

MIRACLE

MODELS OF INTEGRATION THROUGH RELIGION, ACTIVATION, CULTURAL LEARNING AND EXCHANGE

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTIVE PARTICIPATION
OF MIGRANTS IN CHURCHES



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Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe

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The Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME) is the ecumenical agency on migration and integration, asylum and refugees, and against racism and discrimination in Europe. Members are Anglican, Orthodox and Protestant Churches and Councils of Churches as well as church-related agencies across Europe. CCME formally cooperates with the Conference of European Churches and the World Council of Churches.

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“... Well, many believe that the Lord dispersed languages in order to punish the human beings, but the exact opposite is true. He saw that uniformity made them disdainful and used to excessive and useless activities. Therefore He realised that humanity needed a remedy and gave us the gift of differences. [...] For this reason there is no need of a conceded and ostentatious tolerance, such as that which comes from the powerful, but rather a tolerance which is experienced, lived day by day, with the awareness that if it faded away the house would collapse and we would be left without shelter”.

Wu Ming,
Altai, Torino, Einaudi 2009

FOREWORD

Migrants' integration with European societies and their active participation is a topic of public debate, of a considerable number of studies and activities. But what have churches to do this topic? MIRACLE – Models of Integration through Religion, Activation, Cultural Learning and Exchange has been a project coordinated by CCME in the past 18 months, co-funded by the European Commission. The project was based on essential findings of an other EU-funded project, the POLITIS research project looking into the “active participation of new citizens”. For migrants, so one of the conclusions, are active in mainstream and migrants' associations, if opportunities are provided and – sometimes unconscious – hurdles are overcome.

In many European countries, churches are mainstream organisations. There are majority churches, counting the majority of citizens as members, minority churches with a long history in European countries, new minority churches, sometimes linked to a majority denomination in an other country, sometimes independent. Churches of all denominations, however, share the biblical conviction that every person is created in the image of God and, therefore, the dignity of the person must be upheld. Churches assist migrants and refugees in many different ways. But are churches a place of integration? Does religion play a role in integration processes?

The MIRACLE project, while by no means an empirical research project, has looked into different realities and has asked migrants about their views. The interviews with active migrants in different church realities have underlined the findings of others: some migrants are active in an ethnic congregation and a mainline congregation. They want to be part of their new home country and pray and worship in their own language. For many migrants, this is not a contradiction, it goes well



together. For many citizens, however, this is still a new situation. In many places in Europe, parishes strive to become bridges and to foster understanding, but there are still many congregations and Christians who have no experience and practice with newcomers from different countries and cultures.

Based on these experiences, and on training modules produced in yet another EU funded project, the Grundtvig training modules for political parties and trade unions, training modules for churches have been developed and tested in workshops in different countries and settings. The modules are a helpful tool, they can contribute to start the reflections on how congregations and churches can more actively welcome persons from different backgrounds and develop relationships, which are at the heart of all integration processes – a truly two-way process involving migrants and natives or settled citizens alike.

CCME is grateful to the partners in this project for their contribution, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, the Protestant Mission Service in France, the Evangelical Church in Germany, the Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy, Being Church Together in the Netherlands SKIN and the Church of Sweden and to the European Commission for the co-funding of the project from the INTI-Programme. Olivia Bertelli has coordinated the various project events and workshops, and together with the contribution by the trainer Beatrix Bauer, adapted the training modules to the different settings of churches. Marja-Liisa Laihia has added the experience of the cultural mediation method. Norbert Cyrus contributed his experience from the POLITIS and Grundtvig projects and assisted in training interviewers from the different countries, and Alessia Passarelli coordinated the interviewers and analysed the interviews with active migrants in churches. We wish to acknowledge these contributions, which together with the active participation of participants throughout the project have led to a strong affirmation: Active participation of migrants and settled citizens is worthwhile the effort, churches can indeed be a place of successful integration processes by building stable relationships and bridges.

Doris Peschke
General Secretary of CCME



INTRODUCTION

Migration is today a considerable challenge for European societies, and so it is also for Churches in Europe. Governments are promoting different policies, but how are Churches responding to migration? What is actually the situation of migrants in local churches? Are migrants actively participating and taking up responsible positions in European Churches?

Integration is indeed a two-way process, requiring mutual and equal efforts by migrants and the hosting society. It is widely recognized that cultural learning and exchange are fundamental pillars for the integration process. In this regard, religion and belief play a fundamental role as factors concerning the person's identity and as points of connection between individuals and communities, between migrants and natives. Dialogues established among mainline and migrant-led realities are gaining a lot of attention and support, because they are also platforms for mutual understanding and cooperation. Political parties, trade unions and civil society organisations are promoting intercultural initiatives valuing diversity. Also Churches in Europe are actively involved, not only in interreligious dialogue, but also in ecumenical dialogue with migrant-led churches. Thousands of persons from all over the world are enriching the spiritual dimension by actively participating in the life and decision-making of churches in Europe. In a church context the integration process can be considered by looking at the relations between migrants and natives in both traditional churches and migrant-led churches. In this context, churches can be understood as bridges between migrants and local communities. However, challenges and benefits of wider participation in the European societies ought to be considered.

This guide is intended to be a practical tool for all those churches and church-related organisations dealing with issues of interculturalism. Working on integration and active participation in churches is a challenging process, and the dynamics and outcomes differ according to the local context. In majority churches the process is often different from that in minority churches, thus requiring different solutions and attitudes. Similarly, addressing the issues of active participation in migrant-led churches brings to light specific features that have to be carefully considered.

This project benefited from the findings of the EU funded research project POLITIS – an inquiry into the active participation of “new citizens”, carried out between 2004 and 2007. The **MIRACLE project** has sought to understand if and how churches are



a welcoming harbour and a participatory environment for migrants and how the relations between the historical churches and the migrant-led churches can be developed and improved in ecumenical dialogue.

The MIRACLE project started in December 2008, and focused on migrants' participation and activation in Churches in several European countries. The project has been co-funded by the European Commission's INTI Fund Community Action 2007 and the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD).

Partners working together in the MIRACLE project were:

CCME – Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe

Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland

DEFAP – Protestant Mission Service, France

EKD – Evangelical Church in Germany

FCEI – Federation of Evangelical Churches in Italy

SKIN – Church Together in the Netherlands

Church of Sweden

Based on the methodology applied in the POLITIS research project, active migrants, members of traditional or migrant-led churches, have been interviewed in the countries of the project partners. While of course the project could not provide as extensive research as the POLITIS project, the interview analysis offers extremely relevant insights in the activation and participation processes in churches around Europe.

Seven training workshops were organised in the project countries which focused on the process of integration and active participation of migrants and natives in churches and on the relations between migrant-led churches and traditional churches. For these workshops, the "Diversity and Dialogue" method as well as the "WinAct-MIRACLE" methodology¹ were used in order to:

¹ The WinAct – MIRACLE method had been tested and taught in seven different trainings, gathering participants at national level (Finland, twice in Italy, the Netherlands, Germany) and European level (Sweden and France). All in all more than 150 participants attended these events, sharing experiences regarding integration and participation and good practices implemented in churches at local and national levels.



- ❖ understand the activation and participation of migrants in churches and in society at large, looking at the role that religious communities play in the integration process of migrant believers; and
- ❖ promote a reflection on the role and active participation of migrant-led churches in the ecumenical landscape and on new paths that their contributions are opening.

Many good practices of participation and integration within different churches' realities have emerged through the discussions, contributions and observations made by all persons participating in the MIRACLE events with strong commitment and interest.

The findings of the exercises conducted in the trainings organised all over Europe, the views of the migrants interviewed and the inputs given by all persons involved in this project are at the core of this publication. Based on these experiences, some recommendations were developed for facilitating understanding and promoting integration and active participation of migrants, thus going a step forward in the "Uniting in Diversity" working area. Indeed, the European MIRACLE project was able to link local and national experiences, projects and initiatives, such as those of "Being Church Together" (with migrant churches), and to collect, explore and analyse them, thus creating an important network of persons and know-how.

In the closing conference of the project in May 2010, participants expressed their appreciation, and the need for European exchange as provided by CCME through this project. If integration is indeed understood as a two-way process, the provision of time and opportunities to shape such processes remain as vital as awareness raising and training.



INTEGRATION AND ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF MIGRANTS IN CHURCHES

Olivia Bertelli

This guide is intended to be a practical tool for churches dealing with intercultural issues. It promotes the process of integration and active participation in churches, congregations and parishes. It is the final outcome of the MIRACLE project which focused on two main issues:

- ❖ integration and active participation promoted inside churches, and
- ❖ integration and active participation promoted through ecumenical relations.

This guide looks mainly at the former one: it contains recommendations for implementing a process of mutual exchange, cultural learning, conflict mediation, reciprocal integration and active participation. The focus on the first topic is due to the evidence collected throughout the MIRACLE project, where through a series of workshops and a collection of interviews the issue of active participation was addressed mostly, but not only, with regard to the situation within traditional and migrant-led churches.

As evidence from the POLITIS research project indicates, the situation in the country of residence for newcomers plays an important role also for the integration process. Therefore, the situation in churches differs for newcomers according to the size and denomination of the church, and indeed the role of the church in the country. Of course, the project could only look at realities in six countries and has sought to identify core issues, which provide the structure of this guide:

- ❖ Active participation and integration
- ❖ Migrant-led churches and traditional churches
- ❖ Majority and minority churches



ACTIVE PARTICIPATION AND INTEGRATION

The European Commission² defines integration as “a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all migrants and residents of member States”. It is a process, indeed, which connects individuals and communities, involving on the same level those taking part in it. It requires a mutual effort by all those participating in it: it invites them to share their knowledge, their cultures, their history, their identities, and to open up to a process which might well lead to a change for all the actors involved. Integration could be thought of as a bridge, built together by migrants and residents of Member States: they start from two different points and work together to create a new entity which is made up of the stones chosen by each one. If we consider the stones as the issues at stake in the integration process, we can imagine that everyone will have different preferences in choosing which stones to use for building the bridge.



The first pre-requisite for integration is the respect of the human rights³ of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers; a secure residence permit, equal access to

² COM(2005) 389 final “A common agenda for integration – Framework for the integration of third country-nationals in the European Union”. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52005DCo389:EN:NOT>

³ CCME holds the opinion that the International Convention on the protection of the rights of all migrant workers and of the members of their families should be followed as a point of reference in this regard.



health care services, education, social services, the acquisition of civil and political rights, rights of voting and standing at elections are important for the participation of migrants in societies. Furthermore, policies promoting integration should start as soon as migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and persons requiring others forms of protection, and members of their families arrive in a European Member State. It is important to provide access to adequate housing, to qualify and involve them in trainings for linguistic competence, civic rules, professional skills, as well as to facilitate the certification of their academic skills. Integration policies should assure the safety of migrants and of local society, providing proper spaces and opportunities for migrants to develop a good standard of living, and thereby reducing the risk of relying on informal structures. The situations will vary, in some countries health care and education are provided entirely by the state, in others persons are obliged to pay. For integration, however, the principle of equality is vital, and the access to such rights and services needs to be equal for migrants and natives to create a common ground.

Another important pre-requisite for integration is the development of a welcoming and inclusive society⁴. Indeed, integration is not a linear and homogeneous process but has a multidimensionality as it relates to different actors and areas life (a sort of spider-web of processes), which makes it pervasive and unique to each field, from schools to work places, from houses to political parties and trade unions, from churches to associations and from formal to informal networks. Participants attending the workshop of the MIRACLE project held in Italy defined integration in terms of:

“Making everyone participating, avoiding walls”

“Making the ‘stranger’ feel less ‘stranger’”

“Acknowledging the other for what he/she is without considering him/her as identical to myself”

“It is a process that never ends where we try to reach a level of acknowledgment and appreciation of the others’ culture”

⁴ Joint comments on the Commission Communication presenting **A Common Agenda for Integration Framework for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals in the European Union**, COM (2005) 389 final, CCME and 5 Christian partner organisations, :April 2006, http://www.ccme.be/fileadmin/filer/ccme/70_DOWNLOADS/95_ARCHIVE/2006/2006-04-18_Chr_Com_-_Integration_Framework_for_the_Integration_of_Third-Country_Nationals_in_the_EU.pdf ECRE “Towards the integration of Refugees in Europe” July 2005, <http://www.ecre.org/files/Integ.pdf>



“Encounter of different cultures where people are able to make a step back and create together something new”

Integration is closely linked to the concept of active participation. In this guide this means not only taking part as a member of a church or as a leader, but also as being involved in different activities and affairs in a substantial and continuous way, being able to promote new initiatives and to change one’s own personal condition, position and existence by actively participating, but not necessarily taking a leading role. Some definitions of active participation given by participants at the workshop in France were:

“Positive involvement and ready for action in all situations; seeing and doing, listening and sharing, give and take”

“Facing together the challenges of common Christian witness”

“It means partaking in the same project (or mission) with a willingness to learn from each other and to accept each other as equals”

“Active participation is when all members can/are allowed to contribute; sharing abilities and experiences”

The understanding of active participation in the MIRACLE project was underpinned by the collection of qualitative interviews of migrants actively involved in traditional and migrant-led churches. Through the exercises several practical proposals for active participation have emerged, also addressing the structures and attitudes that obstruct active participation.

MIGRANT-LED CHURCHES AND TRADITIONAL CHURCHES: TWO USEFUL LABELS

The definition of migrant-led churches and of traditional churches is highly debated. The easiest and most broad definition for migrant-led churches states that: “migrant-led churches are those churches, ethnic or international, established by migrants⁵ mainly for migrants”.

According to the criteria adopted, the range of churches falling under this definition can vary pretty much. In this guide, migrant-led churches are considered as

⁵ The term ‘migrants’ covers persons temporarily or permanently living in a State where they were not born and have some significant social ties to this State, whether they are refugees, asylum seekers, migrant workers, persons granted complementary forms of protection, or family members of a migrant



churches founded and led by migrants, which refer to a foreign country or region, and in which 2/3 of the persons attending have experienced a migration process and/or which define themselves as migrants. International churches are not directly included in the analysis, but are considered a very relevant and interesting example of co-habitation of different nationalities under the same “church-roof” and, in this sense, can be regarded as potential good practice of integration and active participation. Finally, migrant-led churches are not considered to be “for migrants”: the very idea of this guide is to show a possible path for being an open and welcoming church, which belongs to God and which is for the people of God, irrespective of differences related to national or ethnic origin, gender or social class.

The term “traditional church” refers to those churches constituted by natives. They can also be referred to as “mainline”, “mainstream”, “historic” churches. The main difference between migrant-led churches and traditional churches is that while the former can be transformed into a traditional church due to changes in the composition of the members (natives become the majority, or migrants’ descendants take over and change e.g. the language of the worship service and of the church related activities) or due to an internal process of “naturalisation”, the opposite cannot be true: a traditional church, even if migrants become the majority of the members will not be transformed in a migrant-led church. The process of “naturalisation” of a migrant-led church does not always take place and depends on many different factors related to the local context, the type of church, the links with “mother churches” in the country of origin, or another country, and the composition of the members. Furthermore, it should be noted that the MIRACLE project did not study the influence of the denomination as a factor fostering or inhibiting integration and participation of migrants. The denomination has, however, some bearing on the relations between migrant-led and traditional churches: If the migrant-led church belongs to the same denominational family, e.g. of Reformed Churches, the recognition by a traditional Reformed Church is easier than for a church of an entirely different denomination. In countries where all denominations have a good ecumenical cooperation, building relations with migrant-led churches affiliated to one of the denominations may therefore be easier than in countries where ecumenical dialogue and cooperation is less established. While the issue of welcoming and integrating newcomers is common to all denominations, the response and concepts may differ.

Another important factor for the two types of churches so far discussed, and highly relevant for the ecumenical relations, is the legal status, which may differ



tremendously between the different European Union Members States. In some countries, one or several churches are recognised as a legal entity, while in other countries they may be registered as a religious or even a cultural association; some countries have a history of a “state church” while others separated the institutions of church and state long ago. Therefore, migrant-led churches are often registered as cultural associations, thus not protected as a religious body, and sometimes remain unregistered for several different reasons. This also entails a general difficulty in data collection and in measuring the phenomenon, allowing only for summary estimates of how many persons belong to migrant-led churches.

Similar difficulties are met in determining the attendance of migrants at traditional churches. There are, however, different ways for estimating more precisely the presence of Christian migrants: the first one is by considering the percentage of Christians in the country of origin, assuming that the same percentage applies to the persons migrating from that country, and calculate that percentage with regard to the community of migrants in a specific country of destination. In some countries, the religious affiliation is registered by the authorities, in others not. It is evident that the two definitions are broad and not exhaustive. It would indeed be worthwhile to undertake further comparative research into the reality of migrant-led churches in European countries.

MAJORITY AND MINORITY CHURCHES

A crucial variable for understanding the different patterns and paths of the integration and active participation process occurring in churches in Europe is linked to the nature of the churches. The difference between the two categories of churches has been translated in the approach towards the ecumenical dialogue with migrant-led churches and also in the promotion of active participation of all members.

In the MIRACLE project the partners were three majority churches (Church of Sweden, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and Evangelical Church in Germany), two situations related to minority churches (the Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy and the French Protestant Missionary Service, and one association of migrant-led churches (Samen Kerk in Nederland).

The process of “Being Church Together”, through initiatives and local projects, was visible first in minority churches and later in majority churches. Could this be interpreted as a delay of the response given by the churches to the issue of migration? It does not seem so, since majority churches as well as minority



churches have a long history of working with migrants in terms of social assistance, legal counselling, and provision of shelters and so on. Migration is not a new phenomenon and in many countries with a protestant majority church the presence of migrant communities dates back to several decades. However, it seems that the understanding of the spiritual dimension and needs of the persons migrating have been understood as temporary, addressed by the provision of spiritual care and worship life in different languages at different times, but rarely together. Generally speaking, sometimes churches have been more focused on helping migrants and less concerned about sharing spiritual life and faith together. At other times, the decreasing attendance of people and the growing emptiness of churches had stimulated a welcoming attitude towards new members coming from other countries which were giving a "breath of fresh air". This has typically been the reality for some minority churches; however, starting from an initial openness, not every parish has developed good practices of integration within its walls.

The distinction between majority and minority churches helps in identifying the two main macro approaches so far present in churches around Europe for dealing with believers coming from other countries. However, good practices of integration and active participation are the result and combination of policies coming from the main national/federal bodies as well as from local initiatives at parish/congregation level. National/federal policies and guidelines might influence the implementation of good local practices, but also local initiatives organised and led by congregations might facilitate the creation of strategies at a national or international level. Indeed, there are several relevant factors at the micro level determining the openness of a community and influencing the process of integration and participation of all its members, not only migrants. The social composition of the single communities, in terms of the power-relations between established members and newcomers, plays a crucial role in promoting a process of mutual accommodation, exchange and growth with new members irrespective of their country of origin.



INSIGHTS INTO MIGRANTS' EXPERIENCES IN PARTICIPATING IN CHURCHES IN EUROPE

Alessia Passarelli

BACKGROUND

Do migrants integrate in Europe? Do migrants integrate in churches? Do Europe and churches integrate with migrants? What are the processes behind migrants' involvement? To what extent can churches be tools of integration for migrants even in the wider society? In order to find answers to these questions the report looks into some of the issues related to migrants' integration in both traditional and migrant-led churches.

Why a study that investigates the role of churches in the integration journey of migrants? First of all because churches are among the first places migrants turn on to upon arrival in the new country. Secondly, because religion may serve as a bridge between the old and the new environment providing spiritual as well as material support to migrants. Thirdly, because being active in a congregation - be it as leaders, ministers, translators, or counselors - is an empowering tool for migrants.

This research, based on the research methodology of the POLITIS project⁶, seeks to understand migrants' experiences through interviews carried out in each of the countries involved in the project⁷. For this purpose - and in consultation with CCME partner organisations - interviewers identified immigrants active in churches who arrived in Europe as adults, to be interviewed. Interviews were then carried out among active migrants in mainline churches as well as those who are active in migrant-led churches. The interviewers, who were generally coming from a migrant background themselves, received a 3-day training on qualitative research methods⁸.

This is a qualitative research, and, therefore, it does not aim nor claim to be statistically representative of the active participation of migrants in the country involved in the project or in Europe, but it looks at processes behind migrants'

⁶ For more information regarding the POLITIS project, its aims, its publications please visit <http://www.politis-europe.uni-oldenburg.de/>

⁷ Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Sweden.

⁸ The training and the material given to participants were based on and adapted from the POLITIS material.



involvement (i.e. how and why migrants decided to become active), building on the experiences shown in the data.

The full report, including the methodology used, the challenges faced and the analysis of the themes emerging from the interviews, is available on the CCME website. The following paragraphs contain the summaries of the analysis of the themes; and this executive summary ends with some conclusive reflections.

FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH CHURCH IN EUROPE

Data shows that migrants look for a church which resembles as much as possible the church they know in the country of origin. However, the very first impression is decisive to stay or to go somewhere else. Changing or looking for another congregation is not merely related to the welcoming received, but it is also related to more liturgical and theological issues. In addition, it appears that being welcomed is the first step in feeling part of the community and building the basis for beginning the journey towards integration. Migrants, on their side, also need to first understand the new environment, which might be quite the opposite of what they were used to, and secondly, once welcomed, take an active role in the church.

FACTORS BEHIND MIGRANTS' ACTIVATION

The first consideration to be drawn from the data is the existence of relations between migrants' previous involvement in their church in the country of origin and their activism in the church in the new country. However, interviewees suggest that there are factors promoting or discouraging their participation in church as well as in society. A welcoming environment followed by an involvement of the newcomers in church and extra-church activities does foster an active participation of migrants. On the other hand, a cold reception along with the language barrier discourages migrants' participation, not only active participation, but participation in general. However, what is perceived as a 'cold reception' may be related to cultural differences, and in the journey towards integration migrants have also their role to play. Finally for migrants their legal status in the new country as well as the legal framework regulating migration and integration issues influence their possibility to be active in churches as well as in civil society.

ROLE OF THE CHURCH FROM THE MIGRANTS' PERSPECTIVE

Churches as institutions have a role to play in supporting migrants. Drawing from the data it is clear that the church acts as a bridge-builder for migrants – to link the old and new realities. Churches provide migrants with stability: spiritual as well as



material. Through the religious communities it is possible to establish links and connections which can lead to friendship and employment. Migrant-led churches, especially those with a strong ethnic component serve not only in maintaining religious life - which might not be present in the same form in the new country - but also their cultural identity. Different roles emerge which migrant-led and mainline churches can have in the integration process of migrants, and this is one of the reasons why some of the respondents found themselves attending (both) two congregations. Sometimes migrant churches use the buildings of mainline congregations for worships and other activities but there is not always a real exchange or communication between them.

EXPERIENCING INTEGRATION

Data shows that experiences of integration are diverse; they are influenced by the migrants' attitudes as well as by the cultural and political context in the receiving societies. In their everyday life migrants are confronted with racism, stereotypes – both positive and negative - and prejudices. Another important issue arising from the interviews is the risk of dependency on the support provided by churches or by civil society in general. Respondents also highlight the importance of 'getting to know each other' as a crucial step towards overcoming prejudices, stereotypes, racism and setting the basis for integration. To conclude, it appears evident that migrants' active participation is crucial in fostering their integration process in churches as well as in society.

CONCLUSIVE REFLECTIONS

From the experiences of the migrants interviewed in the Miracle project some more general considerations can be made. First of all, when discussing migrants' participation in both mainline and migrant-led churches, it is crucial to understand the place that religion occupies in their life. Ugba (2006) points out how Western forms of worship are not holistic as it is the case in other parts of the world, including Africa. Even if in Europe there are religious influences in public life, for private citizens, religion, theology and faith are not so intertwined with their daily life as it is for some migrants. This can create misunderstandings and problems as it is often not simply a matter of different liturgies or different theological approaches. However, it is important to keep in mind how diverse the Christian landscape in Europe is with the presence of different confessions, denominations and sensitivities; furthermore, it appears evident that the perception of what is a



holistic worship and what forms of expression it requires is heavily influenced by culture.

Secondly, migration is often a traumatizing experience to the extent that some of the interviewees were not comfortable in talking about it after years, to avoid going through painful memories. Once in the new country, churches are one of the first places migrants turn to. Ebaugh and Chafetz (2000) point out that the benefits of religious practices for migrants are not only psychological but that churches – and religious organisations in general - serve the material needs of immigrants. Furthermore Hirschman, who studied the American situation, believes that religion can have a more central role in their lives after immigration than before. 'The certainty of religious precepts can provide an anchor as immigrants must adapt and change many other aspects of their lives and habits. Religious values can also provide support for many other traditional beliefs and patterns - intergenerational obligations, gender hierarchy, and customary familiar practices - that are threatened with adaptation to the seemingly amoral American culture' (Hirschman, 2007:396).

This leads us towards the third point of this reflection: re-building the sense of belonging. We have discussed the role religion plays before and after arrival in the new country and Handlin (1975) underlines that religion for migrants can indeed be considered a bridge linking the old and the new environment. However, it can be deduced that different church structures may lead the bridges towards different endings. Putnam (2000) distinguishes between social capital that is bonding and social capital that is bridging: bonding refers to the value assigned to social networks between homogeneous groups of people and bridging refers to that of social networks between socially heterogeneous groups. From the interviews a parallelism emerges between migrant-led churches as social capital that is bonding and mainline churches as social capital that is bridging. Choosing to be part of a mainline church can provide bridging by guaranteeing access to services and networks supporting migrants in their integration process in the receiving societies. On the other hand, migrant-led churches can provide bonding, a strong sense of belonging, often reinforcing religious and cultural ties, without opening up to a social network that goes beyond the migrants' community.

However situations are never straight-forward and there are churches, both mainline and migrant-led, which are able to provide bonding and bridging networks for migrants. Ultimately, it depends on what role individuals give to the church, what type of understanding of integration people as well as churches have, and on



the level of migrants' active participation. To conclude, going back to where we started: churches can be, and in fact are, agents and places of integration; however, even if the different agents agree on the concept of integration as a two way process, in their everyday practice they sometimes differ on the actions required in order to foster it, hindering their integration potential.

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

Olivia Bertelli

ADAPTATION OF THE METHODS TO THE CHURCH CONTEXT: EVIDENCE FROM TESTED EXERCISES

“Winning Migrants as Active Members”, this was the aim of the WinAct training modules developed after the POLITIS Research project⁹ for political parties and trade unions. The MIRACLE project benefited from the expertise provided by the trainers from the WinAct project, Norbert Cyrus and Beatrix Bauer. Beatrix Bauer contributed by adapting the modules of WinAct to the churches’ situation and served as a trainer in the workshops. This was combined with the “Diversity and Dialogue” training originally developed in Sweden during the 1980s as an antidote to the rising tide of racism which was accompanying the growth of multiculturalism. The WinAct - MIRACLE method provides a practical tool regarding the issue of “Being Church Together” with migrant, black and ethnic minority churches.

INTRODUCTION TO WINACT AND DIVERSITY AND DIALOGUE TRAINING¹⁰

The WinAct method was based on a European network of seven adult education institutions and was funded by the EU SOCRATES Grundtívog programme. It transferred the POLITIS findings into a programme to “train the trainer” in order to promote migrants’ active participation. Among the aims of the WinAct method was training adult educators conduct further workshops for officers of political parties and trade unions, in order to promote the civic and political integration of migrants.

The “Diversity and Dialogue” training programme has been developed in 1980 in Sweden with the purpose of solving conflicts involving identity and difference. It seeks to uncover the inner attitudes and ingrained prejudices which generate or consolidate discriminatory models of action. Discrimination may be applied according to gender, ethnicity, skin colour, sexual orientation or disability. Conflicts are the raw materials of the course. Only by dealing with the attitudes and

⁹ <http://www.politis-europe.uni-oldenburg.de/>

¹⁰ The author would like to express her gratitude to Marja-Liisa Laihia and Norbert Cyrus for the detailed information provided.



emotional factors at the root of our experiences, one can learn to understand and appreciate the consequences of one's own and others' behaviour. Only when we feel these insights under our skin will they stand the test of time and changing circumstances. From the perspective of the external observer, we can see how simple and stereotyped the structures of our conflicts are. But when we are ourselves participants in these conflicts, we cannot stay unaffected in our ivory towers. We have to come down to the market-place as equal combatants to sort out the living chaos. How do we behave then – do we sit in judgement? Do we withdraw? Or do we build? Every one has his/her own life story and background, giving a unique perspective which must be respected. As we come to understand the conflicts between different perspectives, we can see that attitudes and needs have consequences in the creation of structures. By assessing these consequences, we can find agreement on where we should and could be heading.

Both methodologies highlight two main concepts: diversity as a source of richness and the need to engage in dialogue for the purposes of mutual learning, exchange and solving (and preventing) conflicts. In the WinAct – MIRACLE methodology, participation is the core issue, highlighting its benefits and challenges and also the structures and attitudes that might prevent or promote it.

INTRODUCTION TO WINACT-MIRACLE

Promoting dialogue and diversity while praising together the Lord lead us to consider what an open and a welcoming church is and what the role of the church structures in dealing with the participation of newcomers is. It is not only about considering migrants' participation in historical churches, but also the participation of members from several countries (including the hosting one) in migrant-led churches as a proxy of the congregation's openness. The framework of the MIRACLE project is based on the idea that integration is a two-way process, so it is important to look at migrants' participation in traditional churches, but also at the role played by migrant-led churches. The crucial and challenging role that ecumenical relations between traditional and migrant-led churches have in promoting the integration process is also highlighted. In order to adapt the WinAct exercises, originally designed for secular organizations, to religious communities, we tried to identify the main issues that had to be included in the methodology. Indeed, understanding and promoting an idea of "Open Church" which is welcoming believers coming from other parts of the world needs also theological reflection. The main issues present in the WinAct-MIRACLE method are:



- the significance of being a welcoming and open community while not proselytising,
- the importance of sharing diversities while encouraging active participation,
- the efforts for promoting an everyday dialogue between different traditions (even within the same denomination), and
- the reflection on churches' structures in the integration and participation process.

In the last modules there are some challenging issues, reflecting on the future steps of "Being Church Together". In particular, the last module focuses on the contributions that migrants bring to expressions of faith, to ways of praying, believing, praising the Lord together (while respecting the right to listen and read the Gospel in one's language) and improving trainings for pastors and church leaders (both migrants and natives). This also poses the question how the 'Uniting in Diversity - Being one Church Together' principle is actually realized.

WinAct - MIRACLE follows, and aims to implement a truly participative and learner-centered approach. The exercises presented in the modules aim to initiate a collective learning process, taking into account what participants have experienced. Participants are required to possess already considerable knowledge and expertise on the issue and to be willing to share their expertise with other colleagues. The modules contain group-work, flashlight rounds, lecture, reality-check, feedback rounds, round table work, meetings, activities, discussion and much more – the trainers will have to select them according to their own ability and to the composition of participants and their needs. It is strongly recommended that a relevant part of the participants have a migrant background.

WinAct - MIRACLE provides adult educators/trainers, community leaders, church members and church clerks, a tool kit for training workshops. The training course "WinAct - MIRACLE" enables participants to design and conduct workshops for church clerks and church members in their country of settlement. It makes participants familiar with the WinAct - MIRACLE modules and teaches them how to transfer the modules to their specific national situation. In order to use this methodology at a local level, for a parish or congregation training, it is highly suggested to consider the following organizational framework based on the outline "who, what, where, when":



Who is going to take part in the workshop and who is going to conduct it? A methodology is as good as the person who is using it and as good as the persons who are receiving it.

What has to be focused on, what is the main aim and objective of the workshop? Where will the workshop be organized, and who will participate, influences the perceptions and experiences of the integration process, the dynamics and main challenges.

Where the workshop takes place is fundamental in determining who will take part, what the main issue will be and which exercises will be used: it is absolutely vital that the theme of the event has a concrete connection to participants' experiences. A local workshop for a congregation should deal with local issues of integration and participation in churches. A national workshop should look at national initiatives, networks, and structures involving participants from all over the State. A regional or European workshop should collect different experiences and provide new guidelines or new objectives to be adopted in several countries.

When the workshop will be held influences also who will be participating: weekdays or weekends make a difference for employees or volunteers. Will it be three hours or three days? It is vital to plan a structured time-frame according to the aim, the targeted participants and the budget.

SUCCESSFUL EXERCISES

In order to understand the phenomenon of integration and active participation, its dynamics and complexity, there is a series of exercises **"Complete the sentence..."** (active participation is..., integration is..., an open church is...). The aim is to reflect on words that seem to have an easy, acknowledged and common meaning, showing that actually, according to the definition given, there are many different interpretations of the phenomenon and of its solutions. However, only a joint or shared understanding will lead to further development in a workshop. Furthermore, these exercises highlight that without integration there is no participation – and without participation there is no integration, and that both natives and migrants have an equal right to participation and integration. As a participant stated: *"If a native does not let you integrate, you cannot participate; and if an immigrant does not want to integrate, he/she cannot participate"*.



Participation of migrants in political parties was also one of the issues discussed, and SKIN (Samen Kerk in Nederland) focused on this issue in a three-day workshop. There were different political wing at one table clearing up myths and stereotypes of the 'others': it was largely felt that it was necessary to get to know each other in order to be able to work together. Persons from political parties and churches were sitting for the first time at one table and got to know each other, talked with each other and not about each other. One exercise showed exactly this "Migrants/Natives perceptions on tradition and culture", which in the WinAct-MIRACLE methodology turned into "**Migrants/Natives different ways to believe and pray**". In this exercise, the two sides of "Uniting in Diversity" were shown: there were three groups in this exercise, one "migrant group", one "native group" and one "mixed group". The two "non-mixed groups" were talking about the other group and tried to find excuses for their behaviour, while only the "mixed group" was talking about facts and bitter truth.

Visualizing statistics serves also as a mind breaker and is useful in a workshop to support the discussion and/or turn the discussion in a different direction. In the exercise "**Inventory of migrants' and natives' participation**" as well as in the exercise "**National and local structures influencing migrants' participation**", statistical figures were used to recognize the actual participation at national and local levels.

The several **Role-Plays** and part of the exercise "**Dealing with conflict situations in churches**" are developed in a socio-metric dynamic, visualizing for participants the issues tackled in the WinAct-MIRACLE methods: we all lose our ability to see things clearly within time as we get used to perceive things in a certain manner in our daily live, in the economy it is called "business-blindness". The socio-metric exercises help to overcome this 'business-blindness' and see things clearly again. The Role Plays and conflicts are exaggerated but effective: they go straight to the point and are a wake-up call. Any situation can be represented in a Role-Play, involving the participants as actors.

We are all aware that we are not always able to express ourselves with words in a comprehensible way, therefore the exercises "**Designing a poster**" (it can be done for any subject in the workshop) were developed, allowing for a personal expression through different means and tools. Visualizing is of great help and produces ideas; furthermore, the posters could be used later on as a cover of a brochure or newsletter, or could be displayed in the church.



To be able to lead a successful workshop we have developed an “Introduction” module as the introduction will show with whom the trainer will have the joy to work together, and it can give the trainer a good orientation. The modules need to be adjusted, as was clearly highlighted in the training in Germany, where



expectations and understanding of the events were different before the workshop. The WinAct – MIRACLE methodology is very flexible and changeable, easily manageable at local and national levels, but it has to be adapted to the interests and needs of the participants. The role of trainer/s is important for the preparation and adaptation. And yet, one needs to consider that the exercises should not be carried out mechanically, the interpersonal contact is a fundamental feature for training.



FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS

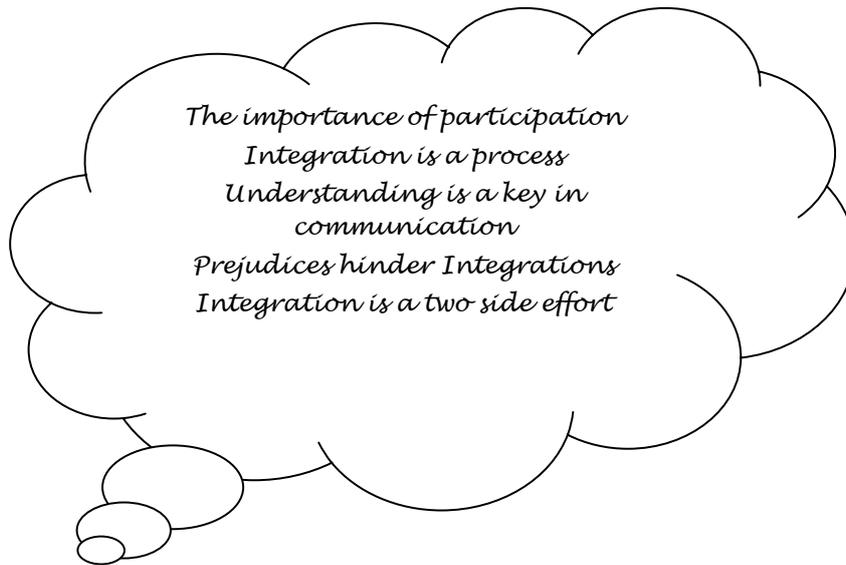


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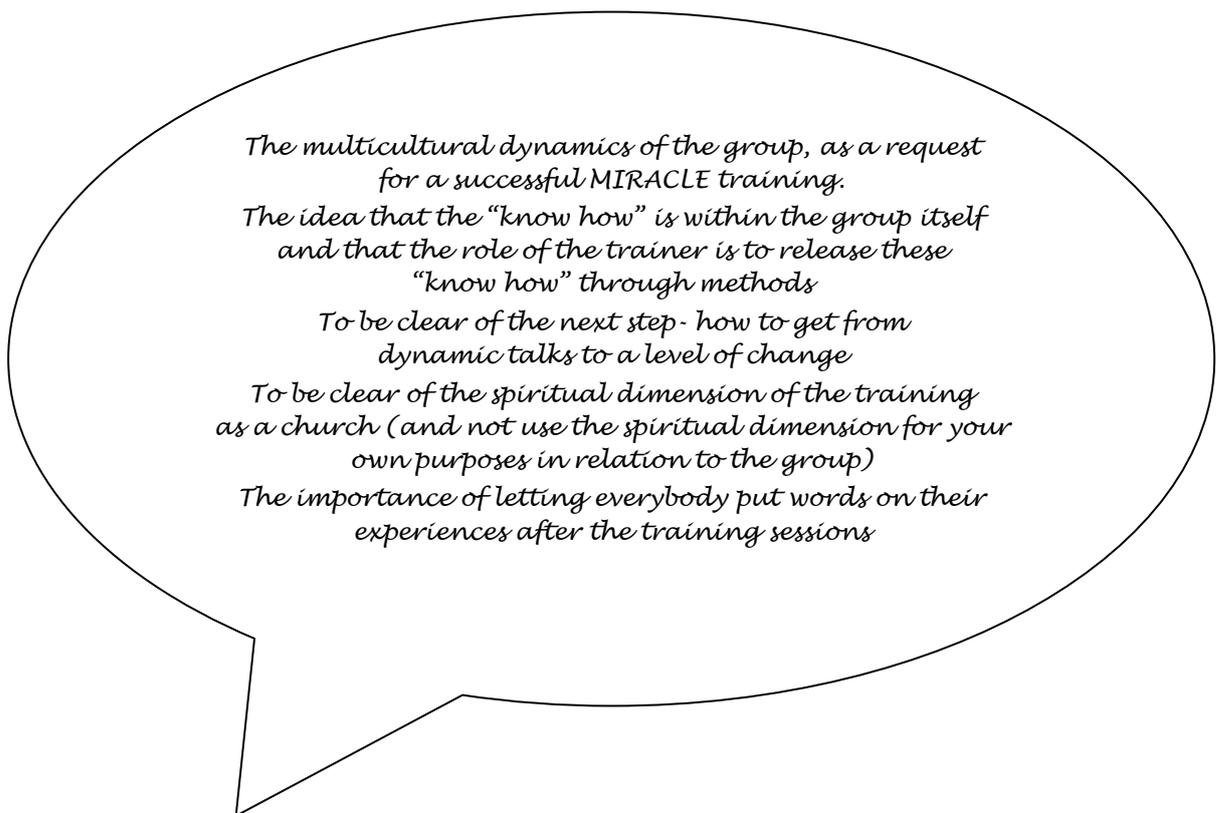


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TEN RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE PROCESSES OF INTEGRATION AND ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN CHURCHES

Olivia Bertelli

The process of integration and active participation of newcomers concerns the structure and attitudes of the church towards all its members. It is a process that requires time, human resources and should be carefully structured in a participative way, without the predominance of some groups or people over others.

As a result of the MIRACLE project ten areas of actions are recommended to improve these processes. This list should not be considered as complete and exhaustive. The recommendations are not listed in chronological order. These actions ought to be taken with a certain degree of simultaneity:

1. Realising integration as a two way process
2. Encouraging a welcoming attitude
3. Introducing interculturalism in church activities
4. Improving social relations among members
5. Reflecting on church structures, aspects and attitudes that influence active participation
6. Going where the others are
7. Establishing dialogue on core issues
8. Addressing conflicts in the church
9. Creating and improving relations with associations, migrant-led churches and traditional churches for exchanging good practices
10. Collecting data regarding the participation in churches



1. REALISING INTEGRATION AS A TWO-WAY PROCESS

The concept of integration as a bidirectional process requiring a mutual effort by migrants and members of the hosting society can be translated in the church context by looking at the relations between migrants and natives in both traditional churches and migrant-led churches. This implies mutual exchange and knowledge of each others' culture, tradition and ways to express the faith. A pre-requisite for enhancing a fruitful exchange is mutual acceptance, recognition and equality of rights. Building bridges among church members means establishing a platform of dialogue where the idea of being church together is jointly developed and implemented. It does not mean to review entirely and turn upside down the existing structure, but to re-think and re-formulate together in a participatory way certain activities, practices of decision-making, ways of managing the community, etc. The fundamental characteristics of a church will not – and do not have to - be modified due to a minority of newcomers. The process of integration and adaptation of the church to the new or different needs of the community is a delicate and long process which is not done overnight. Differences in timing of individuals and communities in elaborating the integration process, in being an active part of the changes and in feeling comfortable with the other members should be carefully considered. Such gaps in timing should be also attentively considered in order to avoid conflicts. The change process might require a longer or shorter amount of time according to the readiness of the individuals. If the time is not ripe, conflicts may crop up and resistance may arise. It may be useful at these stages to look for external support by cultural and conflict mediators, avoiding however that only a few members are left with the duty of finding solutions and achieving reconciliation.

How to do it?

- ❖ The process of integration is the result of local initiatives but also of co-ordinated action at the national level. In order to develop good practices it is important to have a clear system of rules, incentives, strategies and support decided at national level, which will guarantee the existence of an established framework on which local parishes and congregations can base their activities and projects concerning integration and active participation.
- ❖ There is a need for mutual information-sharing. It is important to empower migrants by helping them understand, respect and profit from the local and national civic, juridical and political system. It is also important for migrants to share responsibilities with the local society by participating in existing



realities (church activities and decision-making) and offering their contributions. Natives should work against forms of racism and discrimination present at all levels in local churches and national institutions, promoting migrants' rights and learning to make diversity enriching for everyone.

- ❖ Natives and migrants should jointly organise events and activities witnessing another way of building the society. The churches in Europe have the task to demonstrate that people can together realize a society of solidarity, starting from the church community: by responding to the Biblical message of loving the neighbour and welcoming the stranger they work for the unity of the People of God, against social exclusion and discrimination, enriching one another by the value of diversities.
- ❖ Build together a new collective religious identity: starting from the acceptance and acknowledgement of the individual identity, churches can realize genuine bidirectional integration by remodelling a new collective identity as the result of the contributions of each single church member. Making everyone participate in the integration process involves consideration and attributing value to the identity (cultural and religious heritage, experiences, wishes, expectations, fears, etc.) of everyone. Beginning a process of change requires time, energy, human resources: it is about developing a welcoming church where all the members feel at home. Remodelling a collective religious identity is about developing a common vision of the church and of the expression of the Christian faith.

Reflect on:

- ❖ What do the stones that you would use to build the bridges of integration represent?
- ❖ What scares you about integration?
- ❖ What are the benefits and negative aspects of more diversity in the society?
- ❖ What do you think that national structures and institutions should do more for promoting integration and active participation in churches and in society?
- ❖ How is your church addressing the issues of racism and discrimination?
- ❖ Have there been incidences of racism and discrimination in your church?
- ❖ How would you present your vision of the Kingdom of God?



Useful exercises:

- ❖ Integration is...
- ❖ Design a poster of integration
- ❖ An open church is...
- ❖ Design a poster of an open church
- ❖ Opportunities and benefits of wider participation in the society
- ❖ My church and the current response to migrants
- ❖ Make MIRACLE happen: let's be one!

2. ENCOURAGING A WELCOMING ATTITUDE

Welcoming a new person that has just stepped inside for the very first time is widely acknowledged as a positive factor. It makes the newcomer feel welcomed in the community of faith, indicating the existence of a sense of belonging among the members: on the one hand, welcoming someone is a kind and freely chosen attitude and, on the other hand, it means also recognising that someone is new, still an outsider and not part of the community yet. However, warm greetings indicate the openness of the parish and the importance given to each sheep of the household of God, where also the last arrived deserves the attention of the community as a Christian fellow. It is important to notice that a **welcoming approach is not limited to the first day a newcomer comes in, it is rather a way of structuring human relations and of making everybody feel as part of the same community to which everyone can contribute with her/his own capacities**

How to do it?

- ❖ Evidence from the workshops and interviews revealed that all over Europe many parishes have developed their own practices, however many are yet to define their welcoming and opening attitudes.
- ❖ Promote a **Welcoming Group** made of gate keepers (of women, men, elderly and young people). A rotation can be planned and one or two persons each Sunday can stand on a voluntary basis at the front door and welcome people with kind words handing out the Bible, the hymn book or the booklet of the day. When a newcomer arrives, he/she will be greeted and recognised. It is not necessary to make a whole interview regarding who the person is, what she/he wants, where she/he comes from, which church she/he belongs to,



etc., a simple welcome and the question whether or not assistance, e.g. for language purposes, is needed. To deal with language problems, she/he can be put side by side with someone who speaks her/his language. In case this is not possible it is however important to show that she/he is in the House of Lord, where every human being is treated the same and where he/she can praise the Lord with the other members.

- ❖ Make the newcomer **present him/herself** at the end of the worship service, during a "News and events telling". Persons might be asked to stand up and briefly tell for example: who they are, where they come from, and how they got to know the local parish.
- ❖ At the end of the worship service, make time for a moment where persons have the opportunity to talk to the newcomers, inviting them to join activities or take part in the organisations of events.
- ❖ Visit other churches and share experiences on welcoming methods, and learn-by-doing.

Reflect on:

The first contact is a relevant step in every relationship, often the first impression is the one which really counts. When we meet someone for the first time we usually smile, some people shake hands, some others kiss on the cheeks, some others just greet each other, however, and everyone wants to make a good impression. The name of a person is very important, in many cultures relating to the identity, thus introducing oneself by name and asking the other person's name is a crucial element.

- ❖ How do we present ourselves to newcomers?
- ❖ What do we consider as the most relevant aspects of a person that has entered the local parish for the first time (denomination, country of origin, language skills, social status, etc)?
- ❖ How do we promote an open and welcoming attitude among the members of the local parish? How do we tell the rest of the world that our church is a welcoming faith community?

Useful exercises:

- ❖ Role Play - "First Contact"
- ❖ An open church is...



- ❖ Design a poster of an open church

3. INTRODUCING INTERCULTURALISM IN CHURCH ACTIVITIES

As the MIRACLE acronym suggests, Integration can be done through Religion, Activation, but also Cultural Learning and Exchange. A pre-requisite for achieving peoples' active participation, is to know each other, to share experiences, stories, abilities, capacities and learn from each other. Who finds a friend finds a treasure, one could say. The process of mutual learning in the context of a church has a privileged starting point: all the believers have a common ground, the Bible, and a faith path. Both these aspects are important for the spiritual dimension and life which are at the core of the believers' identity. Starting by sharing and reflecting on the commonalities between believers of different countries is a necessary step for building a community of faith which has its richness in diversities. Often, in the evangelical world there is the temptation of highlighting the differences in order to define a certain denomination. Of course, differences are important since they make everybody a specific and unique human being, and they give parishes their specific and unique nature. However, in the encounter with "the other" it is important to distinguish which commonalities are grounded in the Word of God, and which differences are there due to cultural and historical factors.

How to do it?

- ❖ Hold **prayers in different languages** according to the nationalities or languages present in the parish: if there is even only one person whose mother tongue is different from the language used during the worship service, invite her/him on Sundays to read a prayer in her/his language, or to read a passage from the Bible in her/his language. It will help the person feel recognised and accepted by the community, and the other members will have the opportunity to hear the Word of the Lord in its beauty told in another language. As everyone has the right to hear the Gospel in her/his own mother tongue, others might read the Holy Scripture passage from their own Bibles.
- ❖ New members coming from different countries might teach some hymns, songs or prayers in their own language: the congregation might have each Sunday a hymn in a foreign language which maybe that of the newcomers and spoken also by other members. In this way, **not only migrants will learn the local language but also the community will be enriched by the diversity and will learn from them, realising the two-way process of integration.**



- ❖ **Organise church activities in an intercultural way:** biblical studies, Sunday schools, catechism sessions, public events, happenings, gatherings etc. can always adopt an intercultural approach, with the curiosity of learning from others and promoting the organisation of those activities in a way that stimulates a reciprocal exchange. Many parishes conduct once a month an intercultural worship service, where the Bible is read in different languages. Others organise intercultural Bible studies where people of different nationalities are gathered together and led by a pastor in the study of the Holy Scripture. It might be good to use the local language, making sure that everybody is able to understand and follow.
- ❖ **Sharing roles in service** among the members has appeared to be a widely acknowledged and practised way for promoting a sense of inclusion and participation: not just leading prayers but also singing in the choir, organising groups (for youth, women, visiting, ecumenical relations). Migrants can indeed be a bridge between their ethnic communities and the local society and their contribution in churches should be valued more.

Reflect on:

Churches have often acquired ingrained habits regarding the planning of their activities and to some extent, the worship service. As some participants noted during the MIRACLE workshops, the Bible does not restrict the instruments that should be played (actually in the Bible there are many more instruments than those currently used in churches), the number of intercession prayers, nor does it indicate the rules that should be followed for the collection. In a MIRACLE workshop, for example, participants debated whether the liturgy to which they are used to has some flexibility or not: the trainer suggested to organise a bible study in their church on the liturgy and find out why certain sections are there and what the reasons for the particular sequence may be. While some liturgical elements may not be changed, there may be parts in or after the liturgy which may easily be adjusted.

- ❖ How do you conduct the service? Why do you conduct it in that specific way?
- ❖ How do others hold their worship?
- ❖ How does it function in other countries? And in other denominations?
- ❖ What are the differences and commonalities?
- ❖ How would you enrich it and what would you like to change?



It is important to understand how a congregation and its members experience the spiritual dimension of a service, taking into consideration their origin, denomination and traditions. Some changes of a worship order may only be possible after an agreement has been reached in ecumenical dialogue between different denominations. Some denominations however, have more flexible forms of liturgy than others and can include elements from other traditions. It will be important to represent the belief in the one Church in the worship, as it is contained in the Christian creed. No church can be the Church of God by itself alone; the concept of “Being Church Together” as God’s people is deeply rooted in the biblical message.

Useful exercises:

- ❖ Tower of Babel – how to worship and pray together (language exercise)
- ❖ Migrants and Natives: different ways of praying and believing?
- ❖ Role Play – at the bible study
- ❖ Role play – planning an ecumenical worship service

4. IMPROVING SOCIAL RELATIONS AMONG MEMBERS

Getting to know each other is not only about sharing faith and beliefs, but it is also about getting to know the person as a whole. It is important to structure church life in a way that everybody can share their experiences and contribute their different potentials and capacities. To foster active participation, it is important to begin by improving social relations. Newcomers need to be part of the community and they need to feel that they are part of the Household of God when they attend that local parish.

How to do it?

- ❖ Social happenings and gatherings are usually well organised by local parishes and congregations, they are an ideal place to also **value the contributions of migrants and newcomers** and to improve their social inclusion in the local parish.
- ❖ If a common meal is planned, newcomers might cook together with those usually appointed for preparing meals: they might cook some dishes of their own tradition, teaching it to the others and learning some typical recipes of the local society.
- ❖ Organise activities that combine an ordinary activity of the church with a part dedicated to learning some aspects of the newcomers’ cultures. For



example, a bible study takes place, and there is also a tasting of different dishes: **newcomers should actively be involved and contribute** to both, by participating in the bible study and by cooking something and teaching the local members. Such an event can be organised with other local churches and migrant-led churches. It might also well be in combination with a debate regarding a social/theological issue, or with the projection of a movie, or with another special occasion. Each of these activities should however be structured in two parts giving space for the migrants to introduce significant elements of their cultural traditions. Obviously, cooking is not everything and social relations should never be limited to it: too often the contributions of migrants are limited to an "ethnic/cultural side" of an event (cooking, singing, dancing).

- ❖ **Relegating migrants' contributions to folkloristic aspects and roles is far away from starting a process of mutual integration.** Migrants have to become an active part of the faith community, they need to be given space for expressing their own faith, habits and traditions, but it will be important to involve them in each dimension of the church and at every level. It is not enough to call on them for Pentecost (when Bible readings in different languages appear nice) or for Christmas time (when we feel obliged to help those in need). Migrants are not here to just fill empty church benches and pay fees and taxes. As for every human being and believer the focus has to be put on the social and human development, which can only be done in cooperation with all members.

Reflect on:

- ❖ What are the social activities promoted in your church?
- ❖ What is the target of these activities and how are they structured?
- ❖ What and how would you change them?
- ❖ Is there a youth group in your church? What are its activities and working methods?
- ❖ Is there a women's group in your church? What are its activities and working methods?
- ❖ Is there any activity that has changed in the last few years towards a more intercultural dimension and approach?
- ❖ How is the intercultural issue dealt with in your church?



Useful exercises.

- ❖ An open church is...
- ❖ Integration is...
- ❖ Design a poster of an open church
- ❖ Design a poster of actions for promoting integration in your church
- ❖ Practices and actions to promote integration and participation and to enhance ecumenical dialogue between traditional churches and migrant-led churches

5. REFLECTING ON THE CHURCH STRUCTURES, ASPECTS AND ATTITUDES THAT INFLUENCE ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

From the experiences of the workshop it appeared that the role of charismatic persons in the church is fundamental for promoting active participation of migrants and for starting the integration process. However, actively participating and being socially included depends first of all on how the church is structured. The same aspect can indeed promote or prevent active participation, depending on the access an individual has to it. Some of the main structures determining the active involvement of church members are:

- ❖ **Requirements for becoming a member:** in order to vote in the assemblies, elect and stand for elections, as well as having the feeling of being fully a Christian fellow in the majority of churches in Europe, a believer has to officially be registered as a member. This is coupled with a series of requirements which are not always easy to fulfil, in particular if the person is a migrant.
- ❖ **Language:** the issue of language skills raised concern during the discussions in the workshop. For example, many migrants coming, from former colonies of France, England, the Netherlands, and settling down in the former colonizers' country faced several problems in the integration process although they had ample opportunities to perfect their knowledge of the local language. Even if there was no concern about their language skills, they were nevertheless not welcomed in traditional churches and were invited to join migrant-led churches linked with their home countries. This highlights the fact that the issue of communicating goes beyond the language skills. Although it is unanimously acknowledged that knowing the



language of the local society is vital for actively participating, the language requirement has sometimes been used for excluding migrants from participating. From the experience of the MIRACLE project, we would therefore promote a different approach to the issue of language skills, seeking ways to value the use of different languages. Another way of dealing with language is the case in the Netherlands. Since the descendants of the second or third generation are in the meantime the majority in a migrant-led church in the Netherlands, the local language was adopted as main language for the worship service and church activities. However, in order to keep welcoming new migrants from the country of origin, they opted for simultaneous translation (with beamers and whispered interpretation) in the language of their families' country. This is not entirely new, many migrant-led churches and also traditional churches conduct the service and activities in the mother tongue (which for traditional churches is in most cases the local language), and then use a beamer and/or whispered interpretation for languages spoken by their members (English, French, Russian, Twi etc.). But in the case mentioned above, the process was that the decision to change was taken by migrants, thus inviting the reflection whether that specific church would still be called "migrant-led church".

- ❖ **Worship service:** While this topic is sensitive, for many Christians the way the service is structured influences and reflects the way a community expresses its faith. Cultural heritage and anthropological attitudes determine different aspects of the expression of sacredness as perceived by the believers. It is not, indeed, easy to modify it or to introduce new aspects. It is however important to note that often an unreflected planning and organisation of the worship service, the selection of hymns and music, sometimes unconscious specific traditions of seating or behaviour, are elements that might exclude newcomers. Re-thinking and re-modelling elements of the liturgy is not the only way for promoting integration within churches, but a change of some aspects of the service might well act as a point of conjunction between different ways and traditions of expressions of faith. One example: when migrants started to attend regularly a local traditional parish, the need for reflecting and discussing the structure of the service emerged. The community established a committee to revise the order of service so that the different cultures could go hand in hand. Every three months the service was changed, adjusted, reviewed, and after two



years the new service involved natives and migrants, both on the same level. At the beginning some church members left, however, this experience has become one of the best practices in Europe: the service lasts for two hours, it is conducted in the local language and there is translation in two more languages with leaflets and a beamer, natives have learnt hymns of the migrants' tradition and vice versa. Migrants are deacons, teachers at the Sunday school and the catechism, members of the church council: migrants and natives sit side by side working together in the edification of a new Church.

- ❖ **Roles in church activities:** as for the improvement of the social relations between members, activities organised by the local congregation are relevant for enhancing the integration and active participation of migrants. Having an active role can be regarded as already participating, but also as a factor fostering active participation. In order to encourage this process, it is necessary to get to know the abilities, capacities and wishes of the newcomers in order to promote them for appropriate roles. Being a gate keeper, or the bus driver on Sunday morning picking up church members, singing in or conducting the choir, reading of the Gospel, teaching in the Sunday school, participating in the women's, youth group or the welcoming group: all these roles have been found to be extremely important for feeling accepted and recognised in the community. Having a visible role in one or more of the church activities is a significant sign of good co-operation. Accepting the identity of the newcomers is a fundamental pre-requisite for the beginning of good relations between them and settled church members, who need to be accepted with their culture and traditions, too. Recognizing the validity and importance of the cultural and religious heritage that both parts bring in their identities is the starting point for the two-way process of integration. **Without mutual acceptance and acknowledgement, it is rather difficult to realise a good practice of integration and active participation.**

Reflect on:

In addition to specific church institutions and structures, many other aspects can be identified as relevant for influencing the integration and participation process. Only three main aspects have been listed above, which have emerged as the common ones among the six partner organisations, irrespective of the national context and denominational belonging.



- ❖ What are the main structures in your church?
- ❖ Which ones are promoting active participation and which ones are preventing it?
- ❖ Why is it important for a church that everyone participates actively? And for society?
- ❖ What are the benefits of active participation in the society?
- ❖ Are you aware of the decisions taken in your church? How do you influence them?
- ❖ How do you follow-up on activities of your church?
- ❖ What is your role in the decision-making processes and in the activities?

Useful exercises:

- ❖ Active Participation is...
- ❖ Design a poster of active participation
- ❖ Assessing participation at national levels
- ❖ Opportunities and benefits of a wider participation in the society
- ❖ Inventory of migrants' and natives' participation
- ❖ Three aspects/structures promoting/preventing active participation in your church
- ❖ Assessment of migrants' and native's participation in your country
- ❖ National and local structures influencing migrants' participation
- ❖ Practices and actions to promote integration and participation and to enhance ecumenical dialogue between traditional churches and migrant-led churches

6. GOING WHERE THE OTHERS ARE

Some local parishes, in particular in small villages and rural areas, did not have members coming originally from another country. In these cases, the issue of migrants' participation was felt as not relevant. On the other hand, migrant-led churches often had no natives among their members, focusing only on one ethnic community, and the issue of opening up to the local society was regarded as not appropriate. In both cases there is a disinterest in "the other"; however the issue of



integration and, even more, of being church together with migrants and natives, raised many questions to members living in those realities. Creating an open church, which is for the people of God, gathering Christian fellows irrespective of where they come from, was seen as a big challenge. Instead of beginning to work immediately on the openness and welcoming strategies of a church, in such situations it may be better to start by getting to know different realities, for example, by improving ecumenical relations with traditional and migrant-led churches in the surroundings.

How to do it?

- ❖ **Organise a visit** to a traditional/migrant-led local parish and encourage encounters with congregations of different cultures;
- ❖ Establish **co-operation between churches of different cultures** regarding issues such as ecumenical prayers, services, intercultural Bible studies, singing, etc.;
- ❖ Promote **training for pastors**, local preachers, deacons and church members in intercultural and interreligious issues;
- ❖ Work with a **cultural mediator** and organise a training on intercultural mediation methods to be used in the church;
- ❖ Follow and practice the Biblical message of welcoming the stranger;
- ❖ Undertake **theological reflections** on migration;
- ❖ **Get in contact with organizations** helping ethnic minorities and migrants and offer pastoral care and spiritual support;
- ❖ Support and promote initiatives against racism and social exclusion;
- ❖ Consider whether the activities of the church are actually promoting the participation of the local society.

Reflect on:

During a workshop in Italy, participants had the opportunity to visit a small village where the rate of immigration is quite high and the percentage of migrants in the population is considerable. Migrants represent today the main source of labour and their presence is visible everywhere. The main local parish is situated on the top of a small hill overlooking the area. The church members had all converted as historically that region did not have much of an evangelical reality. Even though



many migrants of the same denomination are present in that village, no migrants are found in the local traditional parish, and the church members know little about the existence of the few migrant-led churches.

- ❖ Do migrants often remain “invisible”? Why?
- ❖ Are natives willing /unwilling to join migrant-led churches? Why?

Useful exercises:

- ❖ Integration is...
- ❖ An open church is...
- ❖ Opportunities and benefits of wider participation in the society
- ❖ Assessment of migrants’ and natives’ participation in your country
- ❖ My church and the current response to migrants
- ❖ Practices and actions to promote integration and participation and to enhance ecumenical dialogue between traditional churches and migrant-led churches

7. ESTABLISHING DIALOGUE ON CRITICAL ISSUES

Involving in ecumenical relations between traditional and migrant-led churches means also dealing with some delicate topics where consensus may not easily be achieved. From the workshops of the MIRACLE project some main issues appeared to be critical: the role of migrants’ descendants in taking the lead in migrant-led churches, the practice of healing, the recognition and role of the leader, gender roles and relations and balance of power as well as homosexuality. These matters were felt to be a source of division between natives and migrants, traditional churches and migrant-led churches. It is important to remember that the very same issues are under discussion between and within traditional churches of different denominations, as well as between and within migrant-led churches, cutting across both realities. For example, there are migrant-led churches with women pastors and there are traditional churches considering homosexuality as a human deviation, and vice-versa. In many Protestant churches, issues such as gender equality and women’s ministry have been fiercely debated in the last century, and more recently been considered and promoted by synods or church councils. However, the different positions taken by churches constitute major obstacles in the ecumenical relations and dialogue between the diverse denominations. It is therefore no surprise that these issues are also no easy subject in the relations between traditional and



migrant-led churches. The evidence from the interviews and workshops suggests that migrant women play a key-role in traditional churches as well as in ecumenical relations acting as a bridge between migrant communities and local parishes. They are often chosen as translators for migrants attending the church (both migrant and traditional ones), sometimes sitting side by side to people for the whole service. The concept of leadership and the role of a leader is also an interesting element of reflection: it has a strong meaning in some migrant-led churches, in the project particularly those of African origin, and Pentecostal traditional churches while a more shared responsibility seems preferred in other migrant-led churches (with Asian and Latin American origin) and Protestant churches.

How to do it?

- ❖ Establish **platforms of discussion** on specific themes, without dealing with the whole issue *per se*: identify specific practical aspects and dynamics where, for example, the healing practices, the gender relations and the migrants' descendants' roles are at stake.
- ❖ **Invite associations** of second generation migrants, of women and of homosexuals for understanding the various aspects of these issues.
- ❖ Work with intercultural mediators and conflict mediators.
- ❖ Promote intercultural Bible studies on these issues.
- ❖ Participate at events and **promote initiatives** regarding these matters.
- ❖ **Establish contacts** with churches which have addressed these issues and taken positions.

Reflect on:

- ❖ Are there pre-defined gender roles in the activities of the church? Can women serve as pastors?
- ❖ What is the gender balance in the activities? And in the decision-making structures?
- ❖ What is the percentage of women pastors at local/national levels?
- ❖ Which healing practices are accepted by your church? Are there others which are not accepted? Why?
- ❖ Are any migrants' descendants in your parish? What are the changes, contributions brought by migrants' descendants to your parish?



- ❖ Is there any women or youth association related to your church?
- ❖ Is there a debate or position regarding the recognition of homosexual unions by the church?
- ❖ What is your experience? Did your church bless homosexual unions?
- ❖ Does your church admit homosexual pastors?
- ❖ What is the role of the pastor in your church? Is there an elected board or council managing the parish?

Useful exercises:

- ❖ Social debate on a contested issue
- ❖ Migrants and natives: different ways of praying and believing?
- ❖ Three aspects/structures promoting/preventing active participation in your church

8. DEALING WITH CONFLICTS IN THE CHURCH

Some participants that attended a MIRACLE workshop said that for them the church is like “A family where you find some family aspects like support, welcoming, clan, conflicts”. The reflection on conflicts in churches has been widely conducted in several workshops: the focus of the exercises had however been on recognising conflicts rather than on learning patterns for a solution. In a workshop, participants identified two main areas, the planning of the worship service and parish management, such as finances, administration, access to decision-making bodies. Many conflicts were reported as not yet resolved, others had been solved through cooperation of both sides, and others were described as basically failing due to the fact that one party left (sometimes by physically abandoning the parish).

How to do it?

- ❖ Conflicts can start quietly with some hidden resistance, it is important to **address them at a very early stage**, involving all relevant actors as parts of the solution to the conflict.
- ❖ Learn from conflict situations: **conflicts are not bad *per se***, they can be a source of mutual learning and growth, it depends on how they are handled.
- ❖ Sometimes it is useful or even necessary to involve a **third, neutral party** for finding a solution.



- ❖ Do not consider a conflict resolved if one party is leaving the scene. **All the parties involved have to be part of the solution** and if one leaves also the others may have lost.

Reflect on:

- ❖ Which kind of conflicts did you experience in your parish?
- ❖ Is there any conflict at the moment? Which kind of solution would you expect?
- ❖ How were/are the conflicts in the parish resolved?
- ❖ Which roles have you played in managing conflict resolution?
- ❖ Which dynamics would you identify as relevant for producing conflicts?
- ❖ Was there any ethnic factor that provoked a conflict in your church?
- ❖ Have you been helped in the resolution by a conflict or intercultural mediator?

Useful exercises:

- ❖ Social debate on a contested issue
- ❖ Dealing with conflict situations in churches
- ❖ Role Plays: Planning an ecumenical worship service
- ❖ Three church aspects/structures promoting/preventing active participation
- ❖ Make MIRACLE happen: let's be one!

9. CREATING AND IMPROVING NETWORK RELATIONS WITH ASSOCIATIONS, MIGRANT-LED CHURCHES AND TRADITIONAL CHURCHES FOR EXCHANGING GOOD PRACTICES

Working in a network of local, national, regional or even European realities can be very demanding but also vital and fundamental for a church dealing with issues of integration and participation. One of the strengths of the MIRACLE project has been exactly the creation of a network of churches and church-related organisations for co-operation, exchange of good practices, sharing of experiences and ideas, promoting new initiatives regarding integration and participation processes in churches in Europe. In this project the co-ordination by CCME offered continuous and regular, structured co-operation and networking with a profitable exchange of feedback.



The creation of such a wide network, however, has only been possible as local and national networks existed already, having worked for many years. Sometimes the focus had been on helping migrants with legal counselling, offering shelters, providing language courses and job trainings, but also meeting and encounter with migrants and migrant-led churches have of course taken place prior to the project. In order to foster and encourage the integration processes and promote more active participation, the focus might be put also on the spiritual dimension and life of migrants. Integration is also a matter of sharing responsibilities, to do so an efficient co-operation with a division of tasks is a key element.

How to do it?

- ❖ Many churches have established a network with associations of migrants and work along with migrants, refugees, victims of trafficking, asylum seekers, other churches, mosques, synagogues, but also local institutions and authorities, police, political parties, trade unions, and schools. **Introducing an approach which looks at migrants not only as people in need, but as fellow believers willing to express their faith in community with others** could be the general guideline. A local church in Austria works with migrants in co-operation with the police force on a project fighting racism and discrimination, and once a year the policemen attend the worship service together with the African migrants. A local church in Italy is in contact with the police headquarters for indicating to evangelical migrants a place of worship in town.
- ❖ Strengthen the relations between migrant-led churches and traditional churches, with the idea of **co-operating and learning by doing together**
- ❖ Develop **contacts with migrants' associations** through church activities, offering pastoral care and spiritual support.
- ❖ **Organise joint activities and events** with civil society organisations and other churches, discussing the integration process and the role played by churches, interreligious dialogue and ecumenical dialogue.

Reflect on:

- ❖ Which kind of networks is your local parish/congregation part of?
- ❖ With which civil society associations and churches does your local parish/congregation have most established co-operation?



- ❖ From which entities does your local parish/congregation get support, and which entities does your church support?
- ❖ How does your local parish/congregation maintain the network relations, and which communication strategies does it adopt to enhance them?
- ❖ How many migrant associations are present in your local parish/congregation networks?
- ❖ How many associations working with migrants are present in your local parish/congregation networks?

Useful exercises:

- ❖ Practices and actions to promote integration and participation and to enhance ecumenical dialogue between traditional churches and migrant-led churches;
- ❖ Design a training programme for church clerks and community leaders
- ❖ Social debate on a contested issue
- ❖ Role plays – planning an ecumenical worship service
- ❖ Role plays – event planning

10. COLLECTING DATA REGARDING THE PARTICIPATION OF MIGRANTS

The data regarding attendance and participation of migrants in migrant-led churches and in traditional churches are rather difficult to collect. In the UK, France, Switzerland, Italy, Ireland, and in some cases at the level of some states in Germany, Churches have conducted a survey of the migrant-led churches at local or national levels. In the Netherlands, thanks to the association Samen Kerk in Nederland (SKIN), more than sixty migrant-led churches have created an important network of churches from different countries and continents¹¹. The CCME publication “Mapping Migration”¹² sought to provide some information and data about the presence of migrant Christians and of migrant-led churches in European countries. However, the data available depended on information given by national and local churches, which only recently have started to map the phenomenon of migrant-led

¹¹ Similar realities already existed (CEAF, African Christian Council, Korean Churches in Germany), but with a different structure and mission

¹² D. Jackson, A. Passarelli (2008) “Mapping Migration. Mapping Churches’ Responses. Europe Study”, CCME, Brussels. Freely downloadable at <http://www.ccme.be/downloads/publications/>



churches and of migrants attending traditional churches. Comparative, reliable data have so far not been collected. This lack of knowledge implies the risk that participation and integration as well as ecumenical dialogue and cooperation cannot be sufficiently planned. Dealing with the issue of Uniting in Diversity without sufficient or precise data may lead churches to act on the basis of assumptions and to address unclear or perceived realities. As a consequence, some initiatives may remain untargeted, not matching expectations and concrete needs. Furthermore, providing clear and reliable information is one of the first and convincing steps for fighting prejudices and promoting mutual learning and exchange.

How to do it?

- ❖ Collect data and analysis regarding migrant-led church presence and **attendance of migrants** in traditional churches at local level;
- ❖ Migrant-led churches, self-organised in wide networks, could realize a **survey of nationalities and attendance of churches** among their members, making their data available to other churches, both traditional and migrant-led ones;
- ❖ Ask for **support by national boards** for promoting a co-ordinated and wider collection.
- ❖ Organize the collection of data with structured tools for **setting up a database**; summary results and analysis should be made available to other actors present in a church's network.
- ❖ Organize events and **focus groups** with the aim of discussing the issue of "Uniting in Diversity" and of collecting information and data on it.
- ❖ The information to be collected should focus on **one or two main dimensions** of the phenomenon of "Uniting in Diversity", in order to avoid too many variables influencing and distorting the data collected.
- ❖ Once the collection has been made, **promote and spread the information** through websites, networking and events, but also in your own church.
- ❖ **Visualize and document the presence of many nationalities in your church through pictures**: expose them at the entrance of the parish, publicize them in church magazines and newspapers, use them as materials for expositions on "Uniting in Diversity".



Reflect on:

- ❖ How many migrant-led churches and traditional churches are there in your city?
- ❖ What are the relations and contacts of your parish/congregation with them?
- ❖ Have you ever conducted a research for data collection? Would it be transposable to the issue of migrant-led churches?
- ❖ How much do you know about migrant-led churches and traditional churches?
- ❖ Which information is lacking and what would you be interested in knowing better?

Useful exercises:

- ❖ Assessment of immigrant and natives' participation in your country
- ❖ My church and the current response to migrants
- ❖ Practices and actions to promote integration and participation and to enhance the ecumenical dialogue between traditional churches and migrant-led churches

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