



INTEGRATION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION PROGRAM

BON, Inburgerin, Brussels

Presenters:

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&

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The workshop about “integration and social inclusion programs” has been organized by BON, Inburgering Brussels (http://bon.be/language_selection?destination=%3Cfront%3E) and presented by Dries van den Brempt and Geert Daems.

The participants coming from different countries and backgrounds participated at the recommendation part of the workshop, where they discussed about possibilities to improve the main task of BON, which was explained with the question of “What do we mean by integration and how can we make the integration and social programs easier and more accessible in local, national and European level?”.

Integration has been considered as a difficult term to be explained with one single word. BON has fit different interpretations of this term into one single word, *inburgerin*, which is a Dutch word meaning “*an interactive process through which the government provides immigrants with a specific program to increase their self-reliance, encourage society to recognize them as fully-fledged citizens (integration seen as a two-way process) with the aim of full active participation or everyone, shared citizenship and social coherence (by getting to know each other)*”.

Question: The word integration is used for legal and policy issues. In this case, another word “assimilation” comes to my mind. It is something to think about. People come and live here a while. Integration is acquisition of citizenship for sure, but final aim may not be full integration by the citizenship acquired.

Answer: in Brussels, within the French speakers, there is a sense of assimilation. For sure, the linguistic sensitivity is important. However, integration is more like “your visible behavior”.

In the end, the word “assimilation” has been considered “not” the part of the integration process.

With 4 local offices and 92 employees with different languages, BON is financed by the Flemish government in Brussels. As an active organization, they believe that integration is an interactive process with the aim of enabling a full and active participation of the society, which aims at newcomers and old comers, and who are registered at a Brussels municipality with a residence status, with a prospect of long term residence, and minor newcomers for whom there are some short programs to integrate. This process is being cooperated by some partners such as House of Dutch. Therefore, it is said that social orientation programs and language programs are being held separately but as a whole. Civic integration program, for example, has been mentioned as one of the main programs of BON organization, which is responsible for “reception and intake through partners”, “social orientation courses with Dutch courses and individual guidance (one-to-one meetings)”, “career orientation programs and social participation” for each member.

For the “reception and intake” part of the, main steps may be summarized by:

- ✂ Introduction to the programme
- ✂ Enrollment of the candidate
- ✂ Cognitive skills at the house of Dutch
- ✂ Definition of candidate’s path at BON on the basis of: language, level of education, result of the Covaar test

Social orientation course of BON is an interactive course given in a contact language, where seventeen other languages are used for communication. The method used here is CLIMO, based on scanned needs of the people after an active communication of a five-week time, active participation and debates over everything that has mentioned within that timeframe. The organization also works on **professional, educational and social-cultural perspectives**, diploma recognition for job seekers etc.

In BON, there are 4 key elements

- ❖ Program in a contact language. The reason is that you're new in a country, you need to digest a lot of information and you might be overwhelmed. It's better to think about them in a language you understand well.
- ❖ BON works on information but more on skills. Easiest way to sum up this key element might be "giving somebody a fish to fulfil his stomach or teaching him how to fish". BON helps people demand their rights and make them aware of their rights in order to make them more assertive. By doing so, they learn where to go and how to find answer for their own questions.
- ❖ Interactive concept.
- ❖ There is a personal coach for one year to give information in the target language.

Currently, there is a new program on civic integration in Dublin in order to create a partnership with BON in the matter of "integration" for an exchange of knowledge and experience.

Question: This project is for the EU citizens like Romanians and Bulgarians as they have started to move into the EU?

Answer: Yes, right now the pilot project is for the EU citizens, we are working on it. We have already had discussions with the Bulgarian groups. Romanian women for example, they don't know their rights as EU citizens. BON is working on social rights for Belgium citizens, for example for the men who are working in the constructions. It's a vague employment. It is a very specific issue, which is getting better now in Belgium.

Possible problems that might occur in the path are; little knowledge about the issues being held and limited language skills, implementation of the program, how to organize finance and competences locally or nationality. Networking, transversal collaboration, organization, participation are also important key elements.

Recommendations in local level, national and European level discussed by the participants:

Local Level:

Accessibility and Flexibility: Flexibility and participative are an important key words for integration. Rules, norms, answers, policies should be visible, flexible and accessible to the moving citizens. Publicity comes first in this case; for example, if the information is only in Dutch, then it should be translated to other languages on the web site. That's why, the contact language is quite important.

Opinion: The web page "Your Europe" is also translated in several languages. But this is only for European citizens. People want to have local information, but this is more European level. There is a lack of communication in local level. Recommendation might be European level: information should

be (awareness raising) more visible and eligible, available for everyone. That's why, promotion of the web site is important.

In order to have access to the social integration, welcoming centers or small offices in downtown of these cities might be located. For example, there are 4 offices in Brussels (in the main areas), which might be extended to the populated areas by immigrants. It is also possible to locate them close to "tourist information desks" to attract attention.

Good timetable for everyone is also considered as an important topic to discuss about. As many people might be working, organizations may be scheduled in the evening or in the morning classifying the groups into same language level and similar backgrounds. However, it is not easy to find the best solution for everyone each time, which should be taken into consideration as well.

Opinion: In these cases, the registration to the city hall is quite important. Otherwise, it would be very difficult to keep the track of the immigrants. As they are registered, they have accessibility to the local information.

By *flexibility*, the participants mean that it is necessary to measure the need of the newcomers. They should be able to vocalize their needs, which is named as "a la carte".

Responsibility of local governments: There are 4 main nationalities that move to Belgium, which are Spanish Moroccans, Romanians, Bulgarians and newly Guineans. These nationalities generally demand to learn the language in order to work, but they also demand educational information. Even the children of these families want to work, generally in part time job or they volunteer in organizations. These bring up the question of social rights, which is also the responsibility of the government. BON is trying to collaborate with them for the development of consistent, unified and clear communication to arriving EU-migrants.

National Level:

Consistency: development of a coherent national framework is important. There also should be consistency in local policies which should be the work of a national level, which makes this point both local and national level recommendation.

Recognition of regional differences concerning conditions, audience, obligations and content of social orientation programs should be developed.

Collaboration and exchange between regional welcoming offices should be developed.

Allowing for content on local needs: allowing for adaptability to local needs.

National recognition of the end result: national exam might help the promotion of the country as a whole rather than local courses. Moreover, recognition of the diploma/certificate by the national level is also important. So that, everybody has the same basic standards.



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Provide structured information on rights of EU migrants (obligation): new immigrants should be aware of their rights and obligations such as local voting or working conditions. They should be in the local point to make them be more aware of the situation

Opinion: If EU created leaflets, and people are not aware of this, it means there is a lack of communication. There should be collaboration sub/super locally with EU parliaments and local organizations. There must be a partnership between these two.

Opinion: Information on rights is important (NGOs). Our citizens, Poles come to our NGO for free information about every rights in the Netherlands. It's not a general information about the Netherlands; it's more for people who have problems; it's like prevention of problems. We talk about possible problems that might be critical/risky for our citizens. Opinion2: if information is available, then your NGO would work as a mediator.

Promotion of facilities such as workshops in all over the country.

European Level:

Connecting the EU and locals: Labor rights and social rights should be organized in order to connect European level and local level. This is important in order to raise awareness and dissemination of information.

Foster city partnerships and the exchange of good practises: local (city) partnership and exchange of good practises about integration programs such as funding is essential, because the financial part of this process is very important.