









The Guide has been designed essentially for local government reform practitioners, including local government staff, staff of local government associations, central government staff working with local authorities, as well as local government experts. Its aim is to contribute to raising awareness about IMC, motivate central governments and local government associations to promote IMC, and provide guidance to municipalities on how to engage in actual IMC initiatives.

***To be successful!
IMC will offer a
win-win solution
to a shared
challenge***

IMC Website

-  [Understanding IMC](#) presents general information on the why, what and how of IMC.
-  [Promoting IMC](#) discusses the relevance of IMC in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), and provides general guidance on the main components of a national IMC promotion policy.
-  [Establishing IMC](#) contains a step-by-step approach on [how to initiate IMC](#). A word of caution is relevant here. The step-by-step approach contained in this site reflects one of the common ways of initiating IMC. Naturally, however, this short and generic site cannot possibly capture all the possible real-life scenarios that can lead to IMC.
-  [Practices](#) comprises a database of 37 IMC practices from 8 countries of the CEE region presented

-  **Contacts** consist of information about IMC practitioners and experts. Practitioners are those who have been involved in concrete IMC practices presented on the site; experts are persons with broad theoretical knowledge of IMC.
-  **Resources** contains a data base of documents related to IMC disaggregated by different categories e.g. legislation, publications, projects as well as samples of IMC contracts and statutes.
-  **Links** provides direct access to the web-pages of organisations which have been involved in the development of this website and its content.
-  Technical features such as “**Add content**” and “**Help**” allow additional IMC practices and other related documents to be added as well as “help” to be called upon in case of technical problems. To add content, there should be prior agreement with administrators of the site.



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INTRODUCING THE TOOLKIT ON INTER-MUNICIPAL CO-OPERATION



Prepared in 2009 by the Council of Europe, the United Nations Development Programme and the Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative of the Open Society Institute (LGI), the Toolkit aims to promote Inter-Municipal Co-operation (IMC)

Effective IMC requires a culture of cooperation

This brochure is written for the leadership of municipalities – particularly Mayors – and for Local Government Associations (LGA) to explain IMC and introduce the IMC Toolkit. It shows how the IMC Toolkit might be used to develop both the right environment and a robust IMC project.

What does the Toolkit include?

The IMC Toolkit includes a Manual and a shorter Practitioners' Guide; they provide a clear explanation of IMC:

- (a) its opportunities and risks,
- (b) the essential local environment,
- (c) the steps needed to plan an IMC project,
- (d) the need for supportive national legal and financial frameworks,
- (e) the legal forms and financial options for an IMC project, and
- (f) methods of local accountability.

The IMC Toolkit also offers a Training Library, comprising (a) training materials that trainers can adapt for IMC seminars and training programmes and (b) access to an IMC Website, containing further information and material such as best practices.

What does IMC mean?

IMC means working in partnership with other municipalities, informally, contractually or institutionally, to deliver services, build infrastructure or strengthen capacity. It can be applied to any local government activity unless the law forbids it.

IMC enables municipalities to deliver better local government. But there are things that municipalities need to know:

- IMC means sharing power between partner municipalities.
- IMC means sharing information, having good communications and straight-forward procedures, being transparent about decision-making.
- IMC means taking account of the interests of other municipalities and reaching consensus.
- IMC requires a focus on performance.

Where a municipality performs poorly, IMC cannot be used as a substitute; each partner must play their part.

This is the key question facing every Mayor: is your municipality really ready to cooperate with other municipalities?

How can IMC be implemented?

IMC will only work where the municipality leadership is ready to invest in it; this requires the right attitude and the will to seize the opportunity. IMC can only operated effectively within a supportive legal and financial framework at the national level. The Ministry responsible for local government, in consultation with other Ministries and the LGA, can assess the existing framework and advocate / introduce the necessary amendments.

“IMC will only work where the municipality leadership is ready to invest in it; this requires the right attitude and the will to seize the opportunity.”

At local level, IMC cannot be delivered by just one municipality. Others have to be persuaded; understanding has to be shared; skills must be developed. This is not easy; it needs trust. The LGA needs to provide municipalities with

support services ranging from legal and financial advice to training and facilitation.

How to launch an IMC Initiative

If an LGA wants to explore the idea of IMC and take action, it might consider the 9-Step Approach to a National IMC Initiative.

1. Read the IMC Toolkit to understand the implications of IMC.
2. Establish the locus of policy and executive responsibility within the LGA.
3. Open a dialogue with the local government Ministry to engage them in a cooperative approach.

The IMC message to Mayors:		
	If you lead a small rural municipality, unable to attract good staff, lacking legal capacity, unable to improve roads then sharing staff (lawyer, HR specialist, engineer) and equipment with neighbouring communes or a nearby town would create capacity.
	If your municipality cannot afford modern waste facilities, if the environment looks unkempt then joining up with neighbouring municipalities to establish and manage a common waste disposal facility would make it affordable through economies of scale.
	If there are elderly people in your municipality without access to proper care, or if there are schools with insufficient students then contracting with a neighbouring municipality to share the care homes and schools would make better use of existing facilities.
	If there are tourist opportunities in your municipality but you cannot attract investment to develop facilities then working with neighbouring municipalities to draw up a common Local Economic Development Strategy will provide greater opportunities for development.

4. Establish a Consultative Group to engage stakeholders to provide advice and expert assistance when needed.
5. Carry out an analysis of the legal framework and existing financial incentives and make proposals for amendments.
6. Translate the IMC Toolkit and establish an Expert Group to adapt it to local circumstances.
7. Organise a Training of Trainers programme and establish a network of trainers and experts.
8. Consider the organisation development of the LGA so that it can provide the necessary training and consultancy services and establish an information and communications platform for IMC.
9. Plan a programme of workshops and study visits to introduce IMC to municipalities and help them to develop robust proposals.

Which are the challenges and benefits of IMC?

There are many examples of informal cooperation between municipalities. But cooperation is not easy, especially where it is more formal. There may be cultural, political or technical obstacles. Parochialism may trump strategic thinking and action; the risks may seem excessive; potential partners may lack the leadership. IMC benefits lie in increasing efficiency, effectiveness and accessibility, creating economies of scale, making good use of facilities, accessing expertise and investment. Municipal leadership starts with tackling challenges and seizing opportunities. But some challenges, like creating jobs or managing waste, are often too big for a single municipality, especially a small one. By using IMC to work with other municipalities, a Mayor can develop the capacity to tackle the bigger challenges.

“IMC benefits lie in increasing efficiency, effectiveness and accessibility, creating economies of scale, making good use of facilities, accessing expertise and investment.”

“You can achieve through IMC what you cannot achieve on your own”

IMC Manual

The Manual aims at supporting the development of IMC within local government as a solution to the challenges faced by many municipalities. It is written for everyone with an interest in IMC.

The Manual is structured in 7 chapters:

1. Understanding IMC
2. Creating an IMC-friendly environment
3. Initiating IMC
4. Legal forms
5. Financing IMC
6. Accountability
7. Deciding on, and implementing, IMC

It brings together a wide range of knowledge about IMC in Europe and can be used as both a reference tool and a guide. Most important, however, will be its translation and adaptation by each country so that it can be used as a dynamic tool reflecting local circumstances.

IMC Training Library

The Training Library offers 6 modules that contain training materials for each chapter of the Manual. The materials offer various training techniques: interactive PowerPoint presentations, role plays, group exercises, buzz groups and case-studies. Separately, several training scenarios are set out, ranging from a ‘business case seminar’ for senior officials of the Ministry and LGA to a regional workshop to introduce IMC to interested Mayors. These programmes draw on a selection of the materials from the various modules.

Module I	Understanding IMC The opportunities provided by IMC, the obstacles to be overcome and the risks to be managed.
Module II	Enabling an IMC-friendly environment The external factors that are necessary to support IMC including both the legal and financial frameworks and the local standards that local authorities should develop.
Module III	Triggering IMC The steps that a municipality will need to take if it wants to launch an IMC initiative.
Module IV	Choosing a legal form The different kinds of legal forms that could be used for an IMC project.
Module V	Financing IMC The different financial mechanisms that would be appropriate for different kinds of IMC projects.
Module VI	Accountability The importance of strong and clear mechanisms for accountability to ensure trust and transparency.