

DIVERSITY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

“Energizing mobile citizens' participation“: Project description

Project partners: Diversity Development Group (Lithuania), Institute of Public Affairs (Poland), European Latvian Association (Latvia); **Project coordinator:** Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS (Latvia).

Overview:

The expansion of the EU in 2004 and 2007 has changed the demographic situation and migratory behavior of European societies. The liberalization of the freedom of movement within the EU has led to increasing migration flows and created new opportunities but also challenges regarding the civic and political representation of mobile EU citizens. Little is known about mobile EU citizens' actual political engagement in many host countries, and in some cases it is known that their engagement is low.

Major factors influencing mobile citizens' participation in the host countries are:

- Knowledge about the rights and opportunities to participate;
- Level of political engagement (e.g. whether a person is interested in local politics in the host country and/ or has party affiliation);
- Access to participation in the host country and factors limiting it (legal framework, voting infrastructure);
- Other factors.

Primary target groups of this project are Latvian, Lithuanian and Polish migrant communities in Ireland. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland have played an important role as 'sending' countries and have witnessed population outflow, mainly to EU countries, creating migrant communities, which are not always politically active.

Ireland is chosen for the project as it is the second biggest destination country for Latvian, Lithuanian and Polish migrants. Also, according to Migration Policy Group (MIPEX, 2010), political participation opportunities in Ireland rate among the highest in Europe. Yet, the political engagement of migrant communities in Ireland remains low. The project “Energizing mobile citizens' participation“ is aimed at tackling this set of issues.

Key project objectives:

- To assess the extent of and limits to participation of mobile EU citizens in Ireland, with particular focus on EU-13 citizens (particularly Lithuanian, Latvian, Polish migrants), and to analyse how the efforts to stimulate mobile citizens' participation can be improved;
- To develop more effective ways of stimulating participation among EU citizens in Ireland and to pilot these new approaches at local level with representatives of Latvian, Lithuanian and Polish citizens;
- To develop recommendations for improving participation of mobile EU citizens in host countries and to present these recommendations to stakeholders and EU policy makers.

Project activities:

The project shall:

- Analyse current practices in promoting participation in political life (e.g. local elections) among EU-13 citizens living in Ireland, and identify barriers and opportunities;
- Promote participation by directly addressing Latvian, Lithuanian and Polish communities in Ireland (training for community leaders, pilot shadowing programme, brochure, interactive online test);
- Develop and present a policy brief with recommendations on how to improve participation of EU-13 citizens in EU-15 countries to EU policy makers.

Type and number of outputs to be produced:

- 1 extensive analytical study with recommendations
- 3 training programmes for up to 15 community leaders (in each programme) in Ireland
- 1 brochure (3000 copies) and 1 interactive test for EU nationals about the role of local authorities and the opportunities to participate in Ireland;
- 1 policy brief and 1 advocacy event in Brussels to promote recommendations to improve participation.

Expected results:

- Evidence-based analysis on participation of EU citizens in Ireland and best practices to improve participation, including awareness on barriers and opportunities;

By producing a representative study and an analysis of best practices, the project will improve stakeholders' and policy makers knowledge about participation and limits to participation, and will suggest ways for improvement.

- New best practices developed for energising mobile citizens to participate

By developing seminars and training programme and creating a shadowing programme for local community leaders of mobile citizens, the project will improve awareness and participation habits, and will develop practices that can be later used by others.

- Policy recommendations

By developing recommendations for EU policy makers how to support the participation of mobile EU citizens in host countries, the project will contribute to policy improvement.

Benefits from the project:

The project is expected to bring concrete benefits to the target groups. With project activities completed, Latvian, Lithuanian and Polish citizens and communities in Ireland are expected to have increased understanding of their civic and political rights that derive from EU citizenship. Gained knowledge is thus expected to encourage targeted mobile Union citizens to become active members in host society and fully exercise civic and political rights (e.g. prompting members of Latvian, Lithuanian and Polish diasporas to vote and stand for election in local elections in Ireland).

The project is also expected to promote discussion and exchange of practices among Member States on how to effectively encourage mobile EU citizens to exercise their civic and political rights deriving from EU citizenship. This will be achieved through policy recommendations for EU-level and national policy makers, based on the research, analysis of best practices and lessons learned from practical actions conducted during the project.

Policy makers, immigrant NGOs and other stakeholders will benefit from the project results indirectly, gaining access to more knowledge about participation and barriers to participation among mobile EU citizens and will also benefit from recommendations.

Type and number of persons benefiting from the project:

- Citizens of Latvia, Lithuania and Poland currently living in Ireland (52000 Latvians, 122000 Poles, 85000 Lithuanians) and other mobile citizens living in Ireland;
- Local authorities and policy makers in Ireland: 2-3 local authorities (Dublin, Cork and possibly Waterford);
- Participants of the training for community leaders: 30-45 migrant community leaders (mobile EU citizens and 3rd country nationals);
- Participants of the event in Brussels: EU policy makers.
- Secondary target groups include community groups, civil society organizations, national public bodies.