



Enhancing structures and policies for intercultural integration in Cyprus” project is co-funded by the European Union via the Technical Support Instrument, and implemented by the Council of Europe, in cooperation with the European Commission. The views expressed herein can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of the European Union. Project Number: Council of Europe 2023-2024

Guidelines for Creating an Intercultural and Migrant-Friendly Municipal Website

Introduction

In today’s globalized world, cities are becoming increasingly diverse, presenting both opportunities and challenges for effective community integration. As municipalities in Cyprus—particularly in Nicosia—respond to the growing influx of migrants and culturally diverse populations, the need for inclusive and accessible online resources has never been more pressing. The Intercultural Cities Program (ICC) recognizes this necessity and aims to foster environments where all residents feel welcomed and engaged.

One of the pivotal goals of CIP, the regional network coordinator for Nicosia District is to develop guidelines for municipal websites that prioritize intercultural integration. These guidelines aim to establish dedicated sections on municipal websites that focus on providing vital resources, information, and support services tailored for migrants and local residents alike. Such sections will not only enhance accessibility but also improve outreach efforts, ensuring that critical information is readily available to all community members—regardless of their cultural or linguistic background.

This document serves as a comprehensive guideline for optimizing municipal websites, ensuring they reflect the values of inclusivity, cultural sensitivity, and accessibility. By adhering to these guidelines, municipalities can create user-friendly platforms that empower migrants, foster social cohesion, and enable all residents to fully participate in community life. Ultimately, these efforts contribute to the establishment of a more harmonious and integrated society, where diversity is celebrated and embraced as a strength.



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Guidelines for a migrant-friendly municipal website

1. Core Information for Migrants

Recommendations:

Municipal websites should provide easily accessible sections on core topics essential for new residents, such as:

- ✓ Welcome Information: Basic guides on settling in, community services, and local amenities.
- ✓ Housing: Guidance on finding housing, rights and responsibilities of tenants, and local housing assistance programs.
- ✓ Healthcare: Information on accessing medical services, finding healthcare providers, and understanding health insurance options.
- ✓ Education: Details on enrolling in schools, adult education, and language learning programs.
- ✓ Legal Rights: Overviews of legal protections, resident rights, and access to legal resources.
- ✓ Payment Methods: Clear instructions on local payment systems, taxes, and utility billing.

By offering clear, basic content on these essential areas, municipalities help migrants orient themselves, navigate local systems, and integrate into the community effectively.

2. Language Accessibility

1.1. Multilingual Support

Recommendations:

- ✓ Offer content in multiple languages commonly spoken in the community. Use data on local demographics to determine which languages to prioritize (e.g., Arabic, Russian, French, Ukrainian, etc).
- ✓ Ensure that essential information—such as welcome guides, emergency services, housing, healthcare, education, legal rights, and payment methods—is



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translated. To maintain consistency and accuracy, it is advisable to hire professional translators, particularly for sensitive content. Partner with local language services or community groups to verify translation quality, especially for dialect nuances or culturally specific terminology.

High-quality translations prevent misunderstandings that could arise from automated errors, building trust and ensuring access to vital information.

If professional translation is not feasible, municipalities can provide a Google Translate option, as exemplified by the website of the [City of Toronto](#) or a high-quality automated translation tool with periodic human review can be used.

In such cases, a disclaimer should be included to inform users about potential inaccuracies in automated translations.

- ✓ Place the language selection feature in an obvious spot on the homepage, using internationally recognized language icons (e.g., flags or globe icon) for easy access.

Example: Language selection at the top of each page allows migrants to find information in their preferred language without needing assistance, promoting independent use.

2. Cultural Relevance and Sensitivity

2.1. Inclusive Imagery and Representation

Recommendations:

- ✓ Use diverse, inclusive images that reflect the cultural backgrounds present in the community.
- ✓ Regularly update images and visual content to represent current community demographics. Avoid stereotypical depictions and instead focus on realistic portrayals.

Example: Including images of multicultural families, cultural festivals, or community gatherings can make diverse groups feel represented and welcomed.

2.2. Culturally Inclusive Content

Recommendations:



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- ✓ Provide information on cultural events, legal rights, language resources, and educational opportunities that cater to migrant needs.
- ✓ Maintain a “New Residents” section with resources like orientation guides, community support programs, and information on cultural and religious practices.

Offering culturally relevant content not only makes migrants feel seen but also improves their access to community resources and services.

2.3. Culturally Neutral Language

Recommendations:

- ✓ Use clear, straightforward language, avoiding idioms, technical jargon, or culturally specific phrases that may be unfamiliar.

3. User-Friendly Navigation

3.1. Clear, Simple Menus and quick access to important information

Recommendations:

- ✓ Organize information logically, with distinct sections for essential topics like “Housing,” “Legal Assistance,” “Healthcare,” and “Language Learning.”
- ✓ Use intuitive icons alongside text to aid comprehension for users with lower language skills or digital literacy.
- ✓ Place high-priority information on the homepage or create a dedicated “For New Residents” or “Welcome” section.

Easy access to crucial services (e.g., finding a doctor, enrolling in school) supports migrant integration and prevents frustrations with website usability.

Example: Berlin’s municipal website features a “[Welcome Center Berlin](#)” section that consolidates information on essential services for new residents, reducing the need to search through complex menus.

3.2. Multilingual Help Resources

Recommendations:

- ✓ Provide multilingual help sections with guides on how to navigate the site, use online services, and understand municipal processes.



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Example: Short videos or written tutorials can guide new users through accessing services, improving confidence and digital literacy.

4. Accessibility and Digital Literacy

4.1. Web Accessibility Standards Compliance

Recommendations:

- ✓ Follow [WCAG](#) (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines) to support users with disabilities, such as providing alt text for images and ensuring keyboard accessibility.

An accessible site supports all users, including migrants with disabilities, ensuring equal access to information.

4.2. Visual Support and Simplified Language

Recommendations:

- ✓ Use infographics, icons, and simple text to convey information. Consider a reading level suited for non-native speakers.

Example: Use icons or infographics in sections explaining processes like applying for residency or accessing healthcare.

4.3. Digital Literacy Support

- ✓ Provide tutorials or links to digital literacy resources in multiple languages, especially for services like online applications or service booking.

Example: Simple video guides on topics like paying bills or setting up a resident account help migrants adapt to digital municipal processes.

5. Feedback and Improvement Mechanisms

5.1. Accessible Feedback Options

Recommendations:



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- ✓ Offer feedback forms in multiple languages and invite input on usability and clarity.

Example: Implement a feedback section or survey that users can complete in their native language, ensuring all voices are heard.

5.2. Regular Updates Based on User Input

Recommendations:

- ✓ Incorporate suggestions and user feedback into site updates to continuously improve user experience.

Responsive updates demonstrate the municipality’s commitment to inclusion, which can boost trust among diverse communities.

6. Community Engagement and Trust-Building

6.1. Partner with Community Organizations

Recommendations:

- ✓ Collaborate with migrant support organizations to ensure website content is accurate and relevant.

Partnerships strengthen connections to migrant communities and improve the reliability of the information provided.

6.2. Highlight Events and Announcements

Recommendations:

- ✓ Promote culturally relevant events and include resources for civic engagement.

Example: Featuring cultural festivals, language classes, or citizenship workshops on the homepage demonstrates active support for diversity.

6.3. Visible Contact and Support Options

Recommendations:

- ✓ Clearly display contact information, and consider multilingual support options.



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Providing contact numbers or live chat options builds confidence that help is available if needed.

7. Privacy and Security Awareness

7.1. Transparent Privacy Information

Recommendations:

- ✓ Clearly explain privacy practices and data use, especially in document submissions.

Example: Provide an FAQ on privacy policies in multiple languages to assure users of data security.

7.2. Secure Document Submission Processes

Recommendations:

- ✓ Ensure secure, encrypted channels for submitting sensitive documents.

This builds trust and protects users’ personal information, making them more likely to engage with online services.

8. Regular Review and Adaptation for Changing Demographics

8.1. Ongoing Multicultural Training

Recommendations:

- ✓ Ensure website maintenance teams understand and respond to migrant needs with regular training.

Training promotes cultural sensitivity in website updates and communications.

8.2. Adapting to Evolving Community Demographics

Recommendations:



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- ✓ Regularly review local demographic data and adjust language and content offerings accordingly.

Example: Update translation options and imagery as new migrant groups join the community, keeping the site relevant.

Final Comments:

This document has been created by the NGO Citizens in Power, regional coordinator for Nicosia and Larnaca, under the Intercultural Cities program of the Council of Europe. Its aim is to assist municipalities in developing clear guidelines on migration and to support them in becoming more migrant-friendly, thereby facilitating better integration and community engagement.

Implementing these guidelines will help create a more inclusive and accessible municipal website that not only welcomes migrants but also supports their integration into the community. By ensuring that the site is linguistically accessible, culturally sensitive, and easy to navigate, municipalities can contribute to building a stronger, more cohesive community where everyone has equal access to resources and opportunities to thrive.

Recourses:

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