

# GOOD PRACTICES AND LOCAL INSIGHTS ON CIVIC INTEGRATION OF MIGRANT RESIDENTS IN PRAGUE 7

**MigAct z.s.**

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# SUMMARY

This report explores how residents with migration backgrounds participate in the civic and community life of Prague 7 and what helps or hinders their involvement. Based on 28 qualitative interviews, two community events, and desk research, the findings show that migrant residents engage most easily through low-threshold activities such as volunteering, neighborhood gatherings, community center events, and informal social networks. Their motivations are rooted in the desire to build supportive relationships, overcome isolation, navigate unfamiliar systems, and contribute to their new community. Participation helps people feel more at home, develop a sense of agency, and better understand how local institutions work. Despite this motivation, involvement is limited by several interconnected barriers, including language difficulties, cultural differences, limited time, unclear information, and feelings of fear or exclusion.

The report also highlights several conditions that make participation more accessible: welcoming attitudes, personal invitations, clear communication, opportunities for co-design, and open community spaces such as the Přístav 7 Community Center. These environments help residents build trust, learn through practical activities, and gradually take on more active roles. The examples of good practice identified here demonstrate that civic engagement grows where relationships are nurtured, where information is accessible, and where opportunities are shaped in conjunction with local residents.

**Building on these insights, the report offers a set of practical recommendations aimed at strengthening the civic and community participation of residents with migration backgrounds in Prague 7.**

## Contents

1. Introduction .....	3
2. Main Findings .....	4
3. Factors That Support Participation and Examples of Good Practice .....	8
4. Practical Recommendations .....	11
5. Conclusions .....	14
6. Literature .....	15

## 1. Introduction

Civic integration<sup>1</sup> and the support of active citizenship among residents with migration backgrounds<sup>2</sup> are becoming increasingly important, especially given the growing number of such residents making Prague their new home (approximately one fourth of the population). **In the Prague 7 district alone, residents with migration backgrounds constitute approximately 32% of the population** — amounting to 13,347 people in 2022 (Ministry of the Interior). However, official statistics—limited to registered foreign nationals—likely underestimate the true population because they exclude naturalized citizens and unregistered EU residents.

Most residents with migration backgrounds (except for EU citizens) do not have voting rights, leaving their perspectives, voices, and needs underrepresented in local political processes. As a result, civil society and community life become some of the few arenas where they can actively participate, influence public discussions, and engage with issues that affect everyone in the district. Greater involvement of residents with migration backgrounds in local initiatives, decision-making, and community activities can help strengthen mutual relationships, reduce prejudice and xenophobia, and foster a shared sense of belonging and responsibility for life in the district (Allen, Slepčková, 2023). Supporting their deeper integration into local civil society and creating accessible opportunities for participation is therefore essential for building a more inclusive and connected community.

This survey was carried out within the project *Pathways to Civic Integration for Residents with Migration Backgrounds*, in cooperation with Prague 7 City Hall and the Agora 7 Foundation. Its aim was to identify **good practices and propose tools to support active citizenship** among residents with migration backgrounds. The resulting **recommendations** offer guidance for strengthening civic integration in Prague 7 and may also serve as inspiration for other cities seeking more inclusive and participatory local communities.

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<sup>1</sup> Social integration involves participation in social life — learning the language, building relationships, and taking part in community activities. Civic integration focuses on engagement in civic and political life, such as participation in non-profit organizations, civic initiatives, advisory bodies, political parties, or volunteering. It promotes active citizenship and enables people with migration backgrounds to contribute to decision-making processes that shape their everyday lives. It is a multifaceted process through which immigrants become full members of society, both individually and collectively. (Filomeno, 2019; Nordregio).

<sup>2</sup> Citizens of third countries regardless of residence status (except for short-term visitors to the city); EU citizens; and citizens of the Czech Republic with a migrant background who have been granted Czech citizenship.

## 1.1 Methodology

The survey behind this report used a **participatory approach** and was carried out in two phases: initial **desk research** was followed by **in-person interviews and community meetings** that explored the research questions collectively. Data was collected between April and September 2025. The desk research focused on reviewing relevant academic literature in Czechia and abroad and identifying key stakeholders within Prague 7's civil society.

The target group included residents with migration backgrounds, representatives of non-profit and community organizations, Prague 7 City Hall officials, and active local Czech residents. Because of the survey's exploratory nature and limited scale, the sample is not statistically representative. In total, **28 interviews** were conducted - 18 with residents with migration backgrounds and 10 with civil society organizations and City Hall representatives. Additionally, **two participatory community events** were held, bringing together **25 participants**.



## 2. Main Findings

### 2.1. How do residents get involved in local civil society?

*"I got involved with the community center and that's my first experience at something that participates in growing or strengthening a community with different projects and initiatives." (R16)*

The interviews indicate that people with migration backgrounds become involved in local civil society in ways that are **easy to access and adaptable to their everyday lives**. They volunteer in NGOs, community centers, churches or community gardens, and participate in activities hosted in community centers, libraries, and other neighborhood spaces. Local markets, festivals, and neighborhood gatherings further provide friendly, low-barrier opportunities for residents to take part in community life.

Representatives of local civil society and municipal organizations described a wide range of activities through which all residents can get involved, including

public events, art festivals, and various community initiatives. A more comprehensive overview of these engagement opportunities is available in the [\*\*Local Neighbourhood Guide of Prague 7 - Sousedský průvodce Prahou 7\*\*](#) (available in Czech only).

## **2.2 Motivations for engagement.**

*“... making a community, because being far from home, all the community that you have in your country of origin, stays in your country of origin, and you come here and you are alone, basically. So, I think it is important to have that community...” (R 25)*

Interviews and observations show that people with migration backgrounds in Prague 7 get involved in local activities for a mix of practical and personal reasons. Many seek to build **supportive community networks** that can replace the social ties left behind in their home countries. Participating in local groups helps them manage everyday challenges, avoid loneliness, and feel a stronger sense of belonging. Their involvement is also shaped by **personal values** such as solidarity, mutual aid, and social justice. For some, being active in the community is a way to contribute to society and uphold a **sense of civic responsibility**.

Engagement also can offer a **sense of agency in a new environment**. It helps residents navigate unfamiliar systems, overcome language barriers, and feel more in control of their lives. At the same time, participation becomes a **practical way to learn how local society works**—improving language skills, understanding Czech institutions, and forming relationships with Czech neighbors. Overall, local involvement supports integration, confidence, and connection, making it an important part of building a meaningful life in Prague 7.

*“I want to feel more integrated here. And, you know, it's my life here. So, I want to have some impact on that.” (R19)*

## 2.3. Factors limiting civic and community engagement

*"Sometimes I wish things were a bit more spontaneous. I mentioned institutions and info events, but I also wish things would just happen organically — that you find yourself involved without even realizing. But here that seems hard. I don't think spontaneity is a trait of Czech society...If I were in my home context, I'd use different codes, but here everything is so planned, controlled, regulated — I don't know how to act in those more collective, community situations..." (R27)*

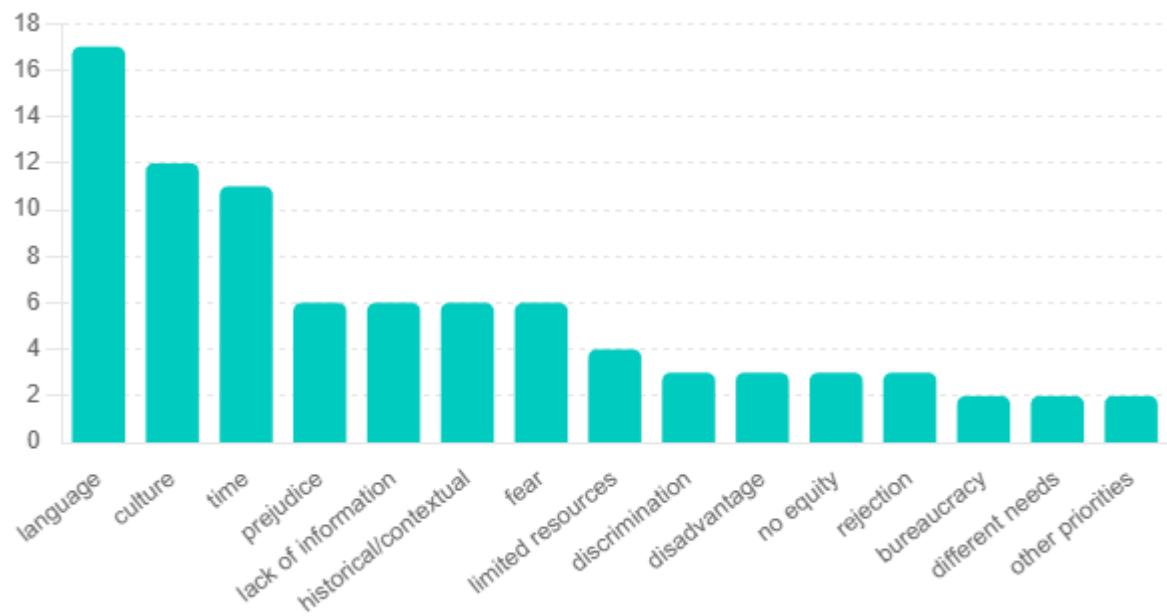
Residents with migration backgrounds in Prague 7 face several interconnected barriers that limit their participation in civic and community life. **Language barriers** are among the most significant, affecting not only access to information but also everyday interactions and the ability to understand informal social cues. **Cultural differences** further complicate engagement, as unfamiliar social norms and communication styles can create discomfort or misunderstandings when interacting with Czech residents. Many also struggle with **limited time** due to work, childcare, or the absence of support networks, making it difficult to attend community activities or become consistently involved.

Experiences of **prejudice and stereotyping** reinforce feelings of exclusion. Some residents report being treated as outsiders or having their perspectives dismissed simply because they are foreigners. Parents who speak other languages often feel overlooked by local institutions, which deepens the sense of not fully belonging. **A lack of clear, accessible information**—often available only in Czech—adds another layer of difficulty, leaving many unsure about existing opportunities or whether they are even eligible to participate.

Across interviews, feelings of **fear and insecurity** emerge as a final significant obstacle. Many residents worry about making mistakes, not understanding procedures, or not being taken seriously. This internal barrier can discourage them from speaking up, joining activities, or engaging with local institutions.

*"...I feel intimidated as a foreigner and therefore maybe my voice won't matter so much." (R14)*

## Top 15 identified barriers from interview data:



For a more detailed overview of the possible barriers to civic and political engagement, also see the report [\*Pathways to active citizenship of residents with a migrant background in the city of Prague\*](#).

## 2.4. Main communication channels

Interview findings show that residents with migration backgrounds rely on a **mix of digital platforms, official municipal channels, and everyday interpersonal networks** to stay informed about local life in Prague 7. **Facebook** — especially neighborhood groups—acts as a key entry point for learning about events, sharing information, and connecting with others. City Hall tools such as the **Hobulet newsletter**, the municipal website, and **information boards** are also trusted sources, particularly because they provide clear, structured information. However, **many residents find the Czech-only content limiting** or are no longer using Facebook. Physical notice boards, posters, and public displays remain especially important for newcomers who may not yet navigate local digital spaces.

Overall, communication is most effective when online and offline channels work together to make information visible, understandable, and accessible. **Residents emphasized the need for multilingual content, simple explanations of local processes, and communication that invites participation rather than simply broadcasting information.** An inclusive, clear, and two-way communication approach—one that listens as well as informs—can strengthen residents' sense of belonging and support more meaningful engagement in community and civic life.

*"In Hobulet, in the newspaper, they have the section in English, it's a small portion of it that's translated to English, so often I'm looking at the rest of it and I try to understand more of what's going on..." (R14)*

### **3. Factors That Support Participation and Examples of Good Practice**

#### **3.1 What helps.**

The data from the interviews and feedback from the participatory events shows several recurring factors that make it easier for residents with migration backgrounds to participate in community life and local civic initiatives in Prague 7. These factors point to the importance of human connection, clarity, and accessible environments.

**Openness** is the most frequently mentioned aspect. Participants highlight the value of friendly, welcoming attitudes and spaces where newcomers feel accepted without judgment. Alongside this, **personal connections**, such as being invited by someone, knowing a familiar face, or having a direct point of contact, significantly increase confidence to join activities.

*"I think that what you guys are doing is actually a very big ray of hope and I think ...seeing more of those initiatives come from local governments to say hey you know, we want to hear your opinion. There's a forum here. There is a discussion in place, where everyone is welcome. We will hear your voice there can be translation from English to Czech in case someone doesn't understand, to know that there is that openness and willingness to get past the language barrier" (R14)*

Various forms of **support and guidance** also play a key role. This includes someone explaining how local initiatives work, helping navigate unfamiliar structures, or offering practical assistance. Related to this, residents appreciate chances for **co-design**, where they can contribute ideas, collaborate, or help shape activities rather than only attend them.

*“... I think I'd need or like some guidance, a mentor of sorts, because I just don't know where to start.” (R27)*

Barriers decrease when participation is **low-threshold** and **English-friendly**, meaning people can join without perfect language skills or complex procedures. **Proximity** and accessible spaces make involvement easier, as do clear, respectful **dialogue** and communication that helps residents understand what to expect.

### 3.2 Good practice

During the data collection, several examples of open, low-threshold organizations were identified as successful in attracting and engaging residents with migration backgrounds, particularly community centers and community gardens.

One illustrative case is **Community Center Přístav 7**, operated by the Agora 7 Foundation. Its main goal is to **connect generations, cultures, and neighbors**, enabling residents to meet, collaborate, and contribute to community life.

The center provides accessible spaces for workshops, neighborhood gatherings, celebrations, and grassroots initiatives. Its approach is community-driven and inclusive: coordinators provide organizational support, help people develop their own initiatives, and create opportunities for volunteer involvement, while allowing residents to shape much of the program themselves.

### Ways to Get Engaged

**Participate in community events** — which are open, informal, and increasingly attended by residents with migration backgrounds.

**Start or host your own initiative**, from cultural activities to language meetups or shared-interest groups, using the center's space and logistical support.

**Volunteer** — support children's activities, accompany groups, help seniors, assist at events, join community gardening or food distribution.

**Co-create neighborhood projects**, individually or with NGOs, schools, and local institutions.

**Use the space informally** to meet people, rest, socialize, and build networks—especially supportive for newly arrived residents.

Přístav 7 successfully attracts a **diverse mix of residents**. Migrant volunteers report that involvement helps them build relationships more quickly, feel "more at home," and integrate through repeated interaction and meaningful shared activities. The center supports **relationship-building** and strengthens local capacity by enabling both Czech and migrant residents to initiate and lead activities. Cooperation with diverse groups—Ukrainian, Israeli, Czech and multilingual families—further enriches the community and normalizes multicultural participation.

*"A few people with a migration background have joined very actively, and they are excellent volunteers... And what we hear from them is that volunteering helped them connect incredibly fast, compared to how slowly it was going for them before... By meeting the same people repeatedly and having something they can do there, it helped them feel more at home in the neighborhood." (R1)*

## Lessons Learned

**Personal contact matters most:** conversations and relationship-building work better than formal tools like surveys.

**Mutual hesitation is a barrier** — especially around language confidence. Creating low-threshold, practical activities helps overcome this.

**Shared practical tasks** (gardening, accompanying children, preparing community meals) create natural, non-verbal interaction and help build trust.

Role models accelerate engagement: once a few migrants join, others follow through word-of-mouth and peer encouragement.

## Adaptability and Scalability

The Přístav 7 model **can be adapted to other neighborhoods if certain conditions are in place**. It is built on open spaces, accessible activities, volunteer coordination, and strong cooperation with local institutions, NGOs, schools, and active residents. Because programs grow organically from community needs and emphasize low-threshold access and personal relationships, the model works well in diverse demographic settings.

However, it is also **resource intensive**. Establishing and running a community center of this scale requires substantial funding, ongoing coordination, and continuous management of activities and partnerships. Its long-term sustainability depends on committed municipal support, stable NGO partnerships, and active involvement from local actors.

## 4. Practical Recommendations.

This set of practical recommendations is based on qualitative interviews, desk research, and insights shared by residents with migration backgrounds. It aims to address the key barriers identified in the study—limited first contact with local structures, uneven access to information, low visibility of opportunities, and the need for more inclusive communication and shared responsibility.

**Together, these recommendations provide concrete steps for local authorities, civil society organizations, and community stakeholders to strengthen community ties, improve participation, and create a more welcoming and inclusive environment for all residents of Prague 7.**

### 1. . Personalized First Contact and Guidance

Establish a “buddy / guide / gatekeeper system” with local volunteers (Czechs and people with migration backgrounds) who can welcome newcomers, explain the local context, and accompany them to their first events.

Always provide a **contact person** for an event (phone/email). This strengthens connections and builds trust.

Offer **multilingual consultation hours** in community or municipal spaces.

The Municipality can provide a **welcome package** with information about local opportunities, contacts, and spaces for engagement.

Organize **regular networking events** for residents with migration backgrounds interested in volunteering or joining NGOs.

Build a volunteer pool to support Czech language needs in informal settings.

## 2. Co-Design and Shared Responsibility

**Involve all residents (including people with migration backgrounds) in planning and running activities** — from designing action plans and projects, organizing events, and creating volunteering opportunities, to hiring people with migration backgrounds as staff.

**Provide low-threshold opportunities** with clear expectations (skills, time, language level).

### **Collecting feedback and co-creation**

Use diverse and engaging methods to gather feedback. Feed residents' ideas back into planning, consistently collect their needs, and provide opportunities for people to initiate and co-create activities.

**Ensure accessibility with translators, multilingual materials, QR codes, and clear explanations of context.** Note: it is possible to consult with long term residents or intercultural workers

## 3. Accessible and Inclusive Communication

**Improve the quality of information available in English** across current channels (Hobulet, newsletters, online apps, websites). It is important to add context and be specific about the opportunities for involvement.

**Use a mix of online and offline channels** (FB groups, boards, cafés, schools, libraries).

**Be explicit when inviting people with migration backgrounds and Czech citizens** (e.g., Everyone is welcome, English friendly, open to all residents of Prague 7...). This reduces fears of rejection and strengthens a shared sense of belonging.

**Showcase positive examples of participation** to encourage involvement and help people become familiar with community life and what it entails.

**Create a central event calendar/app** and an inventory of communication channels.

**Make local decision-making processes easier to understand.**

#### 4. Training, Partnerships, and City Support

**Strengthen cooperation among NGOs, schools, parent groups, community centers and migrant-led initiatives.**

**Provide affordable community spaces and small grants for local initiatives.**

**Provide intercultural sensitivity training for schools, City Hall staff, and community organizers. At the same time, offer workshops on Czech culture, history, and civil society context for people with migration backgrounds.**

**Treat inclusion as a long-term process requiring continuity and shared responsibility.**

**Build databases of volunteers, partners, and community spaces.**

**Use local cafés, libraries, and restaurants as informal meeting hubs.**

#### 5. Family-Friendly and Low-Barrier Participation

**Offer child-friendly formats and childcare options.**

This can also be an opportunity to involve people as volunteers in co-organizing these activities.

**Keep activities free or low-cost, welcoming, and local (in parks, squares, community centers, cafés).**

**Organize regular small neighborhood meetups for everyone to build trust gradually.**

**Offer practical sessions for families (e.g., school system in P7 in English).**

**Collaborate with parent associations, youth centers, libraries, and cultural institutions.**

## 5. Conclusions.

The findings show that civic and community participation among residents with migration backgrounds is shaped by both personal experiences and the broader conditions of life in Prague 7. Language barriers, lack of information, cultural distance, and limited confidence create significant obstacles, especially in the early stages of integration. Because many residents do not yet fully understand local systems or do not feel invited to take part, their first steps into civic life often depend on personal contact, supportive environments, and visible examples of inclusion. These challenges underscore the need for practical, long-term support that helps newcomers navigate the local context and feel that their presence and contributions matter.

At the same time, the report makes clear that meaningful change is achievable. Community centers, NGOs, volunteers, and municipal actors already offer valuable pathways for participation, especially when activities are low-threshold, multilingual, family-friendly, and rooted in genuine relationship-building. Investing in inclusive communication, shared planning, and partnerships across schools, libraries, parent groups, and community initiatives can further strengthen these efforts. Ultimately, creating a welcoming environment where all residents—regardless of background—can participate in shaping local life will not only support integration but also enrich the social fabric of Prague 7 as a whole.



A particularly positive outcome of this project is the creation of a new working group made up of active residents with migration backgrounds and Czech residents. This group has begun meeting regularly to plan activities and explore how to enrich community life in Prague 7. This collective effort represents a tangible step toward more inclusive participation and demonstrates the value of creating spaces where residents can meet, collaborate, and take shared responsibility for community life in Prague 7.

## 6. Literature.

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