



**FACILITATOR'S  
GUIDE FOR  
WELCOMING  
SESSIONS**



## FACILITATORS GUIDE FOR WELCOMING SESSIONS

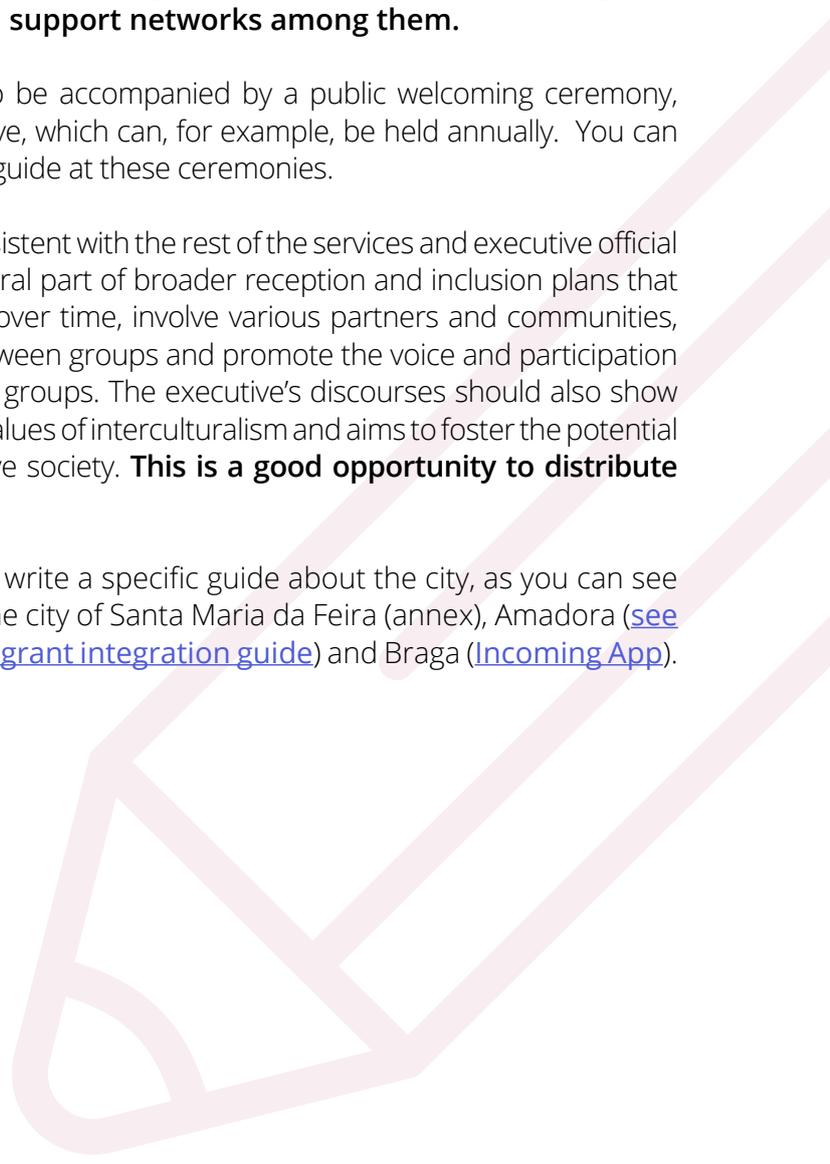
To enhance inclusion and a truly intercultural city, we recommend each city to promote welcoming sessions.

**These sessions, in addition to demonstrating initiative and real willingness to integrate newcomers into city life, enhance positive interaction between different groups and people, promoting the creation of bonds and support networks among them.**

These sessions can also be accompanied by a public welcoming ceremony, attended by the executive, which can, for example, be held annually. You can distribute this welcome guide at these ceremonies.

They should also be consistent with the rest of the services and executive official positions, being an integral part of broader reception and inclusion plans that follow people's journey over time, involve various partners and communities, enhance interaction between groups and promote the voice and participation of people from minority groups. The executive's discourses should also show that the city follows the values of interculturalism and aims to foster the potential of a diverse and inclusive society. **This is a good opportunity to distribute this welcoming guide.**

It may also be useful to write a specific guide about the city, as you can see in the examples from the city of Santa Maria da Feira (annex), Amadora ([see here](#)), Oeiras ([Ebook migrant integration guide](#)) and Braga ([Incoming App](#)).



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SESSIONS****HOW TO IMPLEMENT THESE SESSIONS?**

The sessions are held in groups and can be held online, if it is impossible to perform in person, but we always recommend the in-room, in order to promote positive interaction between group members.

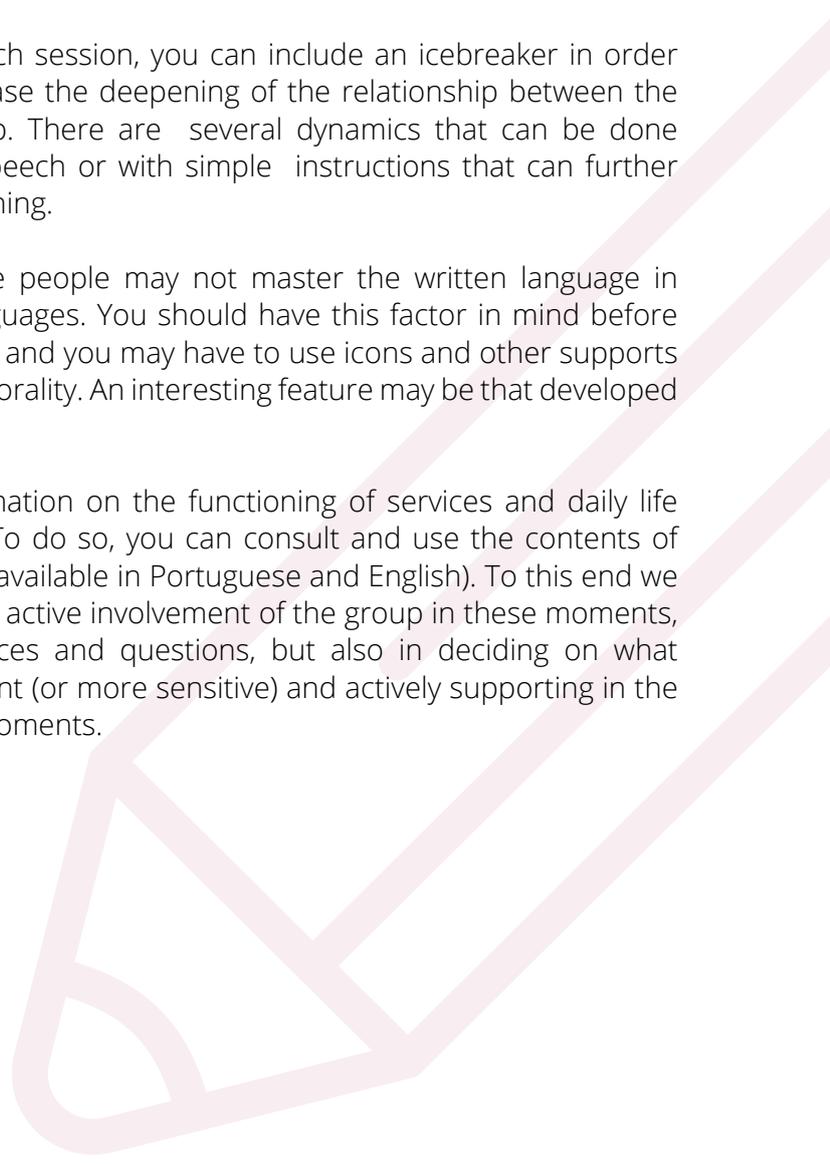
They can be short moments over a period of time or be part of an integration course that includes, for example, Portuguese lessons.

If you want to hold these sessions and at the same time enhance the learning of Portuguese, we estimate that it takes in total about 75 hours to finalize all content.

At the beginning of each session, you can include an icebreaker in order to progressively increase the deepening of the relationship between the members of the group. There are several dynamics that can be done without resorting to speech or with simple instructions that can further enhance language learning.

Don't forget that some people may not master the written language in your or your main languages. You should have this factor in mind before preparing the sessions, and you may have to use icons and other supports for the development of orality. An interesting feature may be that developed by the [lcoon](#) project.

In each session, information on the functioning of services and daily life in Portugal is shared. To do so, you can consult and use the contents of this Welcoming Guide (available in Portuguese and English). To this end we always recommend the active involvement of the group in these moments, sharing their experiences and questions, but also in deciding on what moments will be relevant (or more sensitive) and actively supporting in the preparation of these moments.



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SESSIONS****PRACTICAL IDEAS**

- According to the theme chosen for each day, introduce information on the operation of services, spaces and activities. Practical classes with field visits can be included. For example, if the topic is transport can organise a public transport trip together (where people will be invited to experience the whole process, from consultation of timetable, search for stops, purchase of tickets, etc.), a trip to the local bank, finance services or supermarket. These activities will have to be prepared in advance, requiring active involvement and partnership by the entities to visit.
- Ask each person to choose a topic where they feel most comfortable to share their experience (e.g., tell a story about how they learned how to resolve their affairs at school, or social security).
- Propose the celebration of the important cultural and national celebrations of countries of origin of the group, asking if, when and how they would like to celebrate it with the group (you can make use of the calendar provided), it is always important that this comes with an explanation of the meaning of the celebration. These moments should be proposed according to the degree of trust that the group is establishing, investing in mutual understanding and avoiding creating moments of great discomfort. To this end, you should always consult the group and assess its readiness for such a moment (for example, if the celebration involves a religious practice can be complex for believers of other faiths, it will be necessary to avoid the most religious part and stick to the cultural aspects, offering only an explanation of the meaning for believers of that religion).
- Propose the celebration of the most common/ official celebrations in Portugal, always asking the group if they feel comfortable with such a celebration and how they could celebrate it, it is always important that this comes with an explanation of the meaning of the celebration.
- Take the opportunity to listen throughout the sessions to people's opinions: how does the welcoming in the city is working for them? And in the different services? What can be improved and how? What do you feel in need of to feel welcomed? How could they help with that improvement?

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Furthermore, it is recommended to promote the knowledge each person brings. Do not forget that people, although they may not master the language, have very relevant skills, knowledges, and experiences.

**PRACTICAL IDEAS:**

- On the first day, promote a presentation game that evidences the talents and skills of each person.
- Take time in the first sessions to listen to each person, motivating them to share about who they are, what they expect from these sessions and what they hope to bring to the group. It is possible to ask them to do so through drawings, images, in writing or verbally as each person feels more comfortable. It may be necessary to ensure simultaneous translation on this day, through other local persons who speak the languages, through the support of local associations, etc.
- Book a few sessions or part of each session for talent sharing (e.g. each person presents what they know how to do, teaches the rest of the group what they know or develops a hands-on workshop, etc.) – many things are possible to teach without sharing the same languages!
- Promote the learning of the languages of the people in the group through activities included in each session and make a glossary of the terms that the group deems most important in its main languages, which can then be distributed for future use of the group and to local public organizations and services.
- Invite other actors: local partners working in the field of inclusion, who develop activities that meet the interest of the people of the group, to present their organization; people from associations and formal groups related to the different places of origin, religions and cultural belongings of the members of the group, but also of others who are not represented in the group and who are expressive in the city.
- Also, in order to expand the network of contacts and support of people, invite native and non-native people who live in the city longer to support the sessions, teach some content, share their experience of integration and adaptation, disseminate social organisations and existing local migrants associations, etc.
- Associating these types of sessions with [mentoria](#) or sponsoring projects that promote interaction between native people, long-time residents and newcomers can be an asset to enhance the intercultural aspect of the project.
- We also recommend that non-formal and specific education methodologies for adult education be privileged.

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SESSIONS****WHO SHOULD IMPLEMENT IT?**

We suggest that people with sensitivity to the theme of inclusion should be involved, to whom we recommend that some basic training be provided before starting.

**We also recommend that the people involved can obtain prior information about the interaction with specific groups that may bring some sensitive issues in terms of interaction, through meetings with associations and members of these communities, etc.**

Mastery of English can be key, as well as the presence of local mediators, to translate and support sensitive issues that may arise.

If language learning is given, you may need to develop your language teaching skills.

It may happen that a certain group of people cannot be in the same room as another (at least in an early stage), or that it is necessary to negotiate with leaders and have a community member present to legitimize the sessions. At certain initial moments of establishing a relationship with communities it may be necessary to negotiate with sensitivity their presence in these moments, which may mean changing some part of the project (for example, changing the order of the contents, making sessions for separate groups at a first stage, adapting the contents, etc.) or even preparing the sessions together with someone in the community, and it can often mean asking other people to deliver the most sensitive content. This does not mean you should give up on promoting relations between different groups, or taking out certain important contents altogether, but it will help you to have more time to gain their trust and understand better the reasons why being in the same room or talking about certain issues is sensitive for them. In the end, you might need to reconsider the way these contents are being presented and the way you establish groups for the welcoming sessions to insure they are being presented in a respectful manner.

Some content may be sensitive to address, or people may be afraid about what it will be and how it will be addressed (e.g. in the area of health, religion, etc.).

Listen to community representatives often - it can be that many people are not participating in the activities for reasons of this kind. Put yourself in the place of co-learner: take these sessions as moments of mutual learning: **for those who are invited to the session and to those who deliver it.**

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Think that many cultural issues may not be easy to understand for you, but it is important to get more information in advance, listen to people, and show respect for their cultural practices. Also be careful about assumptions you may be making about a group based on your own traditions, values, cultures and experiences, for example about gender roles, daily habits and routines, clothing, food, etc. Always avoid making value judgments and issuing agreement/disagreement and your opinion. **The role of those who promote the sessions is to listen and transmit information, promoting the establishment of intercultural relationships based on respect and acceptance. If people do not feel comfortable in the sessions this goal will not be achieved.**

**Remember:  
we don't  
have to agree  
in order  
to respect!**