can I effectively communicate my goals and project?

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### PHASE 3 CREATE SAFE SPACES



This is the phase in which you as a facilitator, work with the groups you have engaged to host conversations that matter to them, share their needs, reinforce collaboration and help them generate ideas responding to needs.

Generally, this goal is better achieved through group activities that ensure mutual listening, respect and creativity. That is why it is relevant to dedicate some of your time to the setting of space. Either a conference room, a public space or a private office, please make sure that the space is sufficiently enlightened and airy and have enough room so people can seat in circle. If you are going to replicate the “World Café” activity mentioned in the box, don’t forget to ask for easily movable chairs and tables, pencils and marker pens, posters and papers.

Beyond space setting, make an effort to provide a good start and to create the conditions in which the group diversity is truly celebrated and everyone’s gifts are valued. The first minutes of a meeting are crucial to setting the tone, making everyone feel included and encouraging contributions.

Even more relevant when working with a diverse group, is our posture as community organizers and facilitators. When addressing a social problem, organizing an event, developing a participatory process or just carrying on our daily work in the community, it is important to acknowledge that we are always acting from a very specific position. To truly listen to the perspective of others is the first step for challenging our

positionality and therefore creating a more inclusive and positive environment for our work. In order to do so, here is some advice adapted from ©CREATIVE REACTION LAB, Art of Hosting and Circle Practice::

- **Ensure all voices are heard:** use a variety of activities and break the large group in smaller groups to highlight everyone’s strengths at different moments and create more comfortable settings.
- **Speak with intention:** speak with your mind and heart honestly. Don’t hold the floor more than necessary and encourage others to do the same.
- **Listen with attention:** don’t interrupt if it’s not necessary, ask questions that are of service to the participants, to help them find their inner truths (“What is important for you? Why?”)
- **Use “I” statements:** remember that you cannot speak for others, only your own experiences and opinions.
- **Lean into discomfort:** acknowledge difficult or tense moments, address the issue, not the person. If conflict arise, we should not never personally attack someone.
- **Respect differences in opinions:** don’t assume everyone has the same beliefs and understandings as yourself.
- **Encourage ownership:** everyone should care for the group you created. What emerges from the exchanges is a shared responsibility of all those that are present.



### The World Café

The World Café\* is a discussion method that helps a group explore a set of issues at their own pace. It is very useful to foster interaction and dialogue with both large and small groups. It is particularly effective in surfacing the collective wisdom of groups of diverse people. It is very flexible and adapts to many different purposes – information sharing, relationship building, deep reflection exploration and action planning. Among its operating principles:

1- **CONTEXT and SPACE SETTING:** Before starting, focus on powerful questions that matter to your community. Reflect on how to create a space that feels safe, welcoming and inviting.

2- **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION:** Participants are divided in small groups of 4 around round tables. Present the World Café process, setting the context, sharing the Cafe Etiquette, and putting participants at ease.

3- **SMALL GROUPS ROUNDS:** A series of three or more twenty minute rounds of conversation in small groups. At the end of each round, one person to stay at the table as a “host” and the other members move to other tables as ambassadors of ideas and insights.

4- **QUESTIONS:** each round is focused on a **question** specially crafted for the specific context and desired purpose of the World Café. The same questions can be used for more than one round, or they can be built upon each other to focus the conversation or guide its direction.

5-**LISTEN TOGETHER:** The World Café method works only if the group is encouraged to listen and allow all voices to be heard so collective intelligence can surface.

6-**SHARE COLLECTIVE DISCOVERIES:** At the end of the rounds, the groups are invited to harvest insights from their conversations on post-its and share them with the large group.

#### Resources Required

- Small round tables
- Enough chairs for all participants and presenters.
- Enough flipchart paper to doodle on for each round table.
- Colored water-based markers or crayons scattered on each table.
- Post-its to capture insights
- Flip-chart wall to merge insights in the final plenary discussion.

\*definition and phases adapted from ©THE WORLD CAFE' 2019.



## SPACE FOR REFLECTION

How can I make sure that a common goal is shared by the people in the room?

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Why are participants attending and what are their needs?

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What can help everyone express their views and participate in the codesign process?

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What is the desired change? How can we achieve it?

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## PHASE 4 PROTOTYPE TOGETHER



With the local networks you have created, you will now move from ideas to actual public initiatives that foster integration. This means deciding together what activity/action you will do first, who does what, what resources you need and what you need to find, who can help you find them, etc.

Having a **prototyping approach** in developing the integration initiatives means **making the initiative visible to all by starting on a small but public scale**, to build confidence and to show that change is possible. This is usually done by realizing a functioning first preliminary version of the action/activity to test on the ground, with an invited public and community members. A functioning prototype with which community members can interact, allows you to see what works and what doesn't and to use this knowledge to develop the next round of initiatives. When prototyping something you codesigned together, you should:

- **Focus on what people are keen and willing to do.** This means allowing personal talents and skills to emerge and encouraging simple direct action. (What do you do best? How could we integrate this in the initiative?)
- **Be a facilitator of connections.** Nurturing relationships is part of the process and creates an opportunity to plan and do together. (Who can help him/her do this?)

- **Address complex challenges with simple activities.** Initiatives that include games, photography, team sports, cooking, dances, arts, gardening help build trust and relationship and reduce barriers.

### Activity Matrix

Once identified which activity is more consistent with your community goal, it can be useful to fill an **ACTIVITY MATRIX** that helps to define your idea and find the resources to implement it. The matrix can be compiled as a group activity where responsibility and competences are shared.

Type of activity (Provide a short description):

Who is in the core team (Indicate at least two people):

Who do I wish to engage (Indicate your target group):

Who can help me reach them (Please indicate names of key people and who contacts them):

When is it going to happen (Identify date/timing allowing your target's participation):

Where is it going to happen (Give indication of available spaces private or public):

Which resources do we need/ which do we already have (Material resources, skills, support, management etc):

How are we going to communicate about it (Design key supports and communication activities):



## SPACE FOR REFLECTION

What activity can help us foster integration and inclusion in our community?

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How can we make it visible to the community through a community initiative?

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What community assets can leverage in order to help our local networks to launch the initiative?

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What can we do to make other community members feel engaged and included in our public initiatives ?

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## PHASE 5. EXPERIMENT AND REFLECT



This is the phase in which you launch the initiative, involving more local residents, third country nationals and the wider community that might not have taken part in the codesign and prototyping phase but is there now to take part in the initiative.

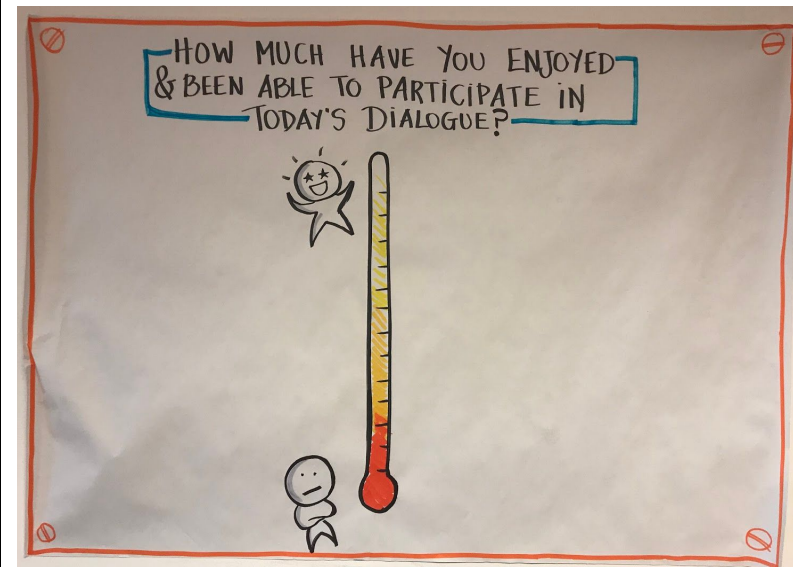
This is an important moment to gather feedback from participants about the sense of the initiative, whether it has been significant for them and why. This can be done simply through visual evaluation posters (see box), and/or by conducting short video interviews to capture “change stories” (“what has changed for me? How has this activity been significant? How has this benefited or harmed integration in our community?”)

This is also a good moment to interest new community members in joining the codesign and prototyping phase of the next initiative. It can be done by setting up a skills marketplace, such as a stand where people can share their name and contact and what they are good at and/or what they would like to do/learn how to do.

Once the initiative is over, always organize a moment of reflection with the local network to make sense together and take stock to plan the next round of activities. This can be done in a circle with the use of a talking piece: everyone in turn holds the talking piece and shares briefly with their own words the perceived value of what has been done and what of this initiative they would like to bring in the next one.

### Visual evaluation posters

Visual evaluation posters hanging on the walls during events can help participants to share in a direct and simple way if they enjoyed the format, felt included, called to express their own opinion directly and whether the setting allowed an active participation without limitations. The use of icons and pictograms and the formulation of relevant questions make this kind of evaluation extremely intuitive.



Citizens Dialogue Visual Evaluation Poster 2019



## SPACE FOR REFLECTION

What has changed for me?

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How has this activity been significant?

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How in my opinion has this benefited or harmed dialogue and integration in the community?

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What would I wish to bring from this event in our next initiative? What do I wish to leave behind?

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