



## Language Support for Migrants *A Council of Europe Toolkit*

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### Tool 78 - Socialising with other people in the local community

**Aims: To engage migrants in social interaction with the people in the local community and to raise intercultural awareness among members of the local community.**

#### Planning a local event

Events that enable migrant learners to meet and talk to new people from the local community are a good way of promoting better understanding and enabling learners to practise their language skills. However, the people from the local community who participants need to be interested in meeting migrants and learning something about their countries and cultures. These events can in some cases lead to longer friendships between migrants and local people.

Depending on the context, ask the local authority, charities, schools, associations etc to help you organise a small event with members of the local community. If possible, ensure that cultural mediators are also involved. Organise a preparatory meeting with those involved in organising the event and some participants from the local community. Give them some basic information about your learners, their language level and the work you are doing. Tell them about the purpose of the event and answer any questions they may have. Then describe the kind of event that you are planning but also ask them for their suggestions and cooperation.

#### Managing a local event: some ideas

It is probably easier for migrant learners to speak to one person at a time to begin with, or two migrants who know each other could talk to two or three people from the local community. At the beginning participants can sit in a circle, with each migrant sitting next to a member of the local community. Ask people to introduce themselves in a simple way, for example: "Hello, my name is Ann. I work in a bank". "Pleased to meet you, Ann. I'm Aisha. I'm from Afghanistan."

After these introductions, migrants can talk to the person(s) next to them about their country, their family, traditions, their interests etc. They can answer simple questions from the person next to them and also ask some questions about their family, interests, family events such as birthdays and weddings, religious festivals and so on. This will work better if, before the social event, you have prepared learners by practising some useful vocabulary, key questions and ways of giving simple answers. When they have talked to one person, they can sit with another person from the local community and ask and answer similar questions.

Later on, some migrant learners may be willing to share some information about their country, their language or their impressions of the host country etc. with a larger group. Quite often a tradition is connected to food. Migrants and members of the local community can take turns to describe to the whole group a typical dish they know. Ideally some of them could bring some food to the meeting so that this can be shared. Music and photos of family members and places can also be useful for stimulating interaction.

Migrants can also share their life experiences since arriving in the host country, what they like and what they dislike, the similarities and differences between the countries and customs, etc. Members of the local community can comment on and ask some questions about these, and about the differences and similarities.

A nice way to end the event would be to encourage participants to sing a song in the language of their choice. If children are present involve them in the singing too.