

Share SIRA

Regional Trainings - France

From October 2021 to February 2022, Share SIRA project partners organised several regional online and offline training sessions in several European countries, enabling more than 230 stakeholders active in rural integration to benefit from capacity building in intercultural communication and local community engagement, as well as in migrant participation and co-creation.

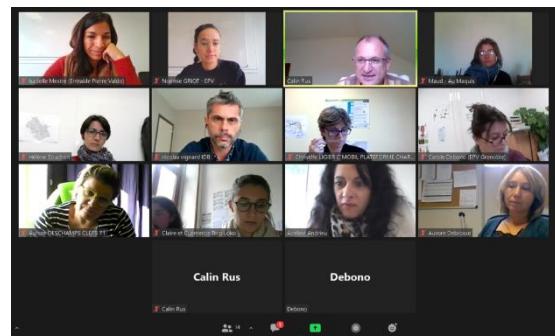
A needs assessment had been conducted by the Share Network during the first months of the [Share SIRA](#) project, so that the trainings drawing from the **Share “Welcoming Communities”** and **IOM “Admin4All”** training curricula would specifically answer the differing needs of the stakeholders in each region. Initially, 10 regional trainings were to be held in each of the regions participating in the Share SIRA project. Due to Covid19 restrictions however, trainings in Spain were transferred online, whereas those in Greek and Polish regions could take place as in person events. In France, the trainings were delivered in hybrid manner. Each training programme was uniquely developed to meet the learning needs of each regional partnerships. Click [here](#) to find out more about these regions!

Regional trainings for migrant and refugee integration in Corrèze, Isère, Saône-et-Loire, and Vaucluse, France

In France, trainings were delivered for actors in a hybrid format. Over the course of the month of **November 2021**, two first online training modules on **community engagement and interaction with migrants** were held online and open to rural integration actors from across the 4 French SIRA project regions, whereas the third and last module **on participation and co-creation** was delivered in person in each of the regions. Each of the modules attracted more than **40 participants**.

First Training Module Exploring Interculturality

After an initial welcome by the trainer, participants went into breakout sessions to exchange examples of challenges from daily work involving interculturality. Back in plenary, participants linked the concrete examples back to the principles of intercultural communication. To deconstruct their experiences of cultural misunderstandings, the trainer proposed a typology of “significant agreements” in which any participant in dialogue has a right to cultural difference and its articulation.



In more concrete terms, participants evoked different interactions they face where beneficiaries might express agreement without fully understanding the issue at stake. It was also mentioned that migrants and refugees arrive in a framework where they are put in a very passive attitude because everything is imposed to them and that there is no participation and inclusion. Participants also understood the significance of “cultural chocs” and how to support newcomers to cope positively. Immediate social environment factors such as the presence of trusted persons or availability of intercultural mediators were identified as possible solutions to make newcomers more resilient in that regard.

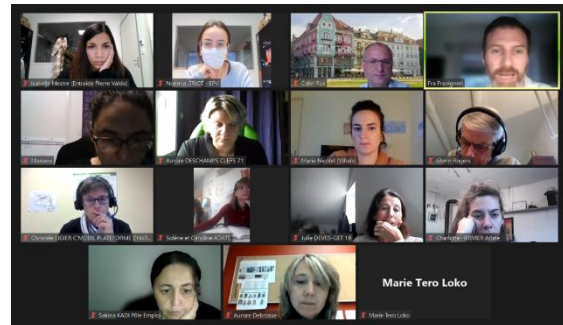


Participants from the trainings underlined that the discussion with fellow integration actors from the same local context but guided by an external mediator enabled a more critical thinking about successful communication – a communication which beyond words needs to find alternative channels to make newcomers feel understood and valued.

“We come from very different worlds and we don't have the same expectations or needs. What is very interesting from my point of view are the exchanges.” (quote from a participant in the French regional trainings)

Second Training Module on Mobilising Local Community Support and Developing Partnerships

The second training module explored opportunities from local community support and partnerships between local communities, NGOs and public services available in the regions.



Participants agreed that sometimes partnerships were hindered by a lack of adequate legal frameworks, despite the interest of local communities to work together in hosting newcomers. In accessing employment, however, participants had experienced – when such job placements were found – fruitful cooperation with employers and cultural mediators to help ease newcomer employees' integration at the workplace. Mentorship for refugees, be it in apprenticeships or job placements, thus was identified as a great opportunity for community mobilisation and partnership developments, on the individual and organisational levels.

All participants had had experiences in which there was at some point resistance from local communities and sometimes also newcomers – either resulting from mutual stereotypes or diverging interests. However, cohesion activities between local communities and newcomers were identified as a possible bridge to deconstruct negative stereotypes.

“The Ideas and concepts are a reminder that we sometimes forget when we are in the field. The exchanges allow us to see that we are not alone. The diversity of each person brings its stone to the building.” (quote from a participant in one of the French regional trainings)

Third Training Module on Participation of Newcomers

The third training module aimed at a better understanding of the dynamics in co-design and participation processes – from the identification of needs and possibilities, over enabling and peer support, up to assessment and reorientation of activities.

A first introductory exercise in which participants could position themselves as either someone (1) informing others on actions implemented, (2) asking for others' opinion before project implementation, (3) organising focus groups to collect proposals from others before setting up a project, or (4) co-designing projects with others showed that participants globally were willing to act with a co-design approach but lacked knowhow for its implementation daily.



The trainer then introduced participants to the legal obligation to nominate a “Council of Social Life” (“Conseil de Vie Sociale” or CVS) in all French CADA hosting facilities for newcomers (cf. law 2002.2). Participants who had worked in this context however explained that drawing up CVSs becomes increasingly difficult as asylum seekers are staying less and less time in one same hosting facility.

Other complementary activities should be initiated to reach meaningful participation of newcomers. Great examples are the Association Causons or Union of Exiled Students. Participants also shared a booklet elaborated by OFII in co-design with Yezidi women commenting their integration pathways artistically through pictures, stories, drawings, or poems.

Upon conclusion of the last training, participants were keen to make intercultural mediation, local partnerships, and participation processes more prominent in their work and more sustainable in the long term – they therefore identified three main principles:

1. Co-design dynamics are inscribed in different sometimes conflicting temporalities, with time needed for change in the host community being much longer than the often-temporary stay of exiled persons in a region;
2. People concerned by activities should also be involved in identifying of needs and possibilities for action;
3. Active participation goes beyond decision making and includes peer support or *ex post* assessment of activities by the concerned publics.

