

IO2 – Toolbox of Integration Resources

Handbook – Getting
Involved in a New
Community



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Young Migrant Integration Leaders

Integration Leader Handbook

The aim of this short handbook is to support you, as a young leader of integration, to use the digital resources provided in the Toolbox of Integration Resources with young migrants in your community. Through this short handbook, we will provide you with some background information on the topic being discussed in the digital resource and then we will provide some guidance on a follow-up activity that you can complete with young people in your local network. The activity included in this handbook will work to further develop their understanding of the topic outlined in the digital resource. In some cases, where group discussions are more appropriate, we will guide you in how to set up a group discussion, and will provide some discussion points and questions for you to introduce to young people in your local group.

The topic of this handbook relates to the digital resource – **Getting Involved in a New Community**

Introduction to the Topic

The aim of this digital resource is to encourage young people to reflect on their own integration and to share stories of how they feel they have been integrated into their host community. The digital resource also aims to encourage young people to become more active in their host community through volunteering and other social and civic activities.

Travelling has become part of people's everyday life; in the globalised world international tourism, studies or business trips abroad are common events. Yet, cultural contact requires quite different psychological and cultural involvement from people depending on the type of 'cultural immersion' they undertake:

- **Tourists:** superficial, short term immersion in the new culture, without commitment;
- **Short-term visitors:** moderate cultural contact by means of repetitive short-term visits/medium term stay relating to business, studies, volunteering, etc., without serious commitment;
- **Immigrants:** indefinite long-term stay requiring serious commitment;

- **Refugees:** indefinite long-term stay requiring serious commitment.

Four variables have key influence on the integration motivation and strategy of newcomers, and how the cultural immersion takes place in the new culture. (Ward et al., 2001) For example, the expectation to return at some stage to the country of origin lowers the commitment to the host country.

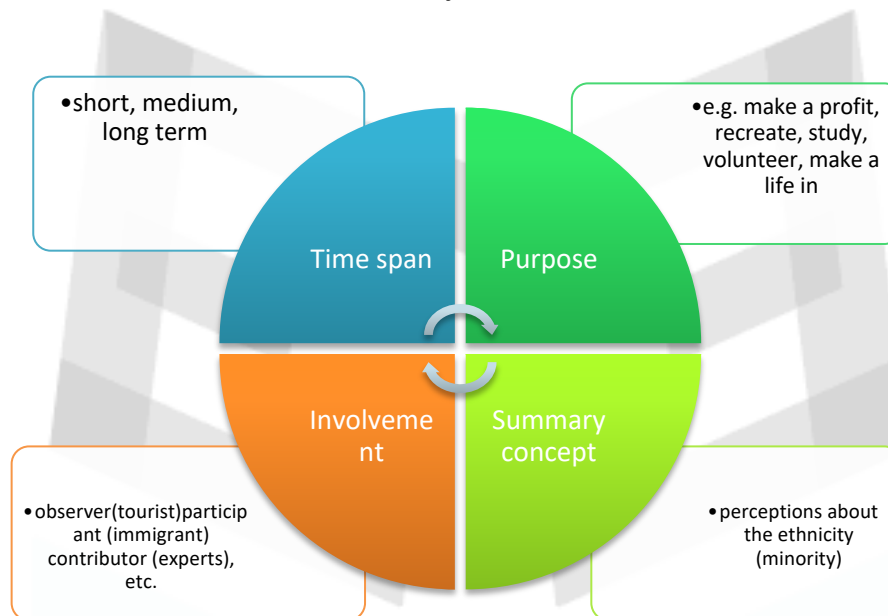


Figure 1. Four dimensions of culture contact. “Culture-Contact-Pie”

Cultural immersion is a powerful ‘journey’, which effects the individual’s wellbeing, self-awareness and ethnic identity. (Brochner, 1982). It definitely takes time to learn to dive in ‘open waters’ in the reality of a new culture, and the deeper you dive, the more time it takes. **Acculturation process** is the process of learning to cope with a new and largely unfamiliar culture (Taft, 1977, p. 122; Dow, 2011).

Setting roots in a new culture is considered a significant life-changing event, which involves unaccustomed changes and new forms of intercultural contact. It is unavoidable that the acculturation process leads to some extent of **cultural shock** in everyone who goes through it. Cultural shock refers to the ‘depression and anxiety experienced by many people when they travel or move to social and cultural setting for a long term’. (Oberg, 1960).

The **acculturation process** is not easy and no one can avoid it; at the same time, understanding the process and its steps can help you to accept the challenge and to cope with it. Migrants can feel that they are not alone with their feelings, and know that what they experience is normal. They can share it, speak about it and don't have to fear it.

In the following bullet points, we will guide you through the main stages so that you can then share these steps with young people in your group. Note, this is just a general description; but remember all individuals are unique. There can be significant individual differences depending on the level of cultural contact, the individual's personality, past experiences, cultural background, social status, etc. Some people go through all the stages 'according to the book'; while others may skip a stage, or spend more or less time in one stage than others.

1. **Honeymoon stage – euphoria & enthusiastic acceptance:** on arrival, everything feels interesting, new. You are all curious about novelties and full of motivation to learn and discover. Your involvement in the host culture is yet superficial (like a tourist), hence you notice similarities and differences between the new culture and the original culture. In this phase most people feel full of energy, positive, ready to cooperate and cope with anything.
2. **Culture shock – frustration and hostility:** the novelty begins to fade and you start to notice the darker side of the new culture, what you haven't seen before. People become more sensitive, small problems can be felt as catastrophes. Feelings of uncertainty, helplessness, frustration, lower self-confidence are common. You get homesick; miss people and familiar things – and to make matters worse, you hear that the weather in your hometown is glorious. Communication and self-expression causes struggle, and you tend to withdraw, rather than opening. It is usual to feel at this stage as if the host nationals were cold, unreachable, snobbish, and prefer to search for expat compatriots.
3. **Resentment and criticism:** this stage is not necessarily a real stage, but more like a state. It is possible, that you never experience it, or just discover it in your attitude sometimes, while you advance from cultural shock towards adjustment.

When you are in this state you tend to see everything with criticism; nothing is good, nobody is friendly enough. Note that this is part of the process, yet it's better to keep on remembering yourself that this is just a challenging phase to overcome; you are a guest in a new culture. Try to resist complaining about everything to locals, since you might catch away some potential friend.

4. **Gradual adjustment – Humour:** when you arrive to this stage you start to feel more familiar with the new culture and its “logic”. Orientation gets easier, you feel more comfortable and less isolated. You probably realize that the previous stages’ negativity has been largely due to the hardship of acculturation; you might as well acknowledge that some aspects of the new culture can be even better than the home culture. It is still normal to experience periodic ups and downs, though. It helps a lot when the sense of humour re-appears and you become able to laugh at things (even at yourself) that previously just annoyed you.
5. **Accommodation and ‘Feeling at Home’:** the “new” culture is no longer new, it starts to feel homey. You have reached certain level of comfort, social embedding (friends, colleagues) and begin to enjoy the new life experiences. Differences from the home culture don’t affect you too negatively anymore and you become able to live and work to your full potential again. This state might as well honour you with a sense of success and pride, allow yourself to feel it!

Using this Resource with a Group

To use this resource with young people in your local group, we recommend that you begin by introducing the topic to people in your group. To prepare what you will say, you should first watch the digital resource yourself and then you can recap on some of the key points mentioned in this handbook.

You should then invite all young people in your group to watch the digital resource. As you won’t have access to a projector and a screen, you can invite your peers to log on to the EXEMPLAR project website: www.exemplars.eu and watch the digital resource on their smartphone, tablet or other device.

Once all peers in your network have watched the video resource, you should begin by asking them:

1. What did you think of the video resource?
2. What did you learn from it? Did you learn something new?
3. How did you find this resource useful and why?

Follow-up Activity

When you have made sure that all young people in your group have watched the digital resource and have engaged in this short discussion, the next thing you can do is introduce this short activity that will help the young people in your group to relate what they have learned from this digital resource to their own lives or situations.

Activity Name: Creating your Cultural Contact Pie

Timing: This activity should take you and your peers 40 minutes to complete – but they can also complete this activity in their own time if they don't have the time to complete it as part of your group work.

Materials: For this activity, you will need to provide the following materials:

- Pens and note-taking materials for all young people.
- Copies of the worksheet printed (if possible).

As you are doing this work on a voluntary basis and there is no budget for materials, you should contact your local community centre, local government office or even approach local businesses working in the community and see if they would be willing to donate some supplies for you to complete this activity with your peers. They may also be able to help you with the printing!

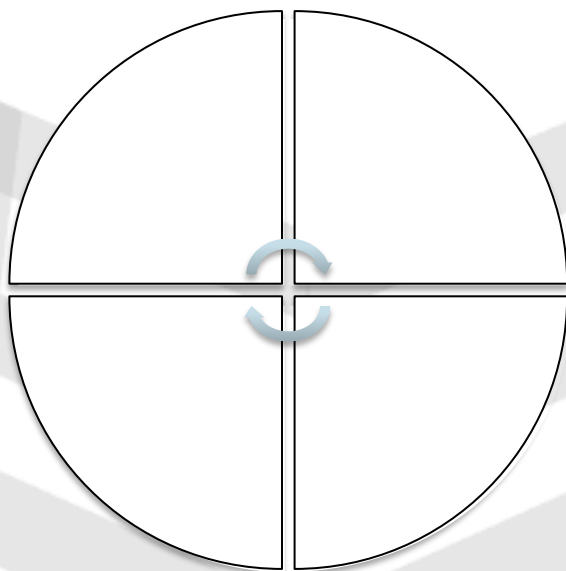
Description of Activity:

- Begin by introducing your peers to the four areas covered in a cultural contact pie. These include:

- Time (short, medium or long-term stay);
 - Involvement (observer, learner, contributor, etc.);
 - Purpose (leisure, making money, professional or personal development, settling down, etc.);
 - General concept (perceptions about one's ethnicity abroad).
- After you have introduced these four elements, give all young people in your group a copy of the Cultural Contact Pie worksheet, and ask them to complete it with information that is specific to them.
 - So for example:
 - In quadrant 1 they should write about the time that they have been in their host community and the length of time that they intend to stay here.
 - In quadrant 2 they talk about their level of involvement already in their host community – are they more of an observer or are they actively engaged in local activities like a contributor.
 - In quadrant 3 ask them to list their purpose for being in their host community – this can also tie into their goals – are they here for school, for work, etc.
 - In quadrant 4, they should add key words to describe how they feel their integration is progressing and how they think their ethnicity is perceived and received in their host community.
 - Now that you have explain these different elements, get your group to create their own cultural contact pie!
 - Encourage them to use different colours to fill in their pie, also using keywords that demonstrate their own experience in a different country.
 - After all your peers fill in their pies, they are invited to share their pies with the rest of the group.

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Worksheet:



Notes about my "Culture-Contact-Pie":

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