

CONNEX



Community **INTEGRATION** **TOOLKIT**



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Credits

The Community Integration Toolkit has been developed as part of CONNEX.

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Disclaimer

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About the Project

This project aims to facilitating the successful integration of refugees into their new communities while also working to strengthen neighborhood connections. By organizing a range of inclusive activities and cultural exchanges, we aim to support newcomers in adapting to their new environment and simultaneously foster a stronger sense of community among all residents. Through these efforts, we seek to build a more cohesive and supportive environment that embraces diversity and encourages mutual respect.

Objectives:

1. Helping migrants and refugees settle into their new communities by encouraging meaningful interactions and building strong connections between locals and newcomers.
2. Using art and cultural events to bring people together, so everyone can better understand each other and feel like they belong.
3. Offering training to migrant workers on how to organize community events, with a focus on cultural awareness, planning, and getting locals involved.
4. Creating opportunities for cultural exchange through hands-on workshops, where migrants and locals can come together, celebrate traditions, and strengthen community ties.
5. Putting together a Community Integration Toolkit, packed with practical, art-based ideas for events that help migrants and locals connect and collaborate.
6. Spreading the word about why cultural diversity and integration matter by producing a video that showcases successful examples of building stronger, more connected neighborhoods.

Module list of the Toolkit:

Module 1 Organizing Inclusive Community Events prepared by CESTA.

Module 2 Building Cultural Sensitivity and Awareness prepared by SATU.

Module 3 Encouraging Neighborly Interactions prepared by DUNAJ.

Module 4 Art as a Tool for Social Integration prepared by DUNAJ.

Module 5 Organizing Cultural and Traditional Festivities prepared by CESTA.

Module 6 Collaborative Volunteer Projects through Art and Culture prepared by SATU.



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MODULE 1

Introduction: Organizing Inclusive Community Events



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Community events

have the power to shape the way people feel about themselves and each other. They create the conditions for friendship, dialogue, collaboration, and shared memory. For migrant workers and newcomers, such events can be the first step toward feeling at home. This module is designed as a starting point—a wide introduction to the values, principles, and formats behind inclusive event planning.



Resource: Spoločná cesta

Rather than diving into one specific type of activity, this module gives a bird's-eye view of five different kinds of events that can help foster connection between migrants and local communities. **These events are not meant to be perfect models, but flexible and adaptable ideas that can grow in different contexts.** We hope that by learning about these different types of activities, you will be inspired to create your own inclusive gatherings

Inclusion means

more than just inviting everyone. It means thinking carefully about accessibility, representation, and emotional safety. It means recognizing and valuing the unique contributions that each person brings, and creating spaces where people are not only present, but genuinely engaged. Over the next five modules, you will find different approaches to inclusive community building.



Resource: Spoločná cesta

Each module focuses on a distinct type of event or activity, offering not just descriptions, but deeper reflections on the theory and purpose behind each format. Here is what you can expect:



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Module 2: Building Cultural Sensitivity and Awareness

This module explores how cutlery-oriented events can create respectful spaces for exchange. Using a Christmas Decorating Workshop as a model, it shows how shared cultural rituals can help participants discover common ground while learning about differences. Participants from both migrant and local backgrounds take part equally, where belonging and co-creation promoted.

Module 3: Encouraging Neighborly Interactions

Everyday gestures like sharing a meal or exchanging a greeting can make a big difference in building community. This module focuses on informal events like the Know Your Neighbor initiative, where small acts of hospitality lead to big impacts. Through practices like offering traditional food, preparing small gifts, or organizing outdoor gatherings, migrants are encouraged to take the lead in forming meaningful connections within their neighborhoods.

Module 4: Art as a Tool for Social Integration

Art allows people to speak without words, and this module explores how creativity can become a bridge between cultures. It highlights inclusive artistic workshops where participants express their emotions and stories through hands-on designs. Whether painting coasters or co-designing public art, these collaborative efforts promote empathy and mutual recognition. Art becomes a shared language for inclusion.

Module 5: Organizing Cultural and Traditional Festivities

Public celebrations of cultural heritage can strengthen community bonds. This module presents models for organizing larger, public-facing events that celebrate diversity—such as cultural festivals or national day celebrations. Participants learn how to ensure fair representation, coordinate logistics, and promote respectful curiosity. Events like these become powerful platforms for visibility and sharing what is common.

Module 6: Collaborative Volunteer Projects through Art and Culture

In this final module, we look at photo exhibitions and creative projects that give voice to personal experiences. Migrants and locals alike are invited to reflect on what a place means to them—through photography, storytelling, or symbolic acts of community participation. These collaborative projects not only create beauty, but also foster trust, build networks, and make visible the unseen stories that shape our communities.



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Each of these modules comes with its own focus, structure, and set of tools. What unites them is the belief that communities are strongest when they are built together—with **care, curiosity, and mutual respect**.

We have chosen not to include specific activities or case studies in this first module. Instead, this introductory section offers a vision and a structure: five types of events, five ways to create meaningful encounters, five approaches to building inclusive communities. The details come later—but the **mindset starts here**.

As you move forward through the toolkit, we encourage you to read each module with an open mind and with a willful spirit. Imagine how the models could be adapted to your own context. Think about your community's needs, its rhythms, and its stories. You don't need to do everything exactly as described. What matters most is your intention—to bring people together in ways that are respectful, welcoming, and human. **We hope this toolkit serves not only as a resource, but as an invitation to organize events where everyone feel they belong.**



Resource: Spoločná cesta



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MODULE 2

Building Cultural Sensitivity and Awareness



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Introduction

This module, Building Cultural Sensitivity and Awareness, is designed to help participants develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to engage respectfully and effectively across cultural differences. In today's diverse communities, cultural sensitivity is a key competency for creating inclusive environments where everyone feels valued, understood, and safe.

The module uses a practical, interactive approach – for example, through seasonal or tradition-based workshops – to explore how cultural beliefs, values, and behaviors influence the way people communicate, celebrate, and collaborate. Participants learn to recognize cultural assumptions (their own and others'), reflect on bias, and practice empathy. The module supports facilitators, volunteers, educators, and community workers in fostering environments where cultural diversity is acknowledged as a strength rather than a barrier.

Theoretical Frameworks

The concept of cultural sensitivity is grounded in interculturalism theory, which emphasizes meaningful interaction between people of different cultural backgrounds. Rather than promoting assimilation, interculturalism supports mutual learning and adaptation through open dialogue and shared experiences. In this view, cultural sensitivity is not passive tolerance, but an active process of understanding others while reflecting critically on one's own cultural lens.

From a community development perspective, building cultural sensitivity is essential to strengthening social capital, particularly bridging capital—the trust and cooperation between diverse groups. Sociologist Milton J. Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) offers a useful framework: it identifies stages people go through as they become more interculturally competent, from denial of difference to integration of multiple perspectives. This module applies these insights in a practical setting, encouraging growth through interaction, empathy, and co-creation.

Resource: Bennett, M. J. (2017). Development model of intercultural sensitivity. In Kim, Y. (Ed.), *International Encyclopedia of Intercultural Communication*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.



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Activity: Christmas Decoration Workshop

This activity invites migrants and local residents to come together and co-create winter or Christmas-themed decorations in an inclusive, welcoming environment. Rather than focusing on religious aspects, the workshop highlights universal values such as warmth, light, togetherness, and creativity.

Participants from diverse cultural backgrounds decorate a shared community space while exchanging stories and traditions related to winter celebrations. The act of making decorations becomes a meaningful way to explore cultural differences, recognize common values, and promote respectful dialogue. This activity supports the development of cultural sensitivity by using art and shared experiences as a bridge between communities.

How to use it

This activity can be used as a practical introduction to cultural sensitivity training. It encourages participants to:

- Explore their own cultural practices
- Learn about others' traditions
- Reflect on symbols, habits, and emotional associations tied to holidays and seasons

Facilitators can use it as a warm-up for broader intercultural learning or as a stand-alone community-building event.

Time Plan

Welcome & Introduction (10 mins):

- Brief talk on how holidays and decorations carry different meanings across cultures.
- Participants are invited to reflect on winter traditions from their own backgrounds.

Creative Decorating Session (45–60 mins):

- Materials provided (paper, pinecones, fabrics, glitter, markers).
- Participants create ornaments and share personal stories in small groups.

Symbol Storytelling & Exchange (20 mins):

- Groups present their decorations and the story or meaning behind them.
- Facilitators connect these to broader themes of inclusion and diversity.

Reflection & Group Photo (10 mins):

- Closing circle where each participant shares one insight or new perspective.
- Option to display the decorations in a public venue.



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Activity Title: Christmas Decoration Workshop

Activity Type

- Community Art Workshop
- Seasonal Cultural Exchange
- Experiential Learning

Target Group

- Migrants and refugees
- Local residents
- Volunteers, educators, and youth workers
- Mixed-age, mixed-background community groups

When to use it?

During December, near the Christmas season or other culturally significant winter holidays.

Materials Needed

- Recycled and craft materials (paper, pinecones, felt, scissors, glue, etc.)
- Tables and chairs
- Soft background music (optional)
- Display space or wall for ornaments
- Warm beverages/snacks (to encourage informal connection)

Skills Adressed

- Empathy and perspective-taking
- Active listening
- Intercultural communication
- Symbolic interpretation and expression
- Creative collaboration



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Recommendations about the module

Tips for Learners

- There is no “right way” to decorate—focus on what the symbols mean to you
- Ask others about their traditions and listen without judgment
- Use the space to express how winter feels emotionally, not just visually
- Enjoy the process—creativity opens doors to connection!

Consider

- Frame the workshop around religious doctrine
- Focus only on aesthetics—prioritize connection
- Overstructure the event; allow room for spontaneity
- Assume everyone is familiar with Christmas or winter traditions

Voices from the Event

“I loved making something beautiful with people I just met—it felt like home.”

-Participant from Turkey

“We shared our stories with scissors and glue. No translation needed.”

-Participant from Ukraine

“For a moment, we were just neighbors, not foreigners.”

-SATU MTÜ team member



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"A good friend, a good neighbor, can help you find yourself as a migrant."

Source: Social Capital and Integration for People from Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Backgrounds



MODULE 3

Encouraging Neighborly Interactions



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Introduction

Building connections with neighbors is one of the simplest yet most powerful ways to support migrant integration. This module explores how informal, everyday interactions—like exchanging food, greetings, or participating in shared traditions—can create trust, familiarity, and a sense of belonging. Through practical examples and creative activities, it highlights how small gestures can lead to strong, inclusive communities.

Theoretical Frameworks

Informal social interactions are a crucial part of integration processes, especially at the neighborhood level. The concept of Informal Social Integration (Penninx & Garcés-Masareñas, 2016) refers to the unstructured, everyday encounters through which migrants gradually become part of the host society's social fabric. Activities like shared meals, cultural exchanges, or hobby groups enable spontaneous but meaningful connections. These micro-interactions can build trust, familiarity, and a sense of inclusion over time—essential elements for long-term integration.

The notion of Spaces of Encounter (Valentine, 2008) emphasizes the significance of public and semi-public spaces where people from different backgrounds meet and interact. These spaces—such as parks, community centers, or even shared apartment buildings—become crucial sites for intercultural dialogue. When such encounters are regular and reciprocal, they have the potential to reduce prejudice, promote empathy, and foster mutual understanding. Migrants who initiate inclusive activities in these spaces play a vital role in shaping environments where community bonds can grow naturally.

Resource: Penninx R, Garcés-Masareñas B. The concept of integration as an analytical tool and as a policy concept. *Integration processes and policies in Europe: Contexts, levels and actors.* 2016:11-29.

Valentine G. Living with difference: reflections on geographies of encounter. *Progress in human geography.* 2008 Jun;32(3):323-37.



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Case Study: Know Your Neighbor Project

The Know Your Neighbor initiative, developed by the Dunaj Dialog Institute, is a multi-phase community engagement project designed to encourage neighborly interactions between migrant communities and local residents. Targeted at migrant workers and their families, the project seeks to build trust, mutual recognition, and belonging through culturally meaningful acts of sharing and hospitality. The project is implemented in three symbolic phases, each rooted in both migrant and local traditions:

Noah's Pudding (Ashure) Distribution:

Migrant volunteers prepare and distribute aşure, a traditional dessert from their cultures, to neighbors in their local area. This act of sharing food serves as an accessible and welcoming entry point to initiate contact, express goodwill, and introduce their cultural heritage.

Christmas Gift Giving:

During the Christmas season, participants prepare small gifts or handwritten cards and deliver them to their neighbors. This stage allows migrants to engage with local customs and contribute to the festive atmosphere, reinforcing a sense of shared humanity and celebration.

Easter Exchange and Outdoor Invitations:

In the final phase, migrant families reciprocate by acknowledging Easter through symbolic gift-giving and inviting their neighbors to join a collective outdoor activity (e.g., picnic, walk, or sports event). These shared experiences move the relationship beyond the doorstep and into a shared public space.

Throughout the project, participants document their interactions through photos and videos shared on social media, amplifying the message of inclusion and intercultural solidarity. The simple act of knocking on a neighbor's door—repeated hundreds of times—translates into meaningful social bridges.

Outcomes:

- Created low-barrier opportunities for contact between migrants and locals.
- Empowered migrant participants to take initiative in social interaction.
- Fostered trust and familiarity through repeated, culturally sensitive gestures.
- Shifted perceptions by presenting migrants as engaged, generous community members.
- Encouraged neighbors to participate in follow-up events, enhancing mutual integration.



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Activity Title: Taste of Home: A Cooking Workshop for Cultural Connection

Description

Participants are invited to cook a simple dish from their home country or culture, individually or in small teams. While preparing the food, they share the memories, meanings, or traditions behind the recipe. Once the food is ready, everyone gathers to enjoy the meal together, exchange stories, and learn about the cultural significance of each dish. Optionally, participants can write down the recipes and stories to create a small intercultural cookbook or digital zone.

Time Plan for the Activity

Steps:

1- Welcome & Introduction (10 mins):

Explain that food is a universal language that connects people beyond borders. Encourage participants to focus on sharing, not perfection.

2- Cooking Session (45–60 mins):

Divide into groups or pairs. Begin cooking and storytelling in a relaxed, collaborative atmosphere. Facilitators can move around and encourage conversations like:

- “When do you usually eat this dish?”
- “What memories do you associate with this recipe?”
- “Is it something you cook for guests or family celebrations?”

3- Shared Meal & Cultural Exchange (30 mins):

Gather around a table, taste each other’s dishes, and continue the dialogue. Allow time for informal bonding and storytelling.

4- Optional Wrap-Up (10 mins):

Offer the chance to write or draw their recipe/story on a card. Collect the cards for a shared recipe wall or booklet.



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Activity Title: Taste of Home: A Cooking Workshop for Cultural Connection

When to use it?

Ideal for the middle or advanced stages of a community integration or intercultural program to foster dialogue, storytelling, and trust-building through shared culinary experiences.

Activity Type

Hands-on cooking session, cultural sharing, storytelling, informal social interaction

Target Group

Migrants, refugees, and local residents (ages 16 and above)

Skills Addressed

- Cultural expression through food
- Cooperation and teamwork
- Oral storytelling and memory sharing
- Informal language practice
- Empathy and intercultural understanding

Materials Needed

- Access to a kitchen or mobile cooking station
- Ingredients for selected dishes (participants may bring recipes or ingredients from their culture)
- Cooking utensils, pans, cutting boards, etc.
- Aprons, gloves, and cleaning materials
- Tables and chairs for eating and sharing
- Paper cards or boards to write recipe names and stories

Tips for Learners

- Share a dish that means something to you – it doesn't have to be fancy.
- Be open to trying new flavors and asking questions.
- This is about connection, not competition.
- Sometimes the best memories come with the simplest meals.



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Recommendations about the module

Videos

- **Unity in Diversity – Singapore**

A short video series showcasing efforts to build bridges between diverse communities in Singapore.

<https://www.mccy.gov.sg/-/media/Unity-in-Diversity.pdf>

Projects

- **Intercultural Gardens – Germany**

A project encouraging intercultural exchange through community gardening.

<https://www.mccy.gov.sg/-/media/Unity-in-Diversity.pdf>

Academic Articles

- **Migrants' Community Participation and Social Integration in Urban Areas** (ScienceDirect)

<https://www.mccy.gov.sg/-/media/Unity-in-Diversity.pdf>

- **Internal Migrants' Social Integration Through Community Volunteering** (Oxford Academic)

<https://academic.oup.com/migration/article/13/1/mnae053/7967205?login=false>



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"Art is not a mirror held up to reality, but a hammer with which to shape it."

Bertolt Brecht



MODULE 4

Art as a Tool for Social Integration



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Introduction

Art is a universal language that can build bridges where words or systems cannot. This module introduces how artistic expression—through painting, crafts, or collaborative creation—can support the social integration of migrants by fostering dialogue, empathy, and shared belonging. Through hands-on activities and real-life examples, it shows how communities can use simple creative tools to bring diverse people together and turn difference into connection.

Theoretical Frameworks

Art-based integration practices are rooted in the understanding that creativity transcends language barriers and cultural boundaries. According to Aesthetic Education Theory (Greene, 1995), artistic engagement helps individuals perceive the world from multiple perspectives and fosters imaginative empathy. For migrants, engaging in art can be a way to process personal experiences, express identity, and connect with others in non-verbal yet deeply human ways. The concept of Participatory Arts for Social Change (Boal & McBride, 2020; Kay, 2000) emphasizes the role of collaborative creative activities in empowering marginalized groups. When migrants co-create art with local residents, they are not passive recipients of integration efforts but active agents shaping shared cultural spaces. These inclusive processes contribute to building trust, mutual recognition, and a sense of collective belonging.

Resource: Greene M. Art and imagination: Reclaiming the sense of possibility. *The Phi Delta Kappan*. 1995 Jan 1;76(5):378-82.

Boal A, McBride MO. Theatre of the Oppressed. In *The applied theatre reader 2020* Oct 20 (pp. 134-140). Routledge.

Kay A. Art and community development: the role the arts have in regenerating communities. *Community development journal*. 2000 Oct 1;35(4):414-24.



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Case Study: The Unity in Diversity

The event, organized by the Dunaj Dialog Institute, was a participatory art installation designed to visually represent the richness of cultural identities within one community. This initiative invited migrants, refugees, and local residents to co-create a large collective artwork—symbolizing unity across differences—through a simple but powerful activity.

At the beginning of the workshop, each participant randomly received the name of a different country. Their task was to research or reflect on a cultural symbol, landmark, traditional motif, or pattern representing that country. Using fabric markers and paints, they then illustrated their chosen symbol directly onto a shared, large white canvas sheet (such as a bedsheet or textile banner).

As the individual symbols were added side by side, what began as isolated national identities slowly transformed into a single, unified artwork—a visual metaphor for intercultural coexistence. Some participants chose flags, others painted food, animals, or architectural elements. The spontaneous mix of colors and styles sparked conversations, laughter, and curiosity.

The event concluded with a circle dialogue where participants shared what they drew and what they learned. This closing reflection helped reinforce the idea that while cultures are distinct, they can coexist and enrich one another when brought together intentionally and creatively.

Key Impacts:

- Created an inclusive, low-barrier space for collaborative artistic expression
- Helped participants learn about unfamiliar cultures in a playful, non-judgmental way
- Fostered a shared sense of ownership and pride in a collective outcome
- Demonstrated how symbolic cooperation can visually and emotionally bridge differences
- Provided a lasting artwork to display in public, sparking continued dialogue beyond the event



Resource: Dunaj Instytut Dialogu



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Activity Title: Paint Your Story: A Coaster Decoration Workshop for Cultural Sharing

Description

Participants decorate plain coasters by painting symbols, colors, or patterns that reflect their culture, values, memories, or personal stories. Each decorated coaster becomes a small "artistic introduction" of the person behind it. After the creative session, participants are invited to share the meaning behind their designs with the group or in small circles. Optionally, coasters can be exchanged as gifts, creating a tangible symbol of connection and goodwill.

How to use it?

Time plan for the activity

1- Introduction:

Briefly explain the purpose of the workshop – to express one's identity and cultural background through art, and to build connections across differences.

2- Creative Process:

Provide participants with materials and encourage them to think about simple ideas (colors, traditional patterns, favorite places, symbols of belonging). Give a few optional prompts, such as:

- "What symbol represents home for you?"
- "Which color tells your story?"
- "Can you draw a memory from your country or new neighborhood?"

3- Sharing Session:

After decorating, invite participants to share the story behind their coaster with a neighbor or the group.

Encourage informal conversations about cultural similarities and differences.

4- Optional Exhibition:

Arrange the finished coasters for a small exhibition or photo documentation. Participants can also exchange their coasters as friendship tokens.



Resource: Dunaj Inštytut Dialogu



Resource: Dunaj Inštytut Dialogu



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Activity Title: Paint Your Story: A Coaster Decoration Workshop for Cultural Sharing

When to use it?

At the middle or later stages of an integration or community-building program to encourage creative dialogue, cultural exchange, and lasting memories among migrants and local neighbors.

Activity Type

Creative expression, intercultural dialogue, hands-on workshop

Target Group

Migrants, refugees, and local residents (ages 16 and above)

Skills Adressed

- Creative self-expression
- Cultural exchange and storytelling
- Fine motor skills and attention to detail
- Empathy and intercultural understanding
- Informal social interaction

Materials Needed

- Blank cork or ceramic coasters
- Acrylic paints, markers, or permanent pens
- Paintbrushes and water cups
- Paper towels
- Protective table covers
- Optional: Varnish or sealant spray to protect finished coasters

Tips for Learners

- Focus on expressing feelings or memories rather than creating a "perfect" design.
- Your coaster tells a story about who you are — there is no right or wrong.
- Enjoy the opportunity to learn about each other through art!



Resource: Dunaj Inštytut Dialogu



Resource: Dunaj Inštytut Dialogu



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Recommendations about the module

Projects

- **Musicians Without Borders – Europe-wide**

A project using music as a tool for peacebuilding and social inclusion.

<https://www.musicianswithoutborders.org>

- **The Paper Project – Finland**

A community art project where refugees and locals create visual stories on paper, exploring memory, loss, and hope through collaborative workshops.

<https://www.hilma.fi/en/the-paper-project/>



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MODULE 5

Organizing Cultural and Traditional Festivities



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Introduction

This module focuses on designing and facilitating public celebrations of culture and tradition as powerful tools for community integration. Cultural festivities allow diverse communities to express identity, connect with others, and affirm their place within society. When coordinated meaningfully, such events help foster social cohesion, promote mutual respect, and highlight the shared values that bind all residents—whether long-time locals or newly arrived neighbors.

Theoretical Frameworks

Cultural integration is not about erasing difference, but about cultivating a shared space where multiple identities can coexist and contribute meaningfully. According to interculturalism theory, integration occurs most effectively through interaction, not isolation. Events rooted in shared cultural celebration become tools for this interaction, offering both symbolic and real spaces where respect, curiosity, and dialogue are naturally encouraged.

From a community development perspective, organizing cultural events promotes interculturalism, a concept that encourages interaction and reciprocity between cultural groups rather than passive coexistence. According to sociologist Emile Durkheim, rituals and shared symbols reinforce collective identity and social solidarity. Interculturalism values the contribution of every group to a common social space. It enhances social capital, builds trust, and creates opportunities for cooperation. Events like Žijeme na Slovensku exemplify how carefully curated festivities can act as platforms for these intercultural dialogues and integration efforts.



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Activity: Žijeme na Slovensku

Description

“Žijeme na Slovensku” (We Live in Slovakia) is an intercultural festival organized annually in Bratislava by Spoločná cesta, in collaboration with local partners. The event highlights the contributions of national minorities and migrant communities living in Slovakia. Through traditional food, music, dance, and storytelling, participants share their cultural heritage with the broader public. The event is held in honor of the UN International Day of Human Fraternity (February 4), reflecting the values of compassion, peace, and coexistence. It serves not only as a celebration, but also as a living demonstration of successful integration and community building.

How to use it?

This activity is designed as a large-scale community event and should be organized in coordination with local stakeholders. Each community involved takes ownership of their cultural presentation, while the central organizing team ensures consistency, accessibility, and visibility across the event.

The activity can be replicated at regional or municipal levels. It is especially impactful when linked to a meaningful occasion, such as a national holiday or an international observance like the Day of Human Fraternity. Partnering with local authorities, cultural centers or schools ensure inclusive participation.

When to Use it?

Ideal for events aimed at intercultural understanding and solidarity, especially around key dates like International Day of Human Fraternity, Migrants Day, or local Diversity Days.

Activity Type

- Public Community Event
- Cultural Festival
- Integration Initiative



Resource: Spoločná cesta

Activity: Žijeme na Slovensku

Target Group

- Members of national minorities and migrant communities
- Local residents of all ages
- NGOs, municipal departments, and cultural institutions
- Students, educators, and youth organizations
- General public interested in cultural diversity

Skills Adresses

- Intercultural communication
- Event coordination and teamwork
- Public engagement and storytelling
- Social and emotional intelligence
- Collaboration and representation

Materials Needed

- Venue with public access (community center, market hall, or square)
- Stage and audio equipment
- Booths or tables for cultural groups
- Promotional materials (flyers, banners, social media visuals)
- Food handling supplies (if offering tastings)
- Volunteer coordination materials (badges, schedules)
- Multilingual description



Resource: Spoločná cesta



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Timeplan for the Activity: Žijeme na Slovensku

1. Opening & Welcome (15 minutes)

- Short speech by the organizers or city representatives.
- Introduction of the festival's goals: cultural connection, shared traditions, and human fraternity.
- Highlight the significance of the International Day of Human Fraternity.

2. Cultural Performances – Part I (45 minutes)

- Stage performances: traditional music, dances, and folklore.
- First round of communities present their cultural performances.
- Facilitator introduces each act with a brief background.

3. Exhibition & Food Stalls Open (whole day)

- Visitors walk around the venue to explore booths representing different countries.
- Tasting of traditional dishes, viewing of traditional clothes, crafts, and cultural displays.
- Facilitators or volunteers engage visitors with light conversation:
 - “What’s a typical celebration in your culture like?”
 - “What does this dish or music mean to you?”
 - “How did you come to live in Slovakia?”

4. Cultural Performances – Part II (45 minutes)

- Second round of cultural presentations by the remaining communities.
- Possibly include interactive segments (audience dance or music workshop).



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Timeplan for the Activity: Žijeme na Slovensku

5. Circle of Fraternity (15 minutes): Short speech by the organizers or city representatives.

- Symbolic act where all community representatives and visitors join a photography taking moment in a large line.
- Music or poetry may accompany the moment as a gesture of unity.
- A brief collective reflection or statement may be read out loud.

6. Informal Dialogue & Closing (30 minutes)

- Space for mingling, interviews, and reflection.
- Volunteers or facilitators can invite guests to leave comments, memories, or feedback.
- Thank you notes and acknowledgements to partners and communities.

Optional Add-ons:

- **Recipe Wall:** Invite each community to share one recipe from their food stand.
- **Photo Corner:** With traditional costumes and cultural props.
- **Kids' Activity Zone:** Cultural crafts or language games for younger visitors.



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Recommendations about the module

Projects

- **Cultural Compass – Ljubljana, Slovenia**

The Cultural Compass project facilitates integration of refugees, asylum seekers and newcomers to Slovenia through immersive cultural tours, creative and art oriented activities in Ljubljana. It is relevant to show how cultural events can serve as tools for social inclusion, which unifies newcomers with the cultural heritage of the host country and reinforces community cohesion.

<https://encc.eu/microgrants/cultural-compass-for-refugees-asylum-seekers-and-newcomers>



Resource: Spoločná cesta

Ted Talks

- **Curating Community – Amy Blackmore**

An in-depth look at the role of community-driven arts festivals that foster and function as cultural integration. Amy Blackmore has over 15 years of experience working in arts and culture. In her talk she highlights how such events can break down barriers and help to build unified and more inclusive communities.

<https://www.hilma.fi/en/the-paper-project/>

- **How Festivals Build Real Communities from Utopian Visions - Eamon Armstrong**

Exploring how festivals serve as community building activity and social innovation for all groups in the society. Eamon Armstrong is the author of a number of popular online articles about festivals and festival communities. In his speech he discusses the potential of these meetings to foster real-world change by creating spaces of inclusivity and sharing the common purpose.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GdOHly&y7pE>



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MODULE 6

Collaborative Volunteer Projects through Art and Culture



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Introduction

This module focuses on capturing and sharing the perspectives of migrants and local residents through a participatory photo-based activity. This activity offers a visual dialogue between cultures by inviting participants to share what their host country means to them through photography. These photos become storytelling tools that connect personal narratives to place, fostering emotional ties, curiosity, and dialogue.

The module is especially suited to coincide with significant national or cultural dates (e.g., independence days, local heritage festivals, or community celebrations). These occasions provide a strong cultural frame within which participants can reflect on identity, community, and belonging in their new environment.

Theoretical Frameworks

From an interculturalism perspective, cultural integration flourishes through meaningful interaction, not forced assimilation. When migrants express their experiences visually, and locals witness them, a dialogic space is created. This visual exchange fosters mutual recognition and reduces symbolic boundaries.

According to community development theory, especially concepts of social capital and reciprocity, shared projects like photo exhibitions increase trust, build networks, and reinforce shared ownership of public space. Drawing from the work of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, cultural participation strengthens social cohesion by enhancing the symbolic capital of marginalized groups and enabling their voices to be visible in the public sphere. Activities like "Estonia in My Eyes" turns everyday symbols (e.g., landscapes, streets, people) into points of connection and empowerment.



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Activity: Estonia in My Eyes

Description

This activity invites migrants and local residents to express how they see and experience life in their host country through photography. It provides a visual platform for participants to share personal stories, highlight everyday moments, and reflect on the meaning of community and belonging. Rather than evaluating technical photography skills, the activity emphasizes emotional connection, symbolism, and diverse perspectives.

How to use it?

Organizers invite submissions of personal photographs that illustrate everyday life, landscapes, emotions, or community interactions. Photos are accompanied by short captions or narratives and curated into a physical or digital exhibition. Facilitators use the stories behind the photos to guide reflection, dialogue, and intercultural learning.

When to use it?

Ideal for intercultural community events, exhibitions tied to civic holidays, migrant welcome weeks, or educational workshops.

Activity Type

- Participatory Art Workshop
- Community Storytelling

Target Group

Migrants, refugees, local residents, young people, intercultural volunteers

Skills Addressed

- Visual and emotional literacy
- Storytelling and reflection
- Empathy and perspective-taking
- Public speaking and presentation

Materials Needed

- Cameras or smartphones
- Printed or digital gallery space
- Projector or photo display board
- Reflection cards or storytelling prompts
- Comfortable room for sharing session



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Timeplan for the Activity: Estonia in My Eyes

Week 1: Planning & Promotion

- Define project theme and goals
- Select the exhibition date and venue (Make sure to align with a cultural or national celebration if possible (e.g., Independence Day))
- Create call for submissions (multilingual)
- Design promotional materials (posters, social media graphics)
- Reach out to potential partners (schools, NGOs, community centers)

Week 2: Call for Submissions & Outreach

- Distribute the call for photo submissions (social media, flyers, emails)
- Host an online briefing or Q&A session for participants
- Share photo prompts or guidelines to inspire diverse submissions

Week 3: Submission Deadline & Curation

- Close the submission window
- Review and curate the photo submissions (choose 15-20 impactful photos)
- Reach out to participants for short captions or stories
- Finalize logistics for the exhibition (venue, setup, etc.)

Week 4: Exhibition & Reflection Event

- Set up exhibition (physical or digital)
- Open the exhibition for public viewing
- Host an event for participants to reflect on their photos (discussion circle or storytelling session)
- Promote exhibition on social media
- Gather feedback from attendees and participants
- Make the event inclusive and encourage public interaction with the photos.



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Recommendations about the module

Tips for Learners

- Focus on the meaning behind the photo more than the composition
- Respect others' stories and cultural expressions
- Be open to different ways of seeing and experiencing daily life
- Ask thoughtful questions and listen actively

Projects

- **Intercultural Gardens – Germany**

A project encouraging intercultural exchange through community gardening.

<http://internationale-gaerten.de/>

Voices from the Event

"I was amazed that children were still playing outside in such cold weather. The light was so soft that day – it was really worth going outside!"

-Claire Sichel (France)

Resource: SATU

"We took the northernmost part of Estonia away from the birds for a while." Jury member Kristina Amor noted: "This photo is ambiguous; each viewer sees a different story. Loneliness and the search for answers can be noticed here, which can also be experienced by a foreigner who has arrived in Estonia."

-Mustafa Özdemir (Turkey)

"There are many wonderful things in Estonia: nature, order, security. Above all, Estonia offered us freedom, peace, and family unity. For that, we are always grateful. But there is another side to this coin. A foreigner in Estonia has its own difficulties. This time I wanted to draw attention to the aspect that it is autumn in Estonia. The photos I take remind me of sadness, loneliness, and homesickness."

-Sümeýra Çatal (Turkey)



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Conclusion

Inclusive community events are not defined by scale or budget, but by intention and heart. As you reflect on this introductory module, consider this: inclusion begins with listening and continues with action. An inclusive event does not merely open its doors—it creates spaces where people feel seen, heard, and valued.

Throughout the modules, you had discovered concrete examples of how simple acts—like decorating a room together, sharing a meal, exchanging cultural symbols, or telling a story through photography—can become powerful acts of connection. These examples are offered not as prescriptions, but as inspiration. You do not need to copy them exactly; rather, adapt them to fit your own context, your own people, and your own vision.

Remember:

- A good event is co-created, not top-down.
- A welcoming space respects and reflects the diversity of those who enter it.
- Small gestures—like a smile, a shared snack, a craft, or a kind word—can build lasting bridges.

We hope that this toolkit has given you the foundational mindset and motivation to imagine and organize events that foster belonging. Your efforts matter. By creating events that are inclusive and accessible, you contribute to stronger, more united communities—where every voice has a place, and every story is worth sharing.



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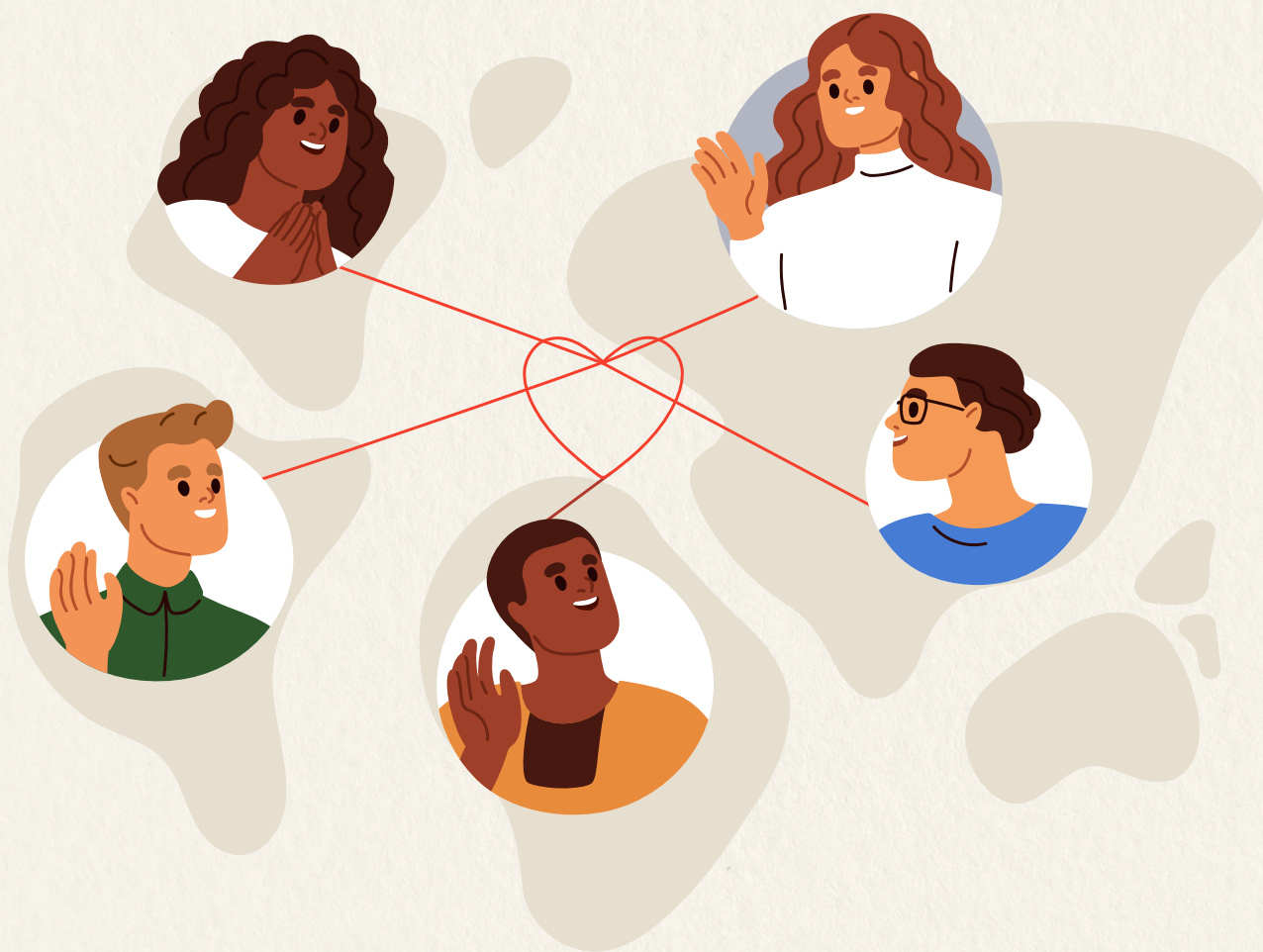
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