

## EMN IRELAND MIGRATION MEMO #7: How do EMN Member Countries approach civic training as a tool for integration?

This EMN Ireland Migration Memo summarises the finding from the EMN inform [on Implementation of measures for civic training as an important tool for integration of third-country nationals](#). This Migration Memo was prepared by [Ciára Dalton](#) and [Aislin Lavin](#). [EMN Ireland](#) is the Irish National Contact Point of the [European Migration Network](#) and is located in the [Economic and Social Research Institute](#) (ESRI) and the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration.

### THE ISSUE

Effective integration of migrants is an important part of successful migration management for EU countries. The main goal of civic orientation across all countries is to enable and promote the integration of eligible third country nationals by equipping them with the knowledge and skills needed to take part in the social, economic, cultural and political life of the host society.

This EMN Ireland Migration Memo provides a comparative overview of the approaches to civic training measures implemented by 25 EMN Countries and outlines key findings of an EMN-OECD joint Inform (2024).

### DEFINITIONS OF CIVIC INTEGRATION & TOPICS COVERED IN TRAINING

While formal definitions of civic integration are uncommon in EMN Member Countries, many reported having a clear and common understanding of the concept in their national context.

Topics in civic orientation training often cover two main elements: 1) information on the functioning of the host society in terms of norms, values, rights, rules and obligations, and 2) practical information on services available, including education, employment and family benefits. The first, including information on gender equality and the prevention of violence, is by far the most widespread topic in civic orientation training.

#### 4 key approaches to defining civic integration in the national context

- ◆ Sufficient knowledge of social, political, and cultural realities.
- ◆ Understanding rules, rights, obligations, duties, and fundamental values.
- ◆ General integration, including active participation. This can include understanding civic integration itself, acquisition of language skills, or participation in the labour market.
- ◆ Ability to participate in public life and enjoy equal opportunities.

### COMPARING CIVIC TRAINING MEASURES ACROSS EMN MEMBER COUNTRIES

Of the 25 responding countries, only Hungary and Portugal do not offer any civic orientation courses. The remaining 22 countries offer civic orientation courses to legally residing third-country nationals, but the target groups vary greatly. For example, Ireland offers limited orientation support and English language classes to resettled refugees following their arrival in Ireland, while other migrants may access local community-based initiatives that promote integration, inclusion and diversity.

In some countries, civic orientation courses or training is compulsory for at least certain groups of migrants who are dependent on public support and/or have the prospect of staying long term. In France, civic and language training is targeted to legally residing third-country nationals wishing to remain in the long term, while in Finland, all unemployed migrant jobseekers are required to participate in integration training and civic orientation. Participation in civic orientation courses is voluntary, in some countries, but in Belgium, Cyprus, Luxembourg, and Serbia, if long-term residence or citizenship is sought, attendance becomes mandatory.

### RESPONSIBILITY FOR COURSES & ADAPTATIONS

Responsibility for offering civic orientation courses or training often lies with a single ministry. In Bulgaria and Croatia, different ministries are in charge depending on the thematic focus of the course or training. Slovenia

and Serbia have independent offices specifically for refugees and migration affairs. Cyprus has no responsible authority, but an inter-ministerial committee determines the process of offering civic training. While ministries bear ultimate responsibility, the actual organisation and delivery of civic orientation courses or training may be outsourced to affiliated entities or to third parties at regional and local level.

Public authorities pay the costs of civic orientation courses in most countries, and no cost is borne by participants with some exceptions. Several EU Member States reported that courses and training are at least financed in part by the EU, for example, through AMIF, ESF or other funding.

Some countries' civic orientation courses are offered both online and onsite, or in hybrid formats. They report advantages and disadvantages with both teaching formats, namely the cost, quality, and accessibility differences. Other adaptations designed to support participants' attendance include courses offered at different times throughout the day, including during lunch breaks, in the evening and at weekends; childcare for participants with young children during class time; and trainings available in multiple languages.

## MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Non-attendance at compulsory or voluntary civic training courses can have negative consequences, typically in relation to individuals' rights of residence or their financial situation. These include: 1) negative impact on residence status, 2) reduction of benefits, 3) fines, 4) non-reimbursement of costs, and 5) expulsion from the international protection reception system. However, some countries offering either compulsory or voluntary civic training courses reported that non-attendance had no consequences.

Many countries reported that they have already conducted evaluations of their civic integration programmes, but the scope and methodologies vary. Both external and internal evaluations have been carried out, with the former generally more comprehensive than the latter. The most comprehensive evaluations of civic orientation offerings have been conducted in Austria, Belgium, Estonia, and the Netherlands. In Austria, civic orientation programmes are regularly evaluated by internal quality assurance officers of the Austrian Integration Fund, external experts, and participants, with the results prompting multiple adaptations of the programme.

### Measurements of civic orientation course success

- Attendance tracking.
- Post-course tests, which range from language tests to 'civic examinations'.
- Feedback surveys or self-evaluations.
- Inspection visits by officials and/or reports by training organisations.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Most EMN Member Countries offer some form of civic orientation to migrants, with many providing options designed to support participants' attendance such as online courses, evening or lunch break timings, childcare during class time, and trainings available in multiple languages.
- Civic integration usually covers information on the functioning of the host society (e.g. norms, values, institutions) and/or practical information on accessing services. Gender equality is the most common topic.
- Civic orientation courses or trainings are free for attendees in the majority of EMN Member Countries, and around half of countries make it compulsory in some circumstances.

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