

Inclusive Handbook:

Tools and Techniques for Community Engagement

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NESEHNUTÍ Organization

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Introduction

This handbook aims to share the experiences and good practices that our organisation uses in its work with newcomers. In the Czech Republic, we most often encounter the term "foreigner" or "migrant". We choose the term "newcomer" because it is not clogged with negative connotations and its breadth can cover a wider range of people who have chosen to live with us in the Czech Republic. The new European Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion for the period 2021-2027 articulates inclusiveness and openness as a fundamental pillar of the way of life in European society, and integration into it is therefore a right and a duty for all European citizens. We would like to start by explaining how we understand these concepts and what they mean to us. **Inclusion** is seen as a social investment that benefits local communities and the long-term prosperity of our societies and the stability of our economies. The process of inclusion involves the host society, which should create opportunities for the full economic, social, cultural, and political participation of newcomers, and it also involves the adaptation of newcomers, who acquire all rights but also responsibilities in relation to their new country of residence. We understand **integration** as a two-way process that requires active creation of conditions for a full life for newcomers on the one hand and active adaptation and assimilation on the other. Rather than the word "integration" we work with the word "inclusion" in our organisation. "Integration" implies acceptance of newcomers only in a limited way, for example in a legislative or socio-legal framework. We see "inclusion" as a long-term, complex process that reaches into all spheres of a person's life, where an individual can become a full member of society.



It is not only disadvantaged communities that need support; the focus should also be on communities that are self-sufficient, strong and cohesive, so that access to rights and a sense of security are ensured. Our organisation is not just trying to find technical tools to implement integration. We seek to bring experiences and activities that enable greater understanding. We all carry values more or less rooted in our culture. The values and rules of society create our identity and give us the feeling of being part of a group. Belonging to the values of one's culture is very important for everyone, especially if they are far from home. Therefore, the goal is not to accommodate the newcomers, but to find common ground on which to build healthy human relationships. This guide will offer you some activities that, in our experiences, promote inclusion and help build local communities.

Target groups

The primary target group of the activities of our Together for Diversity program is third-country nationals, including stateless persons or persons of undetermined nationality (newcomers) residing in the city of Brno and in the broader surroundings, i.e., in the South Moravian Region. These are mainly people living in Brno or in the surrounding area of the South Moravian Region who come to this locality from abroad. We aim to work with marginalised groups of newcomers who have problems with employability and social engagement (e.g., lack of social contacts and language barriers). We reach out to this group through our permanent contacts within the networks working with newcomers, and we also use the contacts that entities with a similar target group (newcomers) that operate in the South Moravian Region in Brno have. The target group includes mainly children, youth, young adults, young parents, and other vulnerable groups, such as females and senior newcomers.



People from the primary target group, i.e. third-country nationals, or newcomers, will be supported:

- 1) the opportunity to establish strong and secure relationships with local people
- 2) increase their organisational and communication skills
- 3) improve their language skills (knowledge of the Czech language)

The secondary target group of our programme are local residents of Brno, i.e. the general public, who are interested in the possibilities of integration of foreigners, volunteering, and who actively seek opportunities to participate in community events.





BUDDY PROGRAMM

This activity aims to build links between newcomers and locals by creating tandems to promote intercultural exchange and inclusion based on long-term personal experience.

Buddy [bady] is an English term for a friend. Buddy means much more to us than just a friend of the newcomer and the entire incoming family. It is also a person who accompanies, helps, teaches, and provides tips for living in Brno or information about cultural or educational opportunities. The role of buddies can be anything from teaching and practicing Czech, accompanying and helping at the offices, to spending leisure time together. But being a buddy is about more than just helping and teaching someone - quite the opposite. We would like to encourage buddies to relate to newcomers in a way that does not take over the responsibilities of newcomers and does not interfere with their independence.

The emphasis is on a friendly relationship where no one forces themselves or the other into anything.





Reciprocity

The whole program is built on the assumption that both sides have something to offer each other. Buddy is a teacher and a pupil at the same time, helping their incoming friend but equally helping the incoming volunteer, for example, when they want to learn or practise a foreign language they know or are interested in another culture or religion. Therefore, the relationship between buddy and newcomer promotes mutual learning and understanding. This relationship develops gradually and can take different forms depending on the particular couple. Someone may become a best friend or a buddy; while someone else may remain more on the level of a guide.



What does the organisation do?

What is its role?

Buddies, our organisation, provides support through training with experts and professionals on relevant topics. We offer opportunities for personal or group consultation and supervision as well as one-to-one consultation. We provide learning materials and games. Our organisation provides mentoring and other support as needed.



The steps that a person interested in the buddy program will go through:

FIRST CONTACT AND FILL OUT THE QUESTIONNAIRE

- We disseminate information about the program through flyers, in person, through volunteers, and on the Internet. One of the first steps for those interested in the program will be to fill out a short online questionnaire. After we receive it, we will contact them about the next steps.

TRAINING

- For those interested in the Buddy program, we are preparing training sessions with experts on understanding cultural differences and teaching Czech as a foreign language.

FIRST MEETING

- The first meeting of newcomers and buddies can occur at a joint community event, where several newcomers and buddies get together or individually. The community meet and greet event is organized by the organizing team and is designed to allow everyone to get to know each other in a fun activity.

REGULAR "CHECK IN"

- To check in with the newcomer on how the collaboration is going and whether both parties feel comfortable, we contact the tandems regularly each month to ask for a short report on how things are going. We only require a brief report, which is sufficient.

MEETING AND SHARING

- We create a space to share ideas with others, such as ideas for active tandem time, teaching materials, and other resources.



SUPERVISIONS

- Group supervision sessions offer the opportunity to talk about your insights and experiences in dealing with different situations or spaces to find solutions to specific challenges under the guidance of external experts. Attending the first supervision after about a month of buddy tandem meetings is a good idea. Supervisions are scheduled every two months.

FURTHER EDUCATION, INVITATIONS TO EVENTS

- As volunteers, participants are also invited to other events organised by the organisation.



Advice for a buddy

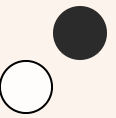
- It's not about performance and virtuosity
- Don't take responsibility for the behaviour of others
- Think about the possible traumatic background of the newcomers
- Communicate crisis and unpleasant situations with the coordinator
- Ask questions, be interested, and don't expect everyone to be a reflection of the cultural background they come from
- Respect diversity and try to avoid prejudices and stereotypes
- Find out about your buddy's culture and religion; you can avoid awkward situations at the outset to establish more accessible communication
- Learning about each other's cultures and customs can be a very enriching and enjoyable part of your encounters; share your value and customs in a respectful way
- If your buddy says something inappropriate that affects you personally, keep a cool head and don't immediately give in to anger
- Find out what is the reason for the opinion and whether it is just a misunderstanding based on cultural differences





The role of the newcomer in the buddy program

- Be active and proactive.
- Articulate your needs.
- This is a mutually beneficial exchange; don't be afraid to come up with your ideas, suggestions, and solutions.
- Share your point of view.



LEARN CZECH LANGUAGE BY PLAYING: Kid's club, summer camp, active tutoring

We aim to offer the children of newcomers regular meetings as well as creative and fun Czech language learning through art, music, and movement activities. A low threshold is essential to us; we communicate information about the possibility of the kid's club in all the languages of the newcomers we target.

This is followed by the leisure activity of the children's summer camp, which offers the children of the newcomers a week-long “suburban” camp during the summer holidays with a varied program. We are based on the principles of non-formal education and inclusion. Children and parents of the newcomers are part of the meeting (e.g., during kid's club lessons), as well as Czech-speaking tutors and lecturers. When organising a summer camp, we offer half of the places to children whose native language is Czech so that the final composition of the summer camp is as inclusive as possible.





Kid's club

We often work with entire families of newcomers and know that an integral part of community activities are activities for children, which we consider central to the faster integration of children into the school system and their easier socialisation in the Czech environment. At the same time, through activities with children, we establish contact with the whole family and have the chance to involve them in our community integration activities. In addition, contact with the family can also act as social prevention; during informal meetings, a safe space is offered for sharing experiences and problems that the families of the newcomers are dealing with. The aim of our organisation is not to provide social and legal counselling. Still, we can give basic orientation and, if necessary, direct newcomers to organisations that offer these services and thus prevent possible problems.

Regularity and low threshold.

Once a week throughout the school year, we run an integration and language club for children from third countries. The low threshold is essential; the club is free of charge, our organization provides the facilities, and parents only need to register their children and then bring and pick them up. They can participate together with their children, or they can send their children alone. Once a month, we organize a thematic activity or parents and children, such as national and religious holidays (Christmas, Easter, Spring, and Autumn Equinox...) or just an open hour with activities for children and adults (board games, workshops).



Inclusive groups

Local children and children from different linguistic and socio-cultural backgrounds attend the group. This ensures their natural contact with their peers, which is particularly crucial for children from non-EU countries, as their lack of language skills can pose a risk to their socialisation, especially if the school they attend pays little attention to their inclusion. For the local children, meeting children from third countries is a way of expanding their social competencies, becoming aware of and appreciating differences, and finding common ground through informal learning and leisure activities. Suggested activities include discovering the world and its people, a year in nature, exploring nature as a typical home, or guided art activities. Through activities focused on language, stories, and activities that require natural cooperation, we non-violently promote the development of necessary social, linguistic, and cultural competencies. Experienced teachers and tutors lead the club.





Summer Inclusive Hub - Summer Camp

Another activity designed to lead to easier integration and socialisation is organised as a five-day suburban camp for children of people from third countries during the summer. The content of the camp includes leisure activities, informal ways of education, Czech language training, sport, music, and art activities, which lead to relaxation of the children and more accessible communication within the mixed group. During the camp, we work with children at risk of losing social contact with their peers during the summer holidays. We work with children who have fewer opportunities to spend their free time developmentally or educationally. The individual activities are designed as a combination of educational and leisure activities with a strong emphasis on creative work. We want to support children in their self-expression and forming their view of the world around them. Emphasis is also placed on respect for difference, self-knowledge, and developing social and cultural capital in children from third countries. During the camp, the children also discover the city where they live, visit institutions such as museums or libraries to broaden their knowledge of the local culture, and naturally learn about the opportunities that the city and its surroundings offer for living.

The Summer Inclusion Hub (a summer camp) is also designed to provide relief for parents who may find it challenging to provide childcare in a new environment or to look after their children during working hours because they do not have the support of extended family or friends. The planning of the program and the implementation of the activities involve members of NESENUTÍ, as well as collaborating volunteers and invited artists dedicated to the use of artistic creation in education.



Active tutoring

The activity is based on the creation of tutor-child tandems. The project coordinator is responsible for fulfilling and mapping the mutual needs and expectations and has an overview of the supply from the tutors (their focus, capacity, time possibilities) and the demand from parents and children (their needs, their level of knowledge, time possibilities). The tutoring is free of charge, and the tandems agree on the place and conditions of the course (time, premises, regularity, frequency).

Networking, reaching out, connecting

Networking is essential to our work, both with similar organizations that work with newcomers and with, for example, educational disciplines that focus on teaching children, young people, and adults. In an activity called active tutoring, we are reaching out to students of pedagogical disciplines, either to volunteer in our organization or so that they can fulfil their compulsory teaching practice and thus increase their competencies. We then reach out to the families of the newcomers and map their needs. It is then the responsibility of the coordinator to set up tutoring tandems, to ensure that they are connected, and to be available to offer active solutions if, for whatever reason, the tutoring is not going as the parties imagine. The activity follows the course of the school year, with recruitment starting in September, and in our experience, there are often changes in the half term, ending in June, just like the school year.



COMMUNITY MEETINGS

Our target group is diverse in age, language, and culture. When planning any event, it is necessary to take this into account. Before we start planning any activity, we need to find out the expectations and needs of our target group. A short questionnaire or semi-structured interview with each participant will help to gather this information and should precede any event or project. We then need to get creative with the results and come up with an event that will engage the newcomers, benefit them (workshop, educational session, cooking and dining together, active recreation, exploring the area, visiting places of interest), provide a safe space, low threshold, wheelchair accessibility, and proactively yet naturally help to create healthy relationships.

What to find out in advance

The interested knowledge and unique needs of the male and female participants (for space, food, accommodation, whether there is or will be a companion with them), communication skills (language proficiency - level, need for interpretation), practical and organisational matters (transport to the event site, contact details) gender identification of the participants, possible expectations, and time availability.



Examples of community events

- Morning program for families with children
- Meeting of mothers and children
- Jointly organised event (e.g., children's day, carnival)
- Brunch for newcomers and our volunteers
- Film screenings

Do you know why community action? They create an informal space.

Public institutions such as schools, associations, leisure centres, etc., play a vital role in the integration process, its set-up, and subsequent success. They are the carriers of the initial information about the new environment where newcomers find themselves. The possibilities for personal, informal encounters between newcomers and locals in such institutions could be more extensive. There needs to be more spaces where newcomers feel welcome and accepted and have the opportunity to experience interest in themselves, their stories, and their life experiences. Through community events targeted at different age groups, and through language support and networking of intercultural workers in this area, we are trying to strengthen the active and natural integration of newcomers into the majority society in the South Moravian Region to raise awareness among the majority society about the life of foreigners in the Czech Republic, to contribute to a more balanced and truthful view of newcomers, and to inform the general public.



The isolation of newcomers and their lack of involvement in local society exacerbates prevailing mutual prejudices that hinder the creation of strong, inclusive communities and disadvantage newcomers in the labour market, the education system, and their ability to live a whole and dignified life.

Valuable benefits of such project activity and the social ties created include improved orientation of newcomers in the city, a better understanding of cultural and social specifics of life in the Czech Republic, the opportunity to participate in the organisation of community events actively and actively contribute to the life of the local community.

Strong ties to the locals help newcomers regain a lost sense of security and strengthen their ability to develop further. The relationships formed motivate newcomers to settle more permanently and to seek long-term employment and stable housing.

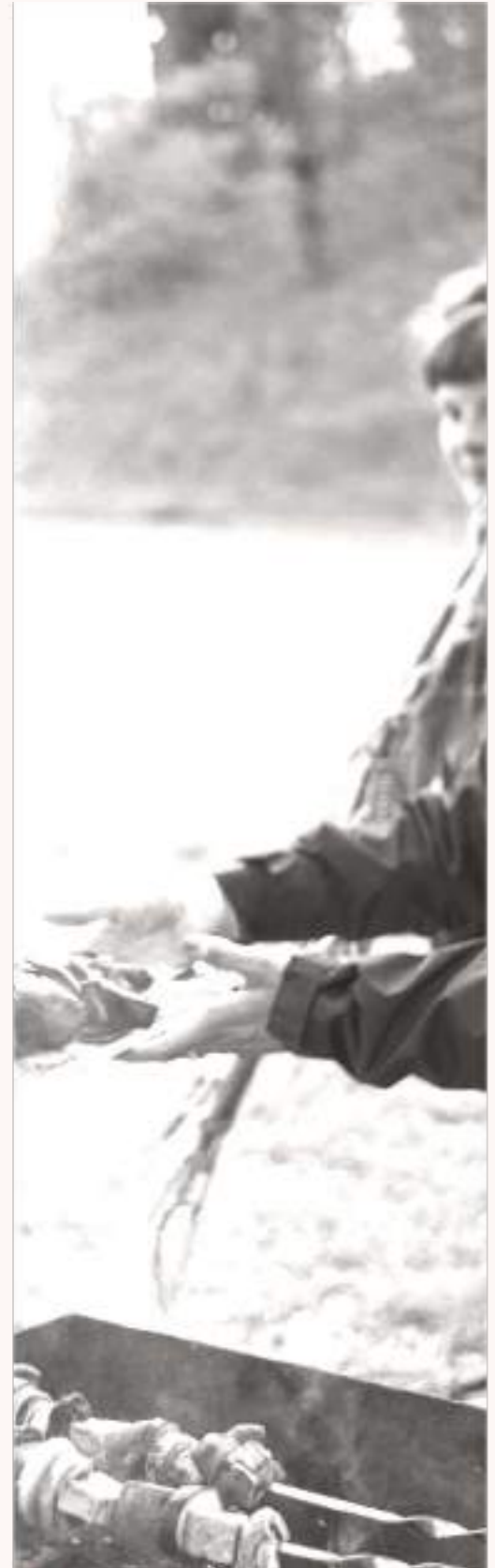




INCLUSIVE GRASSROOTS ACTIVITIES

NESEHNUTÍ has long focused on inclusion "from below" through informal leisure, educational, and community activities.

These activities are an effective and attractive way for newcomers to acquire and expand the necessary knowledge and skills relevant to their daily functioning within their new community. They facilitate establishing and strengthening social ties, increase the diversity of their social networks, and, last but not least, broaden their horizons and opportunities for self-fulfilment. The chance to meet and interact with local communities is essential for newcomers at school, in the office, at a sports club, or in the neighbourhood. Whether educational, cultural, or sporting, joint events bring people together and thus help combat xenophobia, exclusion, or radicalization in society.





Awareness of inequalities

Newcomers are often subject to social isolation linked to language and social and cultural barriers that prevent them from becoming a whole part of society and actively participating. They are usually excluded from attending public events simply because language barriers prevent them from accessing information about the events and engaging during the event itself. Through community-based intercultural events, we want to facilitate the establishment of new social ties, in addition to deepening their interest in the local community, active participation, and learning about the local community and the place where they live and its surroundings, so that they can feel at home and use all the tools available to facilitate their full integration into society.

Newcomers are often offered unskilled positions and menial jobs. They need to be equipped with sufficient knowledge of the environment or the necessary contacts to find adequate offers. Therefore, we must show newcomers that they are part of the local society and provide them with the space and opportunities to form the necessary links.



Safe space is a necessary condition for inclusion

Inclusive spaces need to be rebuilt on a per-event basis. Could you identify needs and requirements, limitations, and indispositions in advance? A good team can guarantee a quality event; the more diverse its composition (e.g., including newcomers among the implementers), the higher the likelihood of success.

Community intercultural activities also benefit the local community and society as a whole. It is also an opportunity for the visiting community to broaden and enrich their social contacts, share their experiences, and learn from each other. A respectful and inclusive society engages all stakeholders in a way that strengthens the cohesion of society and contributes to its all-round development.



Requirements for inclusive community action

Intercultural communication

Communication in a foreign language

Coordination and collaboration in an intercultural team

Communication of intercultural events towards the public and target groups

How to share intercultural actions

•NGOs •travel •clubs •leisure centres •schools, kindergartens •interest groups In institutions with which the newcomers are in contact (authorities, ministries) •municipalities and municipal authorities •volunteer centres cultural institutions •related and verified employers •restaurants, cafés.

It is not only these places and institutions that we are approaching to share with our clients and offer them the opportunity to join the event and become our partners. It is also important to network with workers and staff in organizations dealing with the integration of foreign nationals. Our organization initiates meetings and events dedicated to the transfer of know-how and sharing the effects of integration measures and the standard search for a greater understanding of the needs of newcomers. Such activities also have an impact on the work of the staff involved.



Used tools

Our organisation relies primarily on non-violent communication and non-formal education principles to create activities and design events. Lessons have their practical and theoretical parts, based on rehearsals. We use movement in space to stir up energy.






KULINÁRNA

a culinary workshop and an intercultural activity

Kulinárna is a long-term community activity whose primary goal is to create a space for intercultural encounters, spread awareness among the mainstream public about migration and refugees, and provide citizens with direct personal experience with representatives of other cultures. The culinary room is an opportunity to encounter the traditions and culinary arts of the incoming participants of the project. Each meeting is dedicated to a specific theme, chosen by the chef or chefs who prepare the particular Culinary. The newcomers can implement their ideas and try organizing a public event independently.

The course of the event

This is a regular meeting, e.g., once every three weeks. The frequency is always set individually according to the number of people who wish to attend the event. For example, in our partner organisation, Über den Tellerrand in Berlin, the frequency of meetings is much higher due to the population and the number of interested people in the metropolis. The length of one meeting is about 5 hours.



Form and application form. An invitation to the event follows the meeting itself, so we recommend attaching a questionnaire - a registration form, through which we will find out information about the visitors and prepare the event to be as inclusive as possible and barrier-free. It would be best for you to find out the needs and limitations of the participants (dietary restrictions, preferred address, etc.).

Involvement of all visitors. Volunteers, staff from the organisation, the public, and visitors are involved in the event. Participants and attendees can be offered roles beforehand or on-site: leading a culinary workshop, cooking, photography, devising an icebreaker, keeping track of the time and progress of the event, cleaning up together, helping with interpretation and translation, and babysitting.

Division of responsibilities and the role of the coordinator. It is advisable to designate one person responsible for leading the event, keeping track of time, taking the floor, and being the event guide. Such a person can welcome each participant and introduce themselves, the space, and the event timetable. Setting aside a safe space where anyone can relax, take a breather, or retreat (e.g., one room) is advisable. Participants are asked to create a name tag for the event and add a pronoun to address them.

Event rules. Next, event attendees are introduced to the rules for the event. Each organisation has its own, and we recommend a simple, clear list (e.g., wash hands before handling any food, follow the chosen dress code, be considerate, exclude racist and sexist language, and respect when someone does not want to be photographed or videotaped). When the rules are mentioned, participants can be asked to voluntarily contribute raw materials, appealing for participation in the clean-up.



The course of the event. Once all the participants have arrived, a short familiarisation activity will introduce the participants to each other. A playful and informal method of introductions (icebreaker) can be used. The leader of the culinary workshop will present their menu, propose the procedure, estimate the timetable, divide the work, and divide the participants into working groups. In the working groups, culinary activities occur, followed by preparing the standard table, eating together, cleaning up, and closing.

During the event. Throughout the event, it is possible to introduce the participants informally and indirectly to the food customs of the country or region where the food is coming from. It is also an opportunity to create informal links between the newcomers and the locals, a safe space where participants can share information and communicate about many things. Another important goal of the activity is to provide the opportunity for a personal experience of meeting newcomers, which is often unmistakable in building an open attitude towards other cultures, thus paving the way for more accessible inclusion for newcomers. The activity also aims to indirectly reach the public in the online space of social networks by sharing photo and video recordings of the workshops.



WORKING WITH VOLUNTEERS

During our community and educational events, we meet people who want to be active, participate more in the community, take part, and influence what is happening around them. They differ in their knowledge (whether theoretical or practical), the topics they are interested in, and the resources (whether financial or time) they can devote to pursuing their goals. Such people are essential to our activities. Among them, we are looking for volunteers and volunteers for permanent and closer cooperation with our organization. Moreover, they can form possible candidates for job offers in our organisation.

We don't just target newcomers; we see quality in long-term, community work. If we connect with a few individuals, we can impact the community. We are also concerned with empowering, creating safe spaces, and putting space and resources in the hands of those who don't have as many opportunities to express and assert themselves.





Our activities aim to lead to community building and a positive, truthful image of newcomers in Czech society. We also target the general public, who are united, for example, by living in one metropolis/region. For us, the general public is defined locally.

We actively seek out interested locals and newcomers, thinking through the steps leading to meetings and networking.

Networking is essential to our work with similar organisations, institutions, schools, kindergartens, universities, and interest groups. We look for individuals and groups interested in similar topics to meet or create spaces for meeting and sharing (for example, a platform for workers focusing on integration and inclusion).





Conclusion

This handbook is not a closed, immutable, or complete list and description of the activities we carry out in our organization when we focus on working with newcomers. We are open to change, adapt, and transform our methods according to the experiences and needs of our target groups, volunteers, and professionals. We hope that it has conveyed to our readers some of the principles that underpin our work and that it has broadened their awareness of the possible activities and approaches that can be taken to working with newcomers.

This handbook aims to be an open material to draw, build on, and develop. We would be grateful for its dissemination, feedback, and sharing of your ideas, insights, and comments.

The handbook is part of the project "Community RE-Awaken - Tools and techniques for more resilient youth communities" is funded by the European Union



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2024