



CONFERENCE OF INGOs
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Committee on Migration issues

Integration of displaced persons: Complementarity between Civil Society and Public Institutions

Concept Note Study visit Spain & Portugal - 2026

Introduction / Background

The Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe aims to ensure that the voice of organised civil society is heard within the Organisation. Through its thematic committees, it contributes to the promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law throughout the Council of Europe member States.

In this context, the Committee on Migration Issues has for several years conducted monitoring, analysis and advocacy activities relating to European migration policies. Its recent work has focused on access to fundamental rights, accommodation for migrants, return policies and the protection of persons in vulnerable situations.

However, at a time when migration debates are increasingly dominated by issues of border control, security and return, the Committee wishes to deepen its reflection on a fundamental yet often insufficiently addressed issue: the integration of migrants into European societies.

Integration is not only an essential condition for the effective enjoyment of human rights, but also a key factor in social cohesion, democratic stability and economic development. It is a reciprocal process involving migrants, public institutions, local and regional authorities, employers, civil society organisations and the host society, including its culture and values.

Against this background, the Committee has chosen the following theme for its work:

“The complementary roles of civil society and public institutions in supporting migrants towards integration based on access to employment, intercultural dialogue and adherence to fundamental European values.”

Building on previous study visits and field missions conducted by the Committee on various migration-related issues, the Committee wishes to enrich its work by confronting it with the realities of practices observed on the ground. To this end, it intends to organise a study visit to Spain and Portugal, two

countries recognised for having developed innovative approaches to integration and cooperation between public authorities, local and regional authorities, and civil society organisations.

Rationale for the Selection of Spain and Portugal

Spain and Portugal offer a particularly relevant context for examining integration policies and practices. Over the past decades, both countries have experienced significant migration flows and have developed recognised approaches based on close cooperation between public authorities, local and regional authorities, and civil society organisations.

They have notably implemented innovative initiatives promoting social inclusion, intercultural dialogue, civic participation and access to the labour market. These experiences provide valuable examples of complementarity between public institutions and civil society in supporting people with a migrant background towards autonomy and inclusion. They encompass a wide range of areas, including access to employment, pathways to self-reliance, intercultural mediation, local inclusion policies, dialogue between communities, civic participation, and cooperation between public administrations and civil society organisations.

At a time when integration and inclusion are playing an increasingly important role in European policy discussions, Spain and Portugal provide a particularly rich field of study for the work of the Committee on Migration Issues.

Portugal is notably recognised for its integrated approaches facilitating access to public services, while several Spanish cities have developed innovative local initiatives aimed at fostering inclusion, intercultural dialogue and social cohesion.

Le Portugal est notamment reconnu pour certaines approches intégrées facilitant l'accès des migrants aux services administratifs, tandis que plusieurs villes espagnoles se distinguent par leurs initiatives locales en matière d'inclusion et de cohésion sociale.

Objectives

The study visit will pursue four main objectives:

1. Observe and analyse field practices

Meet with civil society organisations and public institutions involved in supporting migrants and people with a migrant background to gain a better understanding of existing mechanisms, their outcomes and the challenges encountered. The visit will also seek to gather their assessment of success factors, identified shortcomings and possible avenues for improvement that could help inform integration policies and practices in other European contexts.

2. Examine the factors that contribute to successful integration

Identify the mechanisms that enable migrants and people with a migrant background to:

- access employment;
- develop their autonomy and self-reliance;
- participate in social, cultural and civic life;
- better understand and adhere to the democratic values, human rights and rule of law principles that underpin European societies.

3. Analyse the complementarity between public institutions and civil society

Examine how different actors cooperate in the design and implementation of integration policies, as well as the conditions required for effective and sustainable cooperation. The study visit will also seek to identify the respective added value of public institutions and civil society organisations in supporting migrants and people with a migrant background, as well as the factors that foster genuine complementarity between these actors.

4. Contribute to the Committee's future work

Gather concrete evidence, good practices and lessons learned from the field to inform future reflections, recommendations and advocacy activities of the Committee on Migration Issues.

Areas of focus

The meetings and field visits will be organised around the following areas of focus:

• Access to Employment and Economic Inclusion

- support for access to employment;
- recognition of qualifications and skills;
- vocational education and training;
- partnerships with employers;
- migrant entrepreneurship.

• Intercultural Dialogue and Social Cohesion

- intercultural mediation;
- participation of local communities;
- prevention of social tensions;
- initiatives promoting social cohesion and living together in diversity.

• Fundamental Values and Civic Participation

- awareness of rights and responsibilities;
- participation in democratic life;
- engagement in civil society organisations;

- promotion of equality, non-discrimination and mutual respect.
- **Governance and Institutional Cooperation**
 - cooperation between local and regional authorities and civil society organisations;
 - funding and support for integration initiatives;
 - coordination among public administrations;
 - the role of civil society networks.

Methodology

The delegation will meet representatives of national and local public authorities, local and regional authorities, civil society organisations, as well as economic and social actors involved in supporting migrants and people with a migrant background. Attention will be paid to initiatives based on close cooperation between public institutions and civil society.

The study visit will also benefit from the support and expertise of organisations that are members of the Committee on Migration Issues, notably through their national and European networks. This cooperation will contribute to the identification of relevant institutional and civil society stakeholders, as well as to the selection of initiatives that are particularly relevant to the objectives of the mission.

The programme will also include visits to integration projects and initiatives, as well as exchanges with people benefiting from these programmes, to gain a better understanding of their concrete impact in terms of access to employment, participation in social and civic life, intercultural dialogue and autonomy.

The observations and lessons learned during the mission will be subject to a comparative analysis of the approaches developed in Spain and Portugal. They will help identify promising practices and lessons that may inform the future work, recommendations and advocacy activities of the Committee on Migration Issues, as well as the wider reflections conducted within the Council of Europe on integration-related issues.

Expected outcomes

Following the study visit, the Committee will prepare:

- a mission report presenting the main findings and observations;
- a compilation of promising practices identified in Spain and Portugal;
- recommendations intended to inform the future work of the Conference of INGO;
- advocacy and policy recommendations aimed at promoting a balanced approach to migration policies that fully integrates the dimension of inclusion and integration.

Conclusion

In the face of current migration challenges, integration represents a strategic issue for the future of European societies. It cannot be regarded solely as the responsibility of migrants or civil society, but rather as a shared endeavour involving all relevant stakeholders.

Through this study visit to Spain and Portugal, the Committee on Migration Issues seeks to contribute to a better understanding of the conditions that foster successful integration, based on access to employment, intercultural dialogue, civic participation and respect for the fundamental values of the Council of Europe.

The lessons learned from this mission will help strengthen the contribution of civil society to European discussions on migration and integration, from a perspective grounded in human rights, democracy and social cohesion.

Board Members of the Committee on Migration Issues

30 May 2026