

**HANDBOOK ON
HOW TO IMPLEMENT A ONE-STOP-SHOP
FOR IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION**



February 2009

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The Handbook on how to implement a One-Stop-Shop is one of the main outcomes of the project “One-Stop-Shop: a new answer for immigrant integration”, funded by the European Commission INTI Fund and coordinated by the High Commission for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue.

The aim of this project was to create a network of partners to discuss and assess a “One-Stop-Shop” approach, recommended by the Commission’s Common Agenda for Integration (COM 2005 389) to strengthen the implementation of the sixth Common Basic Principle on Integration regarding access for immigrants to institutions.

The Portuguese experience, within this innovative One-Stop-Shop strategy (with two One-Stop-Shops named National Immigrant Support Centres), was considered as an example for this project and, in fact, has been quite successful.


In our days, public services have to accommodate the needs of an increasingly diverse population, including socially and ethically diverse citizens.

We know that immigrants face many barriers to fully use public services. For example: the range of institutions involved in the integration process, the lack of cooperation between Government services and their dispersed locations, the diversity of procedures, complex bureaucracy and communication difficulties as a result of cultural and linguistic diversity.

Many and different steps can be undertaken to eliminate these barriers and enhance the accessibility of services. The creation of ‘one-stop-shops’ is one of them.

The Portuguese One-Stop-Shop approach, according with the EU recommendations, managed to achieve good cooperation between different public services, located in the same building, together with the creation of new services to meet the concrete needs of immigrants, is a fundamental response to the arrival of newcomers and the settlement of permanent immigrants. In other words, the One-Stop-Shop service is a holistic strategy of mainstreaming the provision of immigration services, facilitating the integration process.

Portugal also proved to be innovative in terms of involving cultural mediators from the different immigrant communities in public administration service provision. The Portuguese experience proves that mediators play an important role on promoting immigrant reception and integration, reducing access barriers and distrust in Government services.



This INTI Project was a good opportunity to exchange information, experiences and expertise between all the key actors involved. This Handbook should be seen as a source of inspiration for various actors in the European Union in implementing integration policies in the field of service provision.

It is my belief that the One-Stop-Shop service can respond in an innovative and feasible way to various concerns and challenges related to immigrant integration in Member States, providing a good contribution for a more inclusive society with equal opportunities for all.

Pedro Silva Pereira

Minister of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers (Portugal)

PREFACE by Jan Niessen

Active citizenship and public services

The best integrated societies are probably those where citizens find their way around and contribute to the well-being of all. In such societies people have equal opportunities and are treated equally. Their rights and responsibilities are recognised and respected. They are entitled to an autonomous life based on their own choices and pursuit of personal fulfilment and they are actively engaged in the society's economic, social, cultural and civic life.

This is, of course, a tall order and policies can help to create favourable conditions for this to happen.

In open and inclusive societies immigrants are welcomed as citizens-to-be. These persons are often young and dynamic, hard-working and resourceful men and women. Many of them have escaped from harsh and harmful situations in their countries of origin and are building a new life by matching their personal skills with more favourable circumstances in countries of destination.

Making this work for all is a difficult task, but one from which receiving societies also stand to gain. Public services play a key role in this regard.

In an inclusive environment immigrants can better contribute to societies' well-being. They acquire more rights and assume more responsibilities over time as policies secure their residence, promote their participation, facilitate reunion with family members, encourage naturalisation, and combat discrimination.

The way residence and citizenship status are acquired is very much about service delivery. It is about the correct and timely handling of the necessary formalities for the acquisition of the desired and deserved status. Not only immigrants, but also employers and public institutions benefit tremendously from short, simple and transparent procedures for the application and acquisition of work and residence permits, family certificates, and so on. How these services are delivered, namely correctly and with fairness, conveys a powerful message of respect and dignity.

Just as they contribute to society and become active citizens, immigrants are entitled to be treated as citizens. In a diverse society equal access to services and equal treatment are



defining principles. Immigrants face many barriers to enjoying public services. They may not know which services they are entitled to, or the services are rather expensive and beyond their reach. The service centres may be located at many different places and far away from where immigrants live and work. Many and different steps can be undertaken to eliminate these barriers and enhance the accessibility of services. The creation of 'one-stop-shops' is one of them.

Public institutions traditionally provide services to the 'general public' and tailor their services to groups or persons with specific characteristics. They now have to accommodate the needs of a socially and geographically mobile and increasingly diverse population. To treat everyone not the same but equally, service providers have to invest more than ever before in getting to know what the needs of their ethnically and racially diverse clients are and see whether and how general services need to be complemented by specific services and for how long. Mediators can play an important role in that process and in the delivery of customised services.

This *Handbook on How to Implement a One-Stop-Shop for Immigrant Integration* will be of great help for those who are in charge of delivering and improving public services that work to the benefit of those who enjoy them.

Jan Niessen
Director of the Migration Policy Group (Brussels)



CONTEXT


The *Handbook on how to implement a One-Stop-Shop* is one of the main outcomes of the project “*One-Stop-Shop: a new answer for immigrant integration*” (JLS/2006/INTI/148)¹, funded by the European Commission INTI Fund (Directorate-General Justice, Freedom and Security) and promoted and coordinated by the High Commission for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue (ACIDI, I.P. - the Portuguese state service for the integration of immigrants).²

The main aim of this project was to create a network of partners to discuss and assess a “One-Stop-Shop” approach, recommended in the *Commission’s Common Agenda for Integration* (COM 2005 389) to strengthen the implementation of the sixth Common Basic Principle on Integration - “*Access for immigrants to institutions, as well as to public and private goods and services, on a basis equal to national citizens and in a non-discriminatory way is an essential foundation*”.

The Portuguese experience, within this innovative One-Stop-Shop strategy, was also considered as an example in order to contextualise this project. In 2004, Portugal, through ACIDI, I.P., developed two One-Stop-Shops with the official name *National Immigrant Support Centres*. These two centres, created exclusively for immigrants, bring together under the same roof a number of services related to immigration. Following the philosophy of working with partners to develop good integration policies and outcomes, in a context of shared responsibility – as also defined as a priority in the seventh and ninth Common Basic Principles on Integration -, the centres involve the departments of five Ministries and offer specialised offices that provide specific support.

The first edition of the *Handbook on Integration for policy-makers and practitioners* - a guide to provide valuable and practical guidance for implementing the Common Basic Principles on Integration and facilitating the exchange of experience, information and policy initiatives – identified the Portuguese One-Stop-Shops as an example of Best Practice in working with partners to achieve immigrant integration outcomes.

In Portugal the One-Stop-Shop approach also proved to be innovative in terms of providing a joined-up response for the service-user, since it is based on a general shared data management system used in attending to the public, facilitating the digitalisation of data and documents and communication between the different offices, and on the involvement of cultural mediators from the different immigrant communities in public administration service provision.



Having been in operation for two years, in 2006 the Portuguese High Commission for Immigration requested the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to undertake an independent evaluation of the outcomes of these support centres. Among the most relevant conclusions of the IOM report was the recommendation of the development of an international network to discuss and assess the One-Stop-Shop as a model for immigrant integration and to examine the feasibility of its implementation in other EU Member States.

ACIDI, I.P. convened seven other partners to implement the project *“One-Stop-Shop: a new answer for immigrant integration”*: the Hellenic Migration Policy Institute (Greece), the General-Directorate of Immigration (Italy), the General-Directorate of Immigrant Integration (Spain), the Immigrant Council of Ireland (Ireland), Network Migration in Europe, e.V. (Germany), the International Organization for Migration – Mission in Portugal and the Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies at the University of Amsterdam (the Netherlands). Hence the assessment of the One-Stop-Shop approach was guaranteed through a diversity of project partners, including: (1) countries with a recent immigration experience and countries that are already experiencing second and third generations of immigrants; and (2) partners representing national state integration services (Portugal, Spain and Italy), partners from Non-Governmental Organisations (Ireland and Germany), a partner operating under private law with Ministerial supervision (Greece), a research centre that coordinates a Network of Excellence on the field of International Migration, Integration and Social Cohesion – IMISCOE (the Netherlands), and an international organisation (International Organization for Migration).

This European project, implemented from September 2007 to February 2009 with European Commission funding, also involved a variety of actors with expertise in immigrant integration, including policymakers, Government actors (at the local, regional and national levels), service providers, researchers, immigrant associations and other relevant stakeholders. These diverse integration stakeholders monitored all the project activities as part of the Steering Committee³ of the project and/or as members of one of the six national Advisory Committees⁴ created in the participant countries. During the implementation of the project these key actors were involved in many activities: contributing to the discussion of the country reports⁵ and of the working documents of the project; providing information on the main integration difficulties that immigrants face in their societies in terms of service provision or relevant support services that already exist; and participating in the transnational workshops hosted by the project partners.⁶

The information, initial ideas, inspiring examples and preliminary recommendations gathered through the different activities of the project - with the support of all of these key

actors - were crucial for building the chapters of this Handbook. Some of these form part of the Handbook, inserted in boxes throughout the text, while more detailed information and links are available on the project website - www.oss.inti.acidi.gov.pt.

This Handbook reflects the work of a network of partners who, after analysing their country reports on immigrant integration⁷, were able to discuss and assess a “One-Stop-Shop” service. The sharing of experiences and expertise between all the participants involved in the project (including those who participated in the Steering Committee and in the national Advisory Committees) enhanced the final outcomes of the initiative, including the project website and this Handbook.

This Handbook is also based on the outcomes of three Transnational Workshops⁸ undertaken during the course of this INTI project. Each workshop dealt with a specific theme related to the Project: (1) the first Transnational Workshop was held in Dublin on 26 February 2008 and the theme of the Workshop was ‘The Role of Socio-Cultural Mediators in the One-Stop-Shop’; (2) the second Transnational Workshop was held in Athens on 6 June 2008 and the theme of the Workshop was ‘Integrated Service Provision to Immigrants: examples of One-Stop-Shops in Europe’; and (3) the third Transnational Workshop was held in Berlin on 8 July 2008 and the theme of the Workshop was: ‘Partnerships between NGOs and Government actors in providing services to migrants’. These Workshops were convened by three of the project partners and were attended by representatives of the partner organisations together with members of each of the national Advisory Committees and other Governmental and non-Governmental policymakers and integration stakeholders.

As this Project aims to develop an approach that is replicable in different European Union Member States and this Handbook intends to provide valuable and practical guidance for implementing the One-Stop-Shop service, it was considered to be fundamental to have an external evaluation of the final outcomes of the project. Accordingly, and keeping in mind the eleventh Common Basic Principle on Integration – “*developing clear goals, indicators and evaluation mechanisms*” - the project evaluation was undertaken by Prof. Rinus Penninx, the coordinator of the IMISCOE Network of Excellence. A detailed evaluation of the feasibility of One-Stop-Shop implementation in Member States in view of the project deliverables (e.g. *Handbook on How to Implement a One-Stop-Shop*, Country Reports, Minutes of Advisory Committees’ meetings and Workshop results) was developed and updated onto the project website.

In sum, the exchange of experiences and knowhow between the partners and members of national Advisory Committees involved in the project provided added value to the initiative,



and facilitated the coherent, effective and replicable integration strategy for European Union Member States that we present in this book. Rather than a prescriptive document, this Handbook should be seen as a source of inspiration for various actors in the European Union in implementing integration policies in the field of service provision.

Furthermore, taking into consideration that in some countries the recent debate on immigration started as a reaction to a perceived failure of integration policies, it seems that the approach developed in this project can re-orientate this debate. The identification, definition and evaluation of a new service for immigrant integration, based on the experiences of different Member States and different integration stakeholders, and where immigrants have a fundamental role, is in line with the European Union's top priorities. It is our belief that the One-Stop-Shop service can respond in an innovative and feasible way to various concerns and challenges related to immigrant integration in Member States.




Handbook on how to implement a One-Stop-Shop



1. INTRODUCTION: THE ONE-STOP-SHOP SERVICE



“One-Stop-Shop: A New Answer for Immigrant Integration”



According to the most recent estimates, the population of third-country nationals residing in European Union countries is around 18.5 million, corresponding to 3.8% of the total population.¹⁰ Hence the management of the integration of immigrants in the European Union is one of the most challenging responsibilities that most Member States are facing today. Both countries with longer histories of immigration and countries that are experiencing immigration flows for the first time are being confronted with the need to define sustainable integration policies.

The European Commission, also aiming to achieve this goal, has been supporting the Member States in formulating integration policy by developing common approaches for the integration of immigrants and in promoting the exchange of best practices. Among the most relevant recent developments in this area are the *Common Basic Principles on Integration*, the general framework for the integration of third-country nationals in the European Union adopted through the Commission Communication *A Common Agenda for Integration*, the *Annual Reports on Migration and Integration*, and the two editions of the *Handbook on Integration for policy-makers and practitioners*. Additionally, in 2008, the Council of the European Union adopted the *European Pact on Immigration and Asylum* and the European Ministerial Conference on Integration approved the *Vichy Declaration*.

These EU documents concur in recommending a coherent, whole-of-government approach to integration, working in partnership with immigrant communities. Integration is seen as a process of mutual accommodation, where the receiving society as well as the immigrants take part in the adaptation required. In this sense, the *Vichy Declaration* states that: “*In order to be successful, the integration process calls for a genuine effort on the part of the host society and the competent public authorities as well as the immigrants themselves, to foster in particular mutual respect*” (p5).

In addition, the *Common Agenda for Integration* - the European Commission's first response to the recommendation of the European Council to establish a coherent European framework for integration - proposes concrete measures and encourages Member States to strengthen their efforts in developing integration strategies (COM (2005) 389 final). Taking the diversity of contexts, histories and traditions in different countries into account, this communication draws conclusions from policies implemented so far, aiming to assist Member States in dealing with various kinds of integration challenges. In relation to the sixth Common Basic Principle in the *Common Agenda*, dealing with access for immigrants to institutions and services with a view to facilitating the integration process, actions are recommended that correspond to the overall characteristics of One-Stop-Shops - stimulating partnerships between public and private institutions in order to promote integrated responses -, and to its specificities - involving cultural mediators from civil society institutions and developing the intercultural competences of service providers.

In response to these recommendations, this Handbook presents the One-Stop-Shop service as an approach for immigrant integration. As will be comprehensively and clearly described, this approach represents an essential tool in successfully managing integration to realise the full benefits of immigration, specifically in relation to service provision to immigrants. The One-Stop-Shop is a contribution to ensuring that integration is a two-way process, where the receiving society actively engages in adaptation.


The *European Pact on Immigration and Asylum* invites Member States to establish ambitious policies to promote harmonious integration based on a balance between immigrants' rights and duties (13189/08 ASIM 68: 6). Consequently, the One-Stop-Shop approach is presented as an ambitious and yet realistic proposal for providing services to immigrants, improving integration and providing more and better information on the rights and duties of immigrants in EU Member States.

As will be described in what follows, the One-Stop-Shop service is a policy that approaches integration from the perspective of the adaptation of the receiving society and the services that it provides, combined with a consultative and cooperative process of working with immigrants, to further the integration of both immigrants and the receiving society. It thereby meets the two-way challenge of integration in a sensible and flexible way.

This Introduction defines a One-Stop-Shop, outlines the benefits of its implementation and sets out the prerequisites and necessary steps for its creation. It further addresses potential challenges to the creation of a One-Stop-Shop, in order to provide a realistic guide. Subsequent chapters deal with the fundamental pillars of a One-Stop-Shop service: partnership and coordination in the designing and provision of services (Chapter 2); mediation by immigrant communities (Chapter 3); services provided (Chapter 4); and issues relating to accessibility (Chapter 5). The final chapter relates to economic and public finance aspects in terms of human and material resources that are needed for the implementation of One-Stop-Shops in Member States (Chapter 6).

1.1. What is a One-Stop-Shop?


Different Member States share many common difficulties that compromise the consistent integration of immigrants. To be more precise, among the problems most often cited are: the range of institutions involved in the integration process, the lack of cooperation between Government services and their dispersed locations, the diversity of procedures, complex bureaucracy, communication difficulties as a result of cultural and linguistic diversity, and the difficulties of immigrant participation in decision-making.



Aiming to confront these challenges and define proposals for concrete measures, the European Commission, in the *Common Agenda for Integration* (COM 2005 389), defined as priorities “*strengthening the capacity of public and private service providers to interact with third-country nationals via intercultural interpretation and translation, mentoring, mediation services by immigrant communities, ‘one-stop-shop’ information points and building sustainable organisational structures for integration and diversity management.*” The Commission also stressed the necessity for developing modes of cooperation between stakeholders, enabling officials to exchange information and pool resources (sixth Common Basic Principle).

Nevertheless, only a few Member States, inspired by the *Common Agenda for Integration*, have defined concrete integration programmes for immigrants that can be seen as “One-Stop-Shop” services. The integration of and cooperation between different public services, previously located in different places and working according to different schedules, together with the creation of new services to cater for the concrete needs of immigrants, is a fundamental response to the arrival of newcomers and the settlement of permanent immigrants.

As will be detailed in this Handbook, the **One-Stop-Shop service is essentially based on the provision of both Government and non-Government services to immigrants and people interested in immigration issues under one roof** (further details in chapter 4). In other words, the One-Stop-Shop operates according to the same philosophy as the Citizens’ Centres that already exist in several European Union countries, for the provision of a number of Government services under one roof.



Citizens Service Centres (KEP) were set up in Greece in 2002, under the Ministry of the Interior. They aim to provide administrative information as well as to handle entire procedures, from the initial application until the issuance of the final result. The Citizens Service Centres cooperate with the appropriate civil services and are authorised to handle certain cases primarily addressed to the Municipalities and Prefectures, as well as to the Ministries of Justice, of Economy, of the Merchant Marine, for Environment Physical Planning and Public Works, of National Education and Religious Affairs, of Health and Social Solidarity and others. One of the main underlying principles for the creation of Citizens’ Service Centres was to facilitate citizens’ interaction with Government services. Centres have been set up throughout the country and operate with extended opening hours (Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm and Saturday 8am to 2pm).



In Ireland the *Citizens Information Services* are overseen by the Citizens Information Board under the Department of Social and Family Affairs. This service is aimed at the general population, but in practice a high proportion of service-users in some locations are immigrants. The numbers of people accessing the services of the Citizen Information Centre based in O'Connell Street in Dublin increased significantly during 2008 – 62,630 queries dealt with – compared to 52,832 the previous year and 13,397 in 2000. 12% of queries in 2008 related to immigrant rights and entitlements to residency, citizenship and family reunification. Many queries were also received in relation to the Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill 2007 as there was concern as to how it would impact. In a survey of service users, over 60% of queries were from people of non-Irish origin, made up almost equally of people from the European Union and people from outside the EU, with people from within the EU forming a slightly higher percentage, around 32% for EU and 28% for non-EU.



In Portugal, the *Lojas de Cidadão* (Citizens' Shops) are fundamental models of coordination between Government and other services. These centres combine branches of many of the different Government agencies that a resident of Portugal may have to deal with, under the one roof. Indeed, in the inception stage of the National Immigrant Support Centres, meetings took place with the Citizens' Shop Management Institute, as a consultant, to draw on this experience. This led to further discussions on partnership with various Government agencies to develop a similar service specifically for immigrants.

The One-Stop-Shop is an essential approach because it responds to the problem that services provided to immigrants and procedures to be undertaken are usually dispersed and normally provide independent responses, obliging the immigrant to visit other state institutions and undergo further, sometimes unnecessary, procedures. By bringing all these services together, a coherent and mainstreamed response is given to immigrants, while services and mediation are provided by cultural mediators representing the immigrant communities. In other words, the **One-Stop-Shop service is a holistic strategy of mainstreaming the provision of immigration services**, as it is based on actively and openly combining in the same building all or most of the relevant institutions that immigrants need to contact in any European society.



In 2004, Portugal, through the High Commission for Immigration and Ethnic Minorities (now the High Commission for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue - ACIDI, I.P.), developed two One-Stop-Shops, called *National Immigrant Support Centres* (CNAIs), in Lisbon and Porto. These two centres, created exclusively for immigration issues, bring together under the same roof a number of services related to immigration. Through shared responsibility and partnership between various levels of the Portuguese government, the centres involve six branches of five Ministries (Foreigners and Borders Service, Working Conditions Authority, Social Security, Central Registry Office, Health and Education) and offices that provide specific support, namely with regard to legal advice, family reunification and labour market integration, among other issues.

The services are enhanced through the involvement of 61 cultural mediators from the different immigrant communities. These stakeholders, representing immigrant associations and working in partnership with the Government, have a key role as a bridge between the immigrants and Portuguese public administration.

In 2006 the International Organization for Migration (IOM) undertook an independent evaluation of the outcomes of these support centres. The evaluation concluded that the National Immigrant Support Centre model “is effectively an initiative and an experience that should be disseminated, and that can be internationally replicated within other institutional contexts, obviously always taking into consideration the various specifics that characterise different international migration scenarios” (IOM, 2007: 81).

In the guide developed here, the One-Stop-Shop is not merely conceptualised as a centralised information point (as initially recommended in 2005 by the Common Agenda), but it is rather presented as an approach based on a broader service provision involving Government partners, where effective responses are provided, procedures are concluded and results are achieved.



New Link is a pioneering centre integrating new arrivals into the Peterborough community in the United Kingdom. New Link delivers a range of services including bi-lingual information and advice, and employment and enterprise support. Uniquely, New Link also works with the receiving community and other frontline services staff through awareness training and community development programmes. New Link also advises central and regional government, the police, health services and other local authorities on the successful integration of new arrivals into communities. In 2007-2008, there were 8,300 visitors to New Link, where 3,480 client appointments were with bilingual assistants. 93% of all enquiries were dealt with in-house, so that referral to other service-providers was not necessary. During that year, a total of 1,483 new clients registered with New Link. Twenty languages are spoken by the staff, and a total of 26 new arrival community groups have been established.



The *Migration Information Centre* (MIC) of Slovakia was set up in 2006 by IOM, as part of a project funded by the EU EQUAL initiative. Aiming to facilitate the social and professional integration of migrants in Slovakia, the principal areas of intervention of the Centre are legal advice, support for re-qualification, support for insertion in the labour market and for entrepreneurship, information on education, health and social security in the receiving society, and support for housing, family reunification and citizenship. As of June 2008 the MIC had provided advice and support to more than 600 migrants and their families. In order to undertake its activities, the Centre established a network of socio-cultural mediators, who currently represent 23 immigrant communities.

The identification, definition and evaluation of this new approach in the field of immigrant integration, based on the experiences of different EU Member States and different integration stakeholders and where immigrants have a fundamental role (through the participation of cultural mediators), is in line with the priorities of the European Commission. **The One-Stop-Shop approach can respond in an innovative and feasible way to the concerns and challenges of the EU in relation to immigrant integration in Member States.**

Furthermore, through **the consolidation of the One-Stop-Shop service, links between civil society** - including immigrant associations - **and public authorities and central Government are strengthened** in line with the principles of co-responsibility and of participation in the definition of integration policy, in both the national and the EU context.



Users of the One-Stop-Shop

As a mainstream service for immigration issues, the One-Stop-Shop focuses specifically on new arrivals, employers and service-providers as clients. Newcomers will often have the most needs in terms of integration, due to lack of familiarity with the systems of the receiving society and, possibly, language difficulties. Some longer-established immigrants (including those who already have access to citizenship) may still require integration services for various reasons related to problems with service provision in the past or new difficulties or needs that arise. Should the One-Stop-Shop provide citizenship services, these will also naturally be aimed at long-term immigrants.

National citizens should also have access to the One-Stop-Shop services whenever they require specialised information about integration, immigration or immigrants. As agreed by the Justice and Home Affairs Council, the first Common Basic Principle on Integration underlines that integration is a dynamic and two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States. In this context the One-Stop-Shop services are not only needed by immigrants, but also by nationals.



In 2004, a total of 223,797 people were attended to at the *National Immigrant Support Centres* (CNAIs) in Portugal. In 2008 a total of 296,944 people used CNAI services. From March 2004 to December 2008 a total of over 1,688,114 cases were attended to. Currently, the CNAIs have a daily average of 1,192 service-users. The main nationalities of the people who availed of the services of CNAIs for the first time in 2008 were Brazilian (26.2%), Cape Verdean (17.7%), Guinean (Guinea-Bissau) (9.9%), Angolan (8.0%) and Ukrainian (4.5%). Recently, there has also been an increase in the number of Portuguese nationals using the service.

At the CNAIs in Portugal, the initial idea was to provide services principally to new arrivals. This orientation shifted with the establishment of a branch of the Central Registry Office to deal with citizenship requests from long-term immigrants and those born in Portugal. As an integration service, this One-Stop-Shop also provides health, education and legal advice to both documented and undocumented immigrants. In other words, the One-Stop-Shop service in Portugal does not limit the service-users according to their legal status. By political will it was decided to provide integration services to immigrants with both legal and illegal status.

As a consequence, the users of the One-Stop-Shop are a dynamic population, adjusted according to the immigration experience of the Member State and the individual needs of service-users. This implies that each Member State will decide whether their target group of immigrants should include only non-EU or also EU nationals.



In Ireland according to the official 2006 census, 10% of the population are foreign. Demographic changes increased in significance after the expansion of the EU in May 2004, because Ireland - along with Sweden and the UK - fully opened its labour market to citizens of the new EU Member States. Some of those who migrated to Ireland experience challenges stemming from language barriers, recognition of qualifications and access to public services. EU nationals are by far the largest immigrant population in Ireland.


People accessing the services of the *Immigrant Council of Ireland* come from diverse backgrounds. They include economic migrants, international students, people on business permission, people with long term residency, non-EEA national family members of Irish and EEA nationals, non-EEA national family members of immigrants with residence status, undocumented immigrants and visitors. During 2007, 9,728 people sought the services of the Immigrant Council's Information and Support Service, having increased from 4,842 in 2006.

1.2. The benefits of the creation of a One-Stop-Shop

Although it is possible to identify each different policy regime and the variations in responses to immigrant integration throughout the European Union, a number of common obstacles to integration can be observed in the majority of Member States. As discussed above, among the obstacles most commonly cited are:

- (1) The range of institutions involved in the integration process;
- (2) The lack of cooperation in the field of admission policies and integration between Government services and different integration stakeholders;
- (3) Dispersed locations of Government services that immigrants have to deal with in order to maintain legal residence and to achieve integration;
- (4) The diversity of procedures among public services and complex bureaucracy;
- (5) Communication difficulties as a result of cultural and linguistic diversity;
- (6) The lack of immigrant participation mechanisms in integration policy-making.

Therefore the lack of consistent cooperation between public services, their dispersed locations, and - in some cases - the absence of transparent integration policies, are real



impediments to effective integration of immigrants. Furthermore, frequent communication difficulties between immigrants and public services and the absence of an appropriate response to various problems related to immigrant integration, define the lived realities within the European Union. These obstacles not only complicate immigrants' legal residence in Member States, but can also consign immigrants to the margins of European societies and compromise successful integration processes.

In the country reports developed for this INTI project “One-Stop-Shop: a new answer for immigrant integration” (JLS/2006/INTI/148 – further details at www.oss.inti.acidi.gov.pt) the following were identified as the most significant difficulties in integration service provision faced by immigrants:



In Germany:

1. Procedures are too bureaucratic and hinder integration.
2. There is a lack of a service mentality among many employees in the public sector: immigrants are often not seen as clients or would-be citizens, but rather as a nuisance.
3. There is a lack of linguistic and intercultural competences in public administration. Administrative language is sometimes not understandable for non-native speakers and the foreign language skills of public servants are usually scarce.
4. Communication could be improved. Telephone calls are often not answered, hotlines are not available or not well-structured, office hours are too limited, and use of online information and services could be expanded.



In Greece:

1. The dispersion of Government organisations is problematic. For example, for the issuing or renewal of residence permits, many different documents must be obtained from a number of dispersed authorities and organisations.
2. With the exception of *Citizens Service Centres*, which operate from 8am to 8pm – the opening hours of all the other services coincide with the working hours of the vast majority of migrants (9am to 2pm) rendering access difficult.
3. There is a lack of knowledge by the immigrants of the available services, benefits and rights, especially regarding social welfare institutions.
4. Another problem reported very often by migrants is the difficulty in communication with the employees of the Government organisations. Some migrants are not competent enough with the Greek language, so the lack of translators hinders their access to necessary information, although application forms are translated into nine languages.

✓ In Ireland:

1. Many Government services are located only in Dublin, and immigrants living outside Dublin City may have to travel a significant distance in order to access the services.
2. The Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) does not have a public office, and is difficult to contact by telephone.
3. The majority of immigrants in Ireland are working, and it is therefore often difficult to access services, particularly English language and other training courses, that are only available during office hours.
4. Most public service websites are available in English and Irish only. There are communication and language difficulties, attitudinal barriers, and a lack of understanding of the system and of the services available. For individual immigrants, and NGOs working with immigrants, the cost of translation and interpretation services is generally prohibitive.
5. The quality and accessibility of information for immigrants in Ireland is regularly highlighted as a major problem in terms of exercising rights.
6. There is often a lack of coordination between the various Ministries dealing with immigrants in Ireland, such as the Departments of Employment, Justice and Education.

✓ In Italy:

1. In Italy, public offices are usually open Monday to Friday in the morning, and two days a week in the afternoon between 2.30pm and 5.30pm, but the majority of immigrants work during the morning, so it would be very useful for them if the offices also were open in the late afternoon and on Saturdays.
2. The shortage of employees can sometimes result in substantial negative consequences in terms of queues and waiting at the desks for a response to an application.
3. The language barrier is a significant problem. A lack of multilingual booklets and multilingual forms was highlighted. The application forms provided in public administration offices are usually only in Italian and very few service-users have been provided with different languages.
4. The presence of intercultural mediators is not always guaranteed but is rather dependent on specific and occasional funding.



In Portugal:

A number of difficulties felt by the immigrant communities were identified as the rationale for the establishment of National Immigrant Support Centres in 2004:

1. The process that immigrants had to undertake to obtain legal residence permits was complex (involving requesting documents at different Government services) and time-consuming, and involved costly procedures.
2. Many immigrants ceased processes of legalisation due to the dispersion of services and their impractical office hours.
3. The lack of coordination between Government services and consequent lack of standardisation of procedures and incoherence of information provided was considered a problem.
4. Services were considered to be ill-equipped to deal with a diverse population (lack of language and intercultural competences).



In Spain:

1. There is a lack of flexible coordination between services that share different agencies or ministries.
2. There are often long waiting periods for direct attention and resolution of situations.
3. Office hours regularly coincide with people's working days.
4. Procedures can be complex.
5. There are language and communication difficulties.

The idea of an approach that, on the one hand, facilitates immigrants' access to public administration offices and, on the other hand, stimulates the quality and efficacy of those services, is based on the principle that such a structure will benefit immigrants, other service-users and service-providers. In terms of overall integration, the One-Stop-Shop service contributes to the promotion of fundamental rights, non-discrimination and equal opportunities, as recommended in the European Commission's *Third Annual Report on Migration and Integration* (COM 2007, 512: 6).

As concerns the immigrant perspective, **the creation of such a service results from the general recognition that service dispersion is one of the reasons why immigrants have a lack of information concerning their rights, duties and necessary procedures.**

In addition to physical dispersion, the lack of coordination of different public services is also recognised as representing an obstacle for immigrants' access, due to wide diversity in offices' *modus operandi* and procedures, and incompatible opening hours. Hence, the possibility of rapid exchange of information between offices plays a role in improving coherence

of information and thereby facilitating immigrants' integration in the receiving society. In addition, **working in cooperation minimises inaccuracy and time-consuming *modus operandi* in implementing procedures.** The fact that agencies that deal with immigration issues create specific branches at the One-Stop-Shop for those issues, and that all of these work in cooperation at one single point, effectively contributes to speeding up processes and guaranteeing quality in the services provided.

Moreover, **by reducing contradictory and insufficient information, the One-Stop-Shop plays an important role in increasing immigrants' trust in public administration services, narrowing the gap between the two.** Just as it contributes to the dissemination of a positive image of the State to the immigrant population, it can represent a channel for disseminating a positive message to the receiving society in relation to immigration. The One-Stop-Shop will disseminate information on rights and duties and will provide exposure for the basic values of the European Union,¹¹ as well as national values. This strategy is therefore an important tool for improving the relationship between state, society and immigrants, each playing a distinct but complementary role for more effective reception and integration measures.

Furthermore, by providing integrated solutions to the problems faced by immigrants – offering all services required to meet their needs, at a single point – the One-Stop-Shop can contribute to minimising obstacles. Communication difficulties, often linked to cultural and linguistic diversity, can also be overcome with the One-Stop-Shop strategy, mainly through the recruitment and training of cultural mediators and building up staff with intercultural competence (further developed in chapter 3). Responsible for immigrants' first contact with the services, **cultural mediators play a fundamental role in narrowing the gap between public administration services and immigrant citizens.** On the other hand, by facilitating immigrants' communication with services, this approach also represents a means for improving access for immigrants to institutions and the efficacy and efficiency of services, since clearer information will ultimately reduce the number of unnecessary visits by immigrants to those offices.

A holistic, comprehensive model such as the One-Stop-Shop contributes to improving efficiency in coordinating different actions and simplifies both access to services and the outcomes of procedures. In line with the most recent European guidelines concerning immigrant integration, the One-Stop-Shop is a clear example of concerted action of different Government agencies, in partnership with civil society organisations, in this way involving all actors playing a role in immigration issues (further developed in chapter 2).



1.3. The prerequisites and necessary steps for implementing a One-Stop-Shop

Taking into consideration the general characteristics of the One-Stop-Shop and the potential outcomes for immigrant integration, the most relevant prerequisites for implementing such a service are identified.

Necessary Steps

- a. Development of an analysis identifying the public administration services that immigrants need to contact or those that support immigrant integration in the country. The Report should also highlight the difficulties experienced by immigrants in relation to these services. A cost-benefit analysis concerning the creation of the One-Stop-Shop should also be provided.
- b. Identification of the Government services and of the specific support services that will be available at the One-Stop-Shop, considering the specificities of the receiving society and the immigrant population who reside in the country.
- c. Defining coordination among State agencies on the basis of the opening of a branch at the One-Stop-Shop, rather than any delegation of responsibilities (further developed in subchapter 2.2.).
- d. Identifying or creating the umbrella organisation that will manage the One-Stop-Shop overall and coordinate subsequent implementation steps.
- e. Development of a consultative body with all of the potential agencies and civil society organisations to be involved in service and information provision at the One-Stop-Shop (further developed in subchapter 2.1.).
- f. Identification of an appropriate building in an accessible location in a city with high density of immigrant population (further developed in chapter 5).
- g. Negotiating partnerships with immigrant associations and other civil society organisations (more details in subchapter 2.3.).
- h. Negotiating the employment of cultural mediators with immigrant associations (the added value of mediators in the service is developed in chapter 3).
- i. Recruiting and training cultural mediators for service provision at the One-Stop-Shop.
- j. Where necessary, training staff of Government agencies to work at the One-Stop-Shop.
- k. Opening the One-Stop-Shop.
- l. Continuous evaluation of all services and of the service as a whole, adaptation or expansion of services accordingly, and introduction of new services.





In 2004, the Portuguese Government had the **political will to open the National Immigrant Support Centres** as part of the High Commission for Immigration and Ethnic Minorities (since 2007 the High Commission for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue – ACIDI, I.P.) - a cross-cutting Governmental agency within the Ministry of the Presidency reporting directly to the Prime Minister -, due to the arrival of increasing numbers of non-Portuguese-speaking immigrants in the first years of this century. Because they did not speak Portuguese, many immigrants had experienced problems in their interaction with dispersed public services with various modes of functioning, and often with incompatible hours. These problems had led to inefficiency and people not renewing their permits, presenting a significant obstacle to their social integration.

The Centres respond to the afore-mentioned difficulties by providing various services related to immigration in one space with an identical working philosophy, and functioning in cooperation. A further response was to create various innovative support services, catering for needs that were not met by existing services. The model for this integrated service was the network of Citizens' Shops in Portugal, which had already proven successful in resolving many of the problems of dispersion of services for the general population.

The launching, consultation and discussion phase for the Centres took place during the second half of 2002, while in 2003, appropriate locations for the Centre were identified and the project entered its implementation phase, inviting the various Government and non-Government organisations to take part in the project. Cultural mediators were also recruited and trained during this phase. The Centres were opened in March 2004 and further regulated and consolidated by law in 2005.

Therefore among the prerequisites for the establishment of a One-Stop-Shop are mechanisms for consultation with the immigrant community and with Government agencies. The involvement of a set of immigrant associations, who can prove their representativeness and legitimacy as organisations in the field of immigrant integration, is also relevant (further developed in subchapter 2.3).

The efficacy of the service rests on the willingness of an increasing number of Government agencies and civil society organisations to form part of the One-Stop-Shop, either at the beginning, or as the initiative is developed and expanded.



In Ireland the Office of the Minister for Integration was created in Summer 2007, and is a Junior Ministry based at the Department of Community, Rural and *Gaeltacht* Affairs, with links to the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. The Office has a cross-departmental mandate to develop, drive and coordinate integration policy across other Government departments, agencies and services.

In May 2008, the Minister launched a statement of strategy entitled “Migration Nation”. This statement makes explicit reference to the One-Stop-Shop approach to service provision to immigrants, pointing out that the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service represents a step in that direction, with the Garda (police) National Immigration Bureau located in the same premises. The suggestion that other State services also be incorporated into an expanded One-Stop-Shop, catering also for EU nationals, and working in partnership with non-Governmental organisations, is to be examined and considered. This examination will take into account the changing nature of migration to the country, projected changes due to legislative developments and the administrative advantages or disadvantages of such a One-Stop-Shop.¹²

Furthermore as recommended in the eleventh Common Basic Principle – “*Developing clear goals, indicators and evaluation mechanisms*” – and further elaborated in the second edition of the *Handbook on Integration*, planning and evaluating of integration policies is needed. Accordingly it is highly recommended that there be continuous evaluation of the One-Stop-Shop service, particularly because the implementation of all of its aspects is not immediate. As highlighted, the prerequisites and necessary steps for the creation and development of the **One-Stop-Shop reflect not only a gradual process of negotiation and accommodation of the views and procedures of all those involved** (both government and civil society organisations), **but also a process of continuous monitoring of the service provision, to examine whether it continues to cater to the needs of immigrants and the receiving society.** Consultative bodies will play a fundamental role in that respect, as proactive work is expected from its members to improve the One-Stop-Shop strategy in particular, and integration policies in general. Evaluations of the One-Stop-Shop service will further guarantee the identification of what works and what does not work so well, promoting an organisational learning that can also be used to reshape or reinforce this approach.



Having been in operation for two years, in 2006 the Portuguese High Commission for Immigration requested the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to undertake an independent evaluation of the outcomes of the two Portuguese One-Stop-Shop services – the *National Immigrant Support Centres*. A survey was conducted with both users of the centres and the staff. Several changes were implemented on foot of the evaluation. As also reported by IOM, the centres proved to be dynamic structures undergoing ongoing changes to adapt to new internal and external factors (e.g. changes in laws, growth in unemployment, new immigrant flows). As a consequence in the past few years new support offices have been opened and others have adapted their services in accordance with new needs.


1.4. Possible challenges in the creation of a One-Stop-Shop

This section aims to identify potential challenges to the implementation of a One-Stop-Shop in the various Member States. European Union Member States all have different characteristics in terms of migration history, forms of Government, policy trends and composition of the migrant population. This Handbook therefore reflects upon the potential obstacles to be overcome in implementing a One-Stop-Shop, taking into account the diversity of the 27 European Union countries and the reality that one rigid and fixed model cannot be applied to all countries. In recognising the possible challenges in the implementation process, as well as proposing a flexible model, it is intended that this Handbook provide a realistic and useful guide.

Mainstreaming

Ongoing debates on multiculturalism vs. assimilation and on targeted vs. mainstream service provision are a feature of the European integration policy landscape and as a consequence are incorporated in the definition of the One-Stop-Shop service.

Inspired by the tenth Common Basic Principles on Integration and recommendations of the *Commission Common Agenda for Integration* (COM (2005) 389), the One-Stop-Shop approach aims to stimulate immigrants' access to public services, and strengthen the capacity of public and private service providers. Hence by promoting the integration of immigrants who use the services, **the overall long-term goal of the approach is mainstreaming immigrants' use of public administration services**, as the agencies present at the One-Stop-Shop are mainstream Government agencies. Also by 'mainstreaming' in the One-Stop-Shop approach it is implied that immigrant integration service provision is a cross-cutting effort that engages both Government and non-Governmental actors.



Furthermore the One-Stop-Shop service is in line with the **whole-of-government approach**. Combining different Government agencies that immigrants need to contact with in one single building represents a **coherent political message on immigrant integration**. That is to say that immigrant integration is not simply the responsibility of one institution and that accessibility for immigrants is guaranteed on the basis of equality.

In other words, the Government starts from the premise of not creating parallel and specific services for immigrants, but rather facilitating access for them to mainstream public services through complementary mechanisms of support that respond to the service gaps. These mechanisms permit immigrants to overcome the situation of disadvantage that they may be in, compared to the national population. This entails the use of cultural mediators in public service provision and integrated language and reception programmes, among others. In this sense, social services and civil society organisations, including immigrant associations, are fundamental partners in providing integrated reception programmes that impart necessary information and advice in the various areas covered in the One-Stop-Shop approach.

The policies of some Member States in relation to integration focus on the necessity for immigrants to use mainstream services, while acknowledging that specific programmes of integration addressed to immigrants remain necessary. The current policy trend in Member States of mainstreaming/standardisation is a positive and useful principle in access to and use of public services. Nevertheless, as is also described in the *Common Agenda for Integration* (COM 2005 389), it is acknowledged that the reinforcement of the capacities of services is achieved through interaction with third-country nationals via intercultural interpretation or translation and mediation by immigrant communities (sixth Common Basic Principle).

Therefore, recognising that recent arrivals and other immigrants may not be aware of services and support available, one of the prerequisites of the One-Stop-Shop is the involvement of both immigrant associations and cultural mediators who play a fundamental role in reinforcing the bridge between immigrants and mainstream Government agencies. In other words these immigrant stakeholders become important outreach actors.

In sum, the **One-Stop-Shop is recommended as a useful mainstream and outreach tool for immigrant integration and access to public services**.

Immigration experience and immigrant population composition

The One-Stop-Shop approach presented here is intended to be applicable in countries with both more recent and longer histories of immigration. Many of the Eastern European states

have a more recent history of immigration, while many Western European countries have a longer experience of receiving immigrants (such as Germany, France and the United Kingdom), and some Southern European countries and Ireland have experience of immigration of no more than two decades. As a consequence it is identified that while some States' principal concern is the arrival of a large number of newcomers, other States focus on long-term immigrants and descendents of immigrants, while still other States deal with a mix of both.

As outlined above, the One-Stop-Shop approach provides services according to integration needs, and therefore the issue of greater or lesser numbers of newcomers and of labour migration or family reunification migration, while being relevant to national integration policies, does not in itself promote or prevent the implementation of a One-Stop-Shop. Countries with longer histories of immigration may wish to focus these services on people with integration or employment needs, on anti-discrimination, on social inclusion and/or on naturalisation services. For a number of reasons, long-term immigrants and second or third generations may experience persistent problems in access to the labour market or the rental housing market, for example, due to their specific origin. It is therefore necessary to provide an outreach service in order that all residents of a receiving country are on a level playing field in terms of access to public administration services. On the other hand, countries with more recent immigration will necessarily have a strong emphasis on language and information services and on people's immediate post-arrival needs.

In addition, the composition of the immigrant population in the European Union varies from high concentrations of specific nationalities to those with a greater variety of origins of immigrants. This has implications for the selection of cultural mediators in order to best reflect the immigrant composition. This is a matter that needs to be addressed in accordance with each Member State's needs in this area and will be a complex process of negotiation of the best solution.

A further consideration is the relative composition of non-EU and EU immigrants with integration needs. Each Member State may decide, in accordance with the features of their immigrant populations, whether services should also be directed at EU immigrants who have language and integration issues. They may also decide whether or not to provide services to undocumented migrants, as is the case at the Portuguese One-Stop-Shops. Also depending on the composition of immigrants in terms of modes of entry, the One-Stop-Shop may focus more on family reunification or work-related migration.

The implementation of a **One-Stop-Shop within a broader perspective of mainstreaming is therefore useful to all of the Member States, regardless of their histories and migrant composition.**



National/Regional/Local

The One-Stop-Shop approach can be implemented in centrally governed states, states with a high level of autonomy for regional Governments, and states where local-level Government plays a crucial role. The **One-Stop-Shop service may be adapted to provide for implementation in centralised and federal states, at a national, regional or local level**, in a process that takes place in a gradual way, accumulating services. Depending on the governance style of each country, therefore, the One-Stop-Shop may be provided as a network of local centres, as centres functioning at a regional/federal state level, or as one, or several, national centres in more centralised states.

The different style of Government in EU Member States is therefore not an obstacle to the implementation of a One-Stop-Shop, but will significantly affect the nature of the One-Stop-Shop(s) created. In centralised States, the service is likely to be implemented by the national Government, providing one or more central locations for immigrants to access services, and in partnership with both national and local NGOs and immigrant associations. In these States, public services are provided at a national level, and therefore the Government ministries or agency partners in the One-Stop-Shop will also be at a national level.

In federal or regionally governed states, it is the regional Government that is responsible for the provision of public services, and consequently the regional Government agencies, NGOs and immigrant associations will come together to provide the One-Stop-Shop.

Equally, where a culture of local governance is strong, service provision will take place at a local level, with local Government and non-Governmental partners. Some questions will arise in these cases where there are national competences in terms of issues such as granting residence permits or citizenship. These can be resolved by negotiating at the One-Stop-Shop through local or regional branches of services with national competences.

Partnership with civil society

Some Member States face difficulties in identifying the key partners in civil society organisations (including immigrant associations), which could represent a challenge to the implementation of the One-Stop-Shop.

The ninth Common Basic Principle defines as a priority the *“participation of immigrants in the democratic process and in formulation of integration policies”*. **Immigrants’ participation in policies that directly affect them increases their sense of co-responsibility and of**

belonging, promoting active exercising of rights and duties. Following that principle, in the *Common Agenda for Integration* it is highly recommended that immigrant associations be present as sources of advice to newcomers, and that their representatives be included in introduction programmes. Hence the One-Stop-Shop, following this coherent approach at European Union level, has as a prerequisite partnership with civil society organisations in the provision of services for immigrant integration.




Depending on the Member State, various forms of relationships exist between the Government and civil society in relation to immigrant integration. The existence of a legitimate structure for partnerships between the State and civil society organisations (including immigrant associations) is necessary for implementing the One-Stop-Shop, as it is a service fundamentally based on such partnerships (examined in more detail in subchapter 2.3.).

Therefore the challenge for Governments implementing the One-Stop-Shop is to develop mechanisms for the proper functioning of these partnerships. NGOs should be involved to the benefit of the services provided, while there must be some system in place for identifying the immigrant associations and/or recognising immigrant associations as representative of their communities or by their role in the promotion of immigrant integration.

In several Member States the empowerment of immigrant associations is guaranteed not only by the reinforcement of a system of recognition of immigrant associations but also by making public funding available to immigrant associations to develop integration projects and programmes for their communities, stimulating their sustainability (further details in subchapter 2.3).

Coordination between Government services and financing the One-Stop-Shop

Coordination between Government services in the field of immigrant integration relates to a further challenge that is foreseen in the perceived responsibilities of the ministries involved. This is a crucial issue, and in some Member States there is a difficulty in encouraging different Governmental agencies to work together.



In Italy there is no one single public authority that deals with immigration and integration. Various ministries are responsible for migration policies (e.g. Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Policies), and the welfare system is administered at regional, provincial and city council level. This fragmentation of responsibility within public administration at national and local level makes it difficult to combine the different sectors to bring about the implementation of a comprehensive integration policy.

Nevertheless, seeking to enhance joined-up Government, a Single Immigration Desk - *Sportello Unico per l'Immigrazione* - was established by law in 2002, and implemented in 2005 at the provincial level. It aimed to bring together officials from all the agencies involved in the procedures regarding legal admission of immigrants. In theory coming close to what is defined by a 'One-Stop-Shop' approach, this centre was to include delegations from the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Finance, among others. It was essentially aimed at receiving foreign workers and providing a response to their processes of family reunification and of visa renewals on foot of changes in the reason for their stay in the country.

According to the original plan, officials from different public bodies were to work together at a single desk in order to handle procedures regarding the arrival of foreign workers from abroad, family reunification and changes in the reason for a stay permit in Italy. Present in every Prefecture (local State representation in the provinces of the country), the *Sportello Unico* provides, where possible, multilingual information leaflets and has intercultural mediators in some of its delegations.

However there have been relevant problems in terms of effectiveness and performance of these administrative bodies within the structure, partly due to the difficulty and concern of the different offices in giving up part of their responsibilities. There were also some problems in sharing information between different offices, in choosing a uniform IT platform for use in all the activities and in sharing common databases.

As the result, at present, the Single Immigration Desk operates only as a "front office" (a place to send the application forms for an entry clearance - *nulla osta* - for work and family reunification or for changes in the reason for residence permits). The "back office" activities are carried out separately from the different offices (Prefecture, Job Centre, police headquarters, provincial labour directorate, etc.), which operate at the local level but are not concentrated in the same building or compound.

Furthermore, the immigration office basically deals with immigrants only as workers or as relatives of workers. Amongst other functions, it is not supposed to give information about health, school, social benefits or to give information and advice to undocumented migrants.

Therefore the idea of bringing together under the same roof officials from different administrations has failed so far in Italy, yet the Single Immigration Desk experience represents a first step towards stronger connections and cooperation between different offices involved in the administrative procedures.¹³

It should be made very clear here that **while implementation requires the supervision of one umbrella ministry, agency or local authority, each ministry or agency with a branch present at the One-Stop-Shop retains its competences and does not delegate these to the umbrella organisation.** The staff is simply required to work at its own agency branch with the support of One-Stop-Shop cultural mediators, rather than working for a different ministry.

In order to increase confidence in the value of the One-Stop-Shop, and promote understanding of how it functions, it may be necessary to initially implement it as an information and mediation service, with a limited number of direct services provided. As this structure develops and expands, further Government ministries and agencies will be alerted to the benefits of the One-Stop-Shop, and invited to open branches there. Thus in some countries, **the implementation of all aspects of the One-Stop-Shop may not be immediate, but rather a gradual process of negotiation and accommodation of the views of all those involved.**




The National Immigrant Support Centres (CNAIs) in Portugal have not had a fixed set of services since the beginning, but rather the range and the number of services continually evolves in response to policy changes and changes in the needs of the immigrant population. For example, a new nationality law led to the opening of a branch of the Central Registry Office at the Centre in 2007, a Consumer Support Office has been opened in 2008 and the reopening of a Support Office for Qualifications Recognition and Equivalence is foreseen in 2009. Diligences are in process to bring a Tax Office (Ministry of Finance) to the CNAIs.

The implementation of this coordination between Government services brings benefits for the services involved in terms of efficiency and intercultural competences. Therefore, while the initial process of negotiation of the cooperation between Government agencies may be challenging, as the One-Stop-Shop develops and matures, the advantages of working in cooperation, according to the **principles of joined-up Government**, will become very clear.

In order for the One-Stop-Shop to function as it is intended, there is a need for a limited level of information sharing between the services - Governmental, non-Governmental and support services overseen by the umbrella organisation. Though some agencies may be slightly uncomfortable with this in the initial stages, it is necessary in order to render the response provided to immigrants more coherent and to promote the overall coordination of the service.

The umbrella organisation will manage this inter-agency cooperation, dealing with cross-cutting issues that affect all of the Government agencies represented at the One-Stop-Shop, as



well as the support offices (further developed in subchapter 4.2.), and providing overall management. It is this organisation's responsibility to inform the partners of the procedures of the One-Stop-Shop and how it is to function, and continue to function. Furthermore **the umbrella organisation has the role of communicating a coherent political message on integration, resulting from the combination of the individual Governmental agencies' procedures and views.** This should be in evidence in the training provided to the One-Stop-Shop staff (including the cultural mediators).

This brings us to a fundamental issue in relation to challenges to the implementation of a One-Stop-Shop – that of financing. It is clear that the service requires a minimum of investment in the facilities of the building (as will be further detailed in chapter 6), but **staffing costs are reduced, as the One-Stop-Shop requires the relocation of staff of ministries and agencies rather than hiring new staff.** Other staff costs relate to cultural mediators, who represent immigrant associations. The equipment and general running costs of the One-Stop-Shop will also have to be invested in.

However, as will become clear in chapter 6, these costs are mitigated by the savings inherent in the One-Stop-Shop approach. Government service providers in Portugal experienced reduced costs due to the increased efficiency of procedures and of dialogue between different institutions, a decrease in inaccuracy and time-consuming modus operandi in implementing procedures, and the easing of problems due to intercultural communication by cultural mediators, among other issues.

In sum, the various services therefore need to be encouraged to share information, supported and promoted by the umbrella organisation. This will lead to better coordination between Government services, with a whole-of-government approach. The umbrella organisation will define procedures according to which the One-Stop-Shop will function, and, while maintaining their individual competences, each Government and support service will work according to these common procedures.

One-Stop-Shop Accessibility

For countries of a relatively small geographic dimension, the solution of having one or more One-Stop-Shops in central and accessible locations may be applicable. Problems arise where countries are of a larger dimension, and the issue of accessibility becomes more significant (further developed in chapter 5). This Handbook therefore suggests the possibility of **complementing the physical service with a virtual One-Stop-Shop**, where immigrants



who live and work far away from the centre may undertake certain processes, particularly scheduling appointments with the physical service in order to ensure that when they take the time to travel, they will be attended to as promptly as possible.

In essence, the One-Stop-Shop service in itself offers an improvement for immigrants located at a distance from urban centres, as they need only make one trip rather than several in order to complete certain procedures at different state services. It should also be made possible for service-users to access their profile online to view the status of procedures being undertaken at the One-Stop-Shop, rather than having to visit the building repeatedly.

Handbook on how to implement a One-Stop-Shop



2. PARTNERSHIP AND COOPERATION IN INTEGRATION SERVICES




“One-Stop-Shop: A New Answer for Immigrant Integration”




2.1. Coming together of partners

The European Commission has been recommending the development of comprehensive integration policies based on holistic approaches. In other words, Member States should effectively mainstream immigration concerns in all relevant policy fields, measures and in service provision (COM 2007, 512: 5). **The One-Stop-Shop fulfils these aims, as a holistic approach.** The mainstreaming of immigrant concerns is achieved by requiring an efficient partnership among relevant actors for service provision in immigrant integration. It is expected that through the consolidation of the One-Stop-Shop strategy, links between civil society (including immigrant associations), and public authorities and the national Government, will be strengthened. In addition the consolidation of a coherent and cross-cutting political intervention on immigrant integration is expected to be reinforced due to the cooperation of all relevant Government agencies under one roof.

In response to the need to develop holistic approaches for the integration of immigrants, several Member States have defined and implemented action plans. These plans reflect a general approach by the Governments acting in different fields of intervention, as a result of the involvement of different Ministries, and resulting from widespread participation and involvement of stakeholders from social organisations and immigrant associations.



In Portugal, integration policy is guided by a three-year action plan, the *Plan for Immigrant Integration*, published by the Portuguese Government in May 2007, with a report on implementation in May 2008. The Plan comprises 122 measures, involving thirteen Government Ministries, setting out a roadmap for the integration of immigrants in Portugal. The plan covers both specific areas, such as employment, health and education, and cross-cutting areas, such as racism and gender equality.



In Germany integration plans have been or are currently being developed on several levels: nation-state, Federal States and cities. At a national level, the National Integration Plan was approved in 2007. Goals were set, and measures to reach these goals are currently being discussed and implemented. A systematic evaluation scheme is being developed. Berlin passed its first Integration Plan in 2005 and a thoroughly revised version in 2007. North Rhine-Westphalia passed an Integration Action Plan in 2006. Twenty general goals to improve integration were formulated. In all cases the Integration or Action Plans were the result of negotiations and roundtable talks between State actors, immigrant NGOs and experts.





In Dublin - the largest urban area in Ireland, where immigrants make up over 15% of the population of the city - the City Council set up a committee to assist it in developing a Strategic Anti-Racism, Diversity and Integration Framework Plan. Dublin City Development Board, with Dublin City Council as the lead agency, completed this policy framework, entitled "Towards Integration: A City Framework" and published it in May 2008.

This local integration framework involves a Declaration of Intent by members of the Development Board, representatives of local government, local development, Government agencies and social partners to develop a strong focus on integration in strategic planning and business processes, and to collaborate in measures and policies that contribute effectively to the concept of an open and integrated city. The framework comprises a range of actions that will be implemented by a new Office for Integration at Dublin City Council.

Together with mainstreaming integration across Government ministries, it is considered increasingly important to involve local actors and immigrants themselves in the conception and implementation of integration policies (SEC 2006, 892: 5). This can only be achieved on the basis of partnership and common aims among various Government ministries, as well as involving immigrant associations and other civil society organisations working in the field. Thus all of these actors work together to effectively implement integration policy at the One-Stop-Shop, each contributing their own specific expertise. This environment of partnership is beneficial to the Government, in the effective realisation of integration goals, and to immigrants, who are provided with a higher-quality, more efficient service.



In Germany, State-regulated and supported immigrant services are mainly handled by two actors, namely the Federal Agency for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) and welfare organisations that closely cooperate with the BAMF. There are six such welfare organisations: *Deutscher Caritasverband* (Catholic Welfare Organization), *Rotes Kreuz* (Red Cross), *Arbeiterwohlfahrt* (Workers Welfare Organisation), *Diakonisches Werk* (Protestant Welfare Organisation), *Zentralwohlfahrtsstelle der Juden in Deutschland* (The Central Welfare Organisation of Jews in Germany) and the *Internationaler Bund* (International Federation). They are in charge of the Migration Preliminary Advisory Service (*Migrationserstberatung*), an advice service for new immigrants that was introduced with the Immigration Act in 2005. This service includes advice for newcomers in the areas of education, employment, health, housing, and social welfare.



The *Greek Refugee Council* (GRC) is a Greek NGO that supports refugees and asylum seekers, founded in 1989. Working with diverse partners at various levels – from ministries and local governments to international organisations, the GRC offers legal support and legal representation services, providing lawyers. The Council also provides services of social and psychological support through programmes of cultural orientation and community projects, which include accompanying people to health services or social security and assistance in procedures for registering children in schools or recreational activities, among others. As well as these areas of integrated intervention, the GRC undertakes a range of programmes in partnership with Governmental and non-Governmental organisations at a national and international level, financed by the European Commission, with the objective of promoting research and sharing experience and knowhow, thereby contributing to the resolution of problems faced by the refugee population and to raising awareness among all citizens in relation to this issue.

Therefore the One-Stop-Shop is not only a service that brings together distinct public agencies in one building, but rather brings together the relevant information about those agencies, which is provided in an integrated form by the service provider, where the social services or the social organisations are generally qualified to do this. Therefore the service brings together organisational and methodological aspects applicable within other models: cultural mediators; integration of information relating to different Ministries in the relevant service points, and more integrated computer systems.

Furthermore, the creation of a network, linking different service providers and civil society, facilitates the integration project and reinforces the exchange of experiences and best practices between different actors. The One-Stop-Shop functions on the basis of the exchange of information and expertise among the staff of the various Government agencies and between these agencies and non-Governmental actors.

In a more general sense then, the One-Stop-Shop can build a partner relationship between public administration and civil society (including immigrant associations) that work in the field of immigrant integration. This crucial partnership contributes to strengthening relationships of trust, exchange of experiences and recommendations, feelings of co-responsibility, and the participation of different partners. It may also assist in the creation of a new, enhanced approach for the European Union in dealing with immigrant integration. This is in keeping with the aims of the planned *European Integration Forum*¹⁴, establishing a similar partnership between stakeholders at a national level. Because the One-Stop-Shop strategy is based on different partners working together with a common purpose, it will serve as a pilot project in pursuing European Union objectives on immigrant integration.

Numerous European Member States already have integration forums and/or consultative bodies that assemble stakeholders active in the area of immigrant integration with the aim of discussing and monitoring integration policy. Consultative bodies have been developed in several Member States to enhance political participation by immigrants and improve integration policies. These forums provide for the exchange of views by immigrant and Government representatives and other relevant stakeholders.

The creation and reinforcement of consultative bodies was recommended and characterised in a chapter on Civic Participation in the first edition of the *Handbook on Integration for policy-makers and practitioners*. Across Europe several examples of such consultative bodies or forums can be easily identified:




The Minorities Forum for the Flemish part of Belgium operates according to the principle: “Don’t talk about us but with us”. Through the Minorities Forum, associations of ethnic-cultural minorities engage in a joint effort to develop a comprehensive set of demands regarding policy and the society as a whole. The Minorities Forum currently has 17 member federations. These federations bring together various organisations, spread throughout Flanders and Brussels. The members of the Minorities Forum together represent over 1,000 organisations.

The *Minorities Forum* represents all the ethnic-cultural minorities in Flanders through policy-orientated work, news, background pieces and publications. The Minorities Forum seeks to enhance the role of associations of ethnic-cultural minorities at the level of emancipation, participation, interculturalism and dialogue.¹⁵

In Spain the *Forum for the Social Integration of Immigrants* is an advisory and consultant body for the Government on immigration issues. It consists of a balanced tripartite representation among the Government (10 representatives), immigrant associations (10 representatives) and social support organisations, including trade unions and employer’s organisations (10 representatives). This Forum is a channel for participation and dialogue, focusing aspirations and demands from the immigrant population. It involves the whole society in searching for solutions and alternatives.



In Portugal the *Consultative Council for Immigration Affairs* (COCAI) was created in 1998, and is under the auspices of ACIDI, I.P. COCAI was created to ensure consultation and dialogue with organisations that represent immigrants and ethnic minorities. The Council also has a say in the recognition and financial support of immigrant associations. The Council’s competences include making statements regarding immigrant rights, participating in policy-making for the social integration of immigrants, improving living conditions and participating in the defence of immigrant rights. COCAI plays a central role in terms of the legal regime governing immigrant associations, as it is required to issue an opinion on the recognition of, and provision of financial support to, immigrant associations.



✓ In Italy the *National Council for the problems of immigrants and their families* was established on 1998 at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies. The Council, recently reorganised, includes representatives of trade unions, immigrant associations and from national and the local Government in relation to integration. In the reorganised Council 21 members out of 56 have been designated by the most representative immigrant associations operating in Italy and are immigrants themselves. This Council has the task of monitoring the situation of immigrants in order to have a wider awareness of their condition and to make proposals in this regard.

Territorial Councils on Immigration are consultative bodies in Italy that operate at the provincial (Prefecture) level. The councils consist of public representatives, representative associations of foreigners in the territory, and representatives of the third sector particularly active in aid and assistance to immigrants. There is no limit to the maximum number of immigrant representatives who can be invited to participate in the Territorial Council. The task of the Council is to analyse issues related to immigration and promote policies for the integration of immigrants in the local social context.

✓ Berlin, North Rhine-Westphalia and Bavaria, among others, have created consultative bodies for immigrant integration in Germany. There is, as yet, no such consultative body at a national level. The *Berlin council* was created in 2003 and provides advice to the Berlin government and its Commissioner for Integration. The members are nine high-ranking Government representatives, the Commissioner for Integration, two district mayors, a representative of the District Commissioners for Integration, and representatives of the Chamber of Commerce, the Chamber of Crafts, the Federal Sport Association, trade unions, welfare organisations, the Berlin Refugee Council and the Association of the Expelled. The *Bavarian Integration Forum* is a forum for the promotion of the integration of immigrants. It is constructed in the form of a central kick-off event and regional follow-up events, based on the concept of "Integration through Dialogue." The kick-off event of the Bavarian Integration Forum took place on 1 October 2004. *North Rhine-Westphalia* established its Integration Council with 26 members in 2006. According to the State Minister for Integration, the task of the council is "to advise, support and evaluate the State Government in relation to all issues of integration policy." The Council membership includes the State Integration Commissioner, the former President of the national parliament, an MEP, university professors, journalists, civil society representatives and the head of the Institute for Intercultural Management and Policy Advice.

Given that in some countries the recent debate on immigration started as a reaction to a perceived failure of integration policies,¹⁶ the One-Stop-Shop approach could re-orientate this debate. The philosophy of recognizing immigrants as part of the solution rather than the problem is instructive for more general integration policies in the European Union. Immigrants are furthermore likely to be far less critical of immigration and integration policies that they themselves were involved in developing and implementing, leading to a more harmonious relationship between Government and immigrant representatives.


Therefore, as outlined above, one of the fundamental steps to be taken in implementing a One-Stop-Shop is for the umbrella organisation to bring together all of the State and non-State partners and potential partners to form a consultative body or a similar forum to negotiate putting the model into practice. Coordination among State agencies and partnership between the State and civil society can be furthered by that forum, and developed at further meetings in preparation for setting up the One-Stop-Shop. Another option is for some of the partners to begin a consultation at an initial stage in order that a One-Stop-Shop is set up, while other potential partners, both State and non-State, agree to form partnerships at a later date. Therefore the One-Stop-Shop, as a dynamic structure, could also develop gradually, accumulating more services with time.

2.2. Coordination among Government services


A holistic and comprehensive approach to migration has been consensually recognised as the most effective way of understanding and intervening in migration issues – and in integration in particular – at a European level. Involving all actors concerned in the process of developing and implementing policies is a key principle inherent in any intervention. Furthermore, this contributes to reinforcing the principle of shared responsibility. Thus, a whole-of-government approach enhances the viability and effectiveness of immigrant integration policies and measures, and is a crucial element of the One-Stop-Shop strategy.

The Government services whose work is directly or indirectly linked to migration must have a fundamental role in policy definition as well as in service provision. The widely reported incoherence of information as a difficulty frequently felt by the immigrant population in EU countries is a sign of a lack of cooperation between different agencies and ministries, and/or between national, regional and local Government.


In the European Commission's Common Agenda for Integration (2005), '*developing modes of co-operation between governmental stakeholders, enabling officials to exchange*



information and pool resources' is one of the recommended actions in relation to immigrants' access to services (sixth Common Basic Principle). Furthermore, 'reinforcing the capacity to co-ordinate national integration strategy across different levels of government' and 'supporting co-operation, co-ordination and communication between stakeholders' are two of the actions identified as necessary to guarantee the tenth Common Basic Principle: 'Mainstreaming integration policies and measures in all relevant policy portfolios and levels of government and public services is an important consideration in public-policy formation and implementation'.



In Spain the *Centres for Refugee Reception* (CARs) are Government-run centres that provide temporary board and lodging; information and advice on the new situation; guidance to allow the user to be included in the education, social and healthcare system; psychological attention; specialised social attention and management of complementary economic aid; language training courses and basic social skills; guidance and mediation for professional and labour inclusion; free-time and leisure activities; and awareness-raising and dissemination of the CAR's functions among the receiving society. All of these are services aimed at facilitating living together and integration for asylum seekers, refugees or displaced people. In order to stay at the centres, they must be unemployed and lack economic means to fulfil their basic needs and those of their families. The stay at the centre is of a six-month duration and can be extended under exceptional circumstances until the notification the resolution of the asylum case. The CARs are under State Secretariat of Immigration and Emigration and there are four in place, in Vallecas, Alcobendas (Madrid), Mislata (Valencia) and Seville.



In Greece the *"Efxeini Poli"* constitutes an Information and Support Centre for Socially Excluded Groups that could serve as a model of sustainable partnership for all the actors involved in the issue of integration. From 1995, its foundation date, it has, through its eleven branches in several cities and towns throughout the country, provided information and advice on education, employment, health, legal issues, as well as socio-psychological support, Greek language courses, and so on.

Cooperation between State agencies that provide services at the One-Stop-Shop results from the co-location of these agencies under the same roof, at one single location. This contributes to more efficient functioning for each agency, as the transfer of information is simpler and more immediate. From the immigrants' perspective, this allows for easier access to clear and coherent responses.



At the Portuguese National Immigrant Support Centres (CNAIs) – examples of the One-Stop-Shop approach – the Government services that participate (see below) state that close contact between the various services facilitates the work of each office and promotes more effective responses to immigrants' procedures and queries. These agencies are:

- (1) Foreigners and Borders Service (Ministry of the Interior)
- (2) Working Conditions Authority (Ministry of Employment and Social Solidarity)
- (3) Social Security (Ministry of Employment and Social Solidarity)
- (4) Central Registry Office (Ministry of Justice)
- (5) Regional Health Administration (Ministry of Health)
- (6) Regional Directorate of Education (Ministry of Education)

In fact, according to IOM's external evaluations of these centres (2006; 2007-2008), the majority of immigrant users are satisfied with the services provided, revealing a preference for using these services at the CNAI rather than at other locations, both due to the quality of the front-line service and due to ease of access to clear responses to their situations. In addition, almost all the answers given in the surveys undertaken demonstrate the intention to continue using these centres and to recommend them to friends and acquaintances, confirming a predominant general satisfaction. From the point of view of the staff of Government offices, the impression was given that the organisational structure of the CNAI was a model for inter-Ministerial cooperation.

Cooperation among Government services for the implementation of the One-Stop-Shop does not alter each agency's responsibilities and competences. The One-Stop-Shop contributes to centralising efforts and achieving coherence and the enhanced synergy effects of cooperation. However, autonomy has to be guaranteed, while the coordination of an umbrella organisation works as a channel for better functioning of the service. Rather than delegating responsibilities, the creation of the One-Stop-Shop allows State services to concentrate immigration and integration issues at a new branch of their central, regional or local agency, relocating already existing staff. Therefore, among the medium-term benefits of the model is the cost-saving effect of this relocation.

The choice of local-, regional- or central-level coordination clearly depends on the style of governance of each Member-State, as already discussed in subchapter 1.4 of this Handbook. Regardless of the level at which it is implemented, the **One-Stop-Shop approach brings with it a number of benefits in terms of cost, efficiency and customer satisfaction for the Government agencies involved, resolving the problems that frequently arise from dispersal of services, lack of information-sharing procedures and lack of coordination of services.**



2.3. Partnership between Government and civil society

Immigrant communities are usually very far removed from political decision-making on matters that directly affect their integration and their lives in the European Union. This common separation between policy-makers and immigrant populations results in the development of inappropriate policies and is contrary to the tenth Common Basic Principle on mainstreaming integration and information-sharing between all stakeholders.

The *Vichy Declaration* commits Member States to “*the further promotion and enhancement of the roles and tasks of associations, in particular migrant associations, and civil society, as well as migrants themselves, in the migrant integration process.*” According to the principle of shared responsibility, immigrant communities play a fundamental role in the conception and implementation of partnerships, as they both represent the target group of the intervention and have personal knowledge of specific integration challenges and needs. Therefore immigrant associations or other civil society organisations that work in this field are important partners as immigrant representatives when implementing a One-Stop-Shop. The European Commission’s *Third Annual Report on Migration and Integration* further recommends the establishment of platforms for discussion between stakeholders and immigrants at all levels.

Immigrant participation in the decision-making processes

One of the proposed set of actions in the *Common Agenda for Integration* (2005) relates directly to the ninth Common Basic Principle - “*the participation of immigrants in the democratic process and in the formulation of integration policies and measures*” -, as one of the main orientations for intervention in immigrant integration. The structure of the One-Stop-Shop, as based on partnerships between Government agencies and non-Governmental organisations, provides for the concrete implementation of this participation. Immigrants as service-users of the One-Stop-Shop are active agents in negotiating and implementing policies.

On the one hand, the fact that immigrant communities are often very diverse, with different needs, places immigrants themselves in a privileged position to identify those needs, analyse them and adapt a common intervention accordingly. On the other hand, immigrants’ participation in this process is an effective way of promoting citizenship and empowerment, which will ultimately enable them to achieve better integration, on the basis of shared responsibility.


Within the Common Agenda guidelines under this topic, the following actions can be found:

- (1) *"Increasing civic, cultural and political participation of third-country nationals in the host society and improving dialogue between different groups of third-country nationals, the government and civil society to promote their active citizenship;*
- (2) *Supporting advisory platforms at various levels for consultation of third-country nationals;*
- (3) *Encouraging dialogue and sharing experience and good practice between immigrant groups and generations;*
- (4) *Increasing third-country nationals' participation in the democratic process, promoting a balanced gender representation, through awareness raising, information campaigns and capacity-building;*
- (5) *Increasing involvement of third-country nationals in society's responses to migration;*
- (6) *Building migrants' associations as sources of advice to newcomers, and including their representatives in introduction programmes as trainers and role models."*

The involvement of immigrant support and immigrant representative associations in the designing and functioning of the One-Stop-Shop furthers the effective application of these actions in a specific and comprehensive way. Civic, professional and cultural participation by immigrants is realised through the provision of services by cultural mediators, as examined in Chapter 3 of this Handbook. Advisory platforms involving immigrants serve to facilitate dialogue in the conception of policies and measures affecting this population group. Such advisory platforms - in the form of a consultative body - form an essential complementary feature of the One-Stop-Shop approach to service provision. The location of all Government and support services under one roof promotes the exchange of best practice among the various Government and immigrant staff, while information campaigns and capacity-building form a central part of the outreach function of the One-Stop-Shop. Finally, the model involves immigrants in immigration policy-making and builds upon the added value provided by the expertise and experience of immigrant representative associations in providing services to immigrants.

Partnership with civil society organizations

In order to guarantee immigrants' participation in these processes, the creation of advisory platforms for consultation (action 2 recommended in the *Common Agenda for Integration*, under the ninth Common Basic Principle) will work as an enhancement of the benefits of the creation of a One-Stop-Shop. By setting up these consultative bodies – where Governmental and non-Governmental organisations whose work concerns migration issues are represented




– the definition of integration policies and, in particular, the establishment of the conditions for the creation of a One-Stop-Shop, have a strong support structure.

Representatives of immigrant associations play an important role in dialoguing with the Government in order to find solutions for the promotion of integration. The most important steps to be taken in this area are (1) setting up the basis for Government and association cooperation and (2) the selection of the most representative and legitimate organisations to represent immigrant communities. For these two processes, the following actions are recommended:

- (1) Initiate the process with the creation of a consultative body where both Government and civil society are represented, in order to engage in discussion, negotiate interests and reach a common strategy;
- (2) Since the implementation of the One-Stop-Shop is not an instantaneous, but rather a continuous and progressive process, immigrant associations should go through a first step of official recognition according to their work on integration, for which both State and civil society establish the criteria. The discussion of these criteria might take place at the meetings of the consultative body. In some European Union countries, this process may be facilitated by the fact that consultative bodies and recognition processes already exist.

Recognising the importance of widespread participation and direct involvement of immigrant associations in establishing integration policies and programmes, the challenge of selecting or recognising stakeholders who are representative of their communities has been identified in several Member States (as raised in subchapter 1.4). Accordingly there are several examples of programmes and measures that empower immigrants' participation through the definition of criteria for the official recognition of immigrant associations:



In Spain the criteria to select NGOs and immigrant associations for the national Forum for the Social Integration of Immigrants (national Government consultative body) were defined as follows:

- It must be a legal entity registered on the national social organisations register.
- It must be a non-profit organisation.
- The organisation's aim must be focused on immigration and clearly stated on their statute.
- It must work at a national level or at least at several territorial levels (e.g. regions, provinces).
- It must be proven to have carried out programmes or activities for immigrant integration.
- It must have properly justified any public funding awarded in the last three years.
- It must have a sufficient structure and institutional capacity to carry out its activities.
- Immigrant associations must be representative in relation to the number of immigrants in Spain, their diversity and plurality.



The Portuguese Government also prioritises the promotion of immigrant associative activities, and commitments in this area comprise points 94-100 of the Government's *Plan for Immigrant Integration*. In order to be officially recognised, associations must:

- have published statutes and elected representatives;
- be registered on the National Register of Corporations; and
- have as their specific objective the promotion of the rights and interests of immigrants, and undertake activities to promote their rights and interests.

Both the Consultative Council for Immigration Affairs and ACIDI, IP's Technical Support Office for Immigrant Associations are involved in the recognition process. As a recognised Immigrant Association, organisations have the right to participate in the definition of immigration policy, immigration regulation processes, consultative councils, and applying for Government funding of specific projects through ACIDI, I.P.'s budget every year.

Immigrant participation in service provision at the One-Stop-Shop

Immigrants participate in decision-making processes concerning integration and the implementation of the One-Stop-Shop, and representatives of immigrant communities are selected. Immigrant involvement in the One-Stop-Shop, however, goes further than consultation, as it is also essential in terms of service provision. Together with the branches of Government agencies, specifically tailored support services are also provided, in which immigrant representative and immigrant support associations participate, based on their particular expertise in the area. This further contributes to strengthening the philosophy of shared responsibility and thereby achieving better integration outcomes.

The involvement of immigrant communities in the provision of services at the One-Stop-Shop should be assured by:

- (1) the presence of cultural mediators, who represent immigrant associations, and are usually from an immigrant background themselves (as will be discussed in Chapter 3). By working in partnership with public administration, mediators and immigrant associations have a key role in creating proximity between immigrants and the State and increasing immigrants' trust in services.
- (2) participation in the consultative body that involves all the Governmental agencies and civil society organisations that provide services and information at the One-Stop-Shop.
- (3) participation in support offices that are created as complementary to all the Governmental services available at the One-Stop-Shop (as will be further detailed in Chapter 4).



The specialised support services provided at the One-Stop-Shop by cultural mediators will not start from scratch in terms of staff training and resources. Where possible, each support office will develop a partnership with one or more civil society organisations working in that specific area. For example, if a specific support office for the family reunification process is to be set up, a partnership will be sought with an NGO that has particular experience and expertise in that area. This is a further cost-saving aspect and added value of the partnerships involved in the One-Stop-Shop approach. This is also in keeping with the recommendations of the *Common Agenda for Integration* concerning coordination, cooperation and communication between Government and non-Governmental organisations (tenth Common Basic Principle).

It should be reiterated here that responses provided at the One-Stop-Shop should be complementary and involve all relevant and interested actors – namely the State (central, regional and local authorities) and civil society (including immigrant associations).

Furthermore, and from a holistic approach to immigrant integration, other sectors – such as the private sector and the media – should also be involved in the definition of a coherent strategy for promoting immigrant integration, as also recommended in Conclusion 2 of the Council of the European Union's *Conclusions on Strengthening of Integration Policies in the European Union* (10267/07 (Presse 125): 24).

The private sector is a key player in terms of the employment of immigrants, but also potentially as funders for various initiatives carried out at the One-Stop-Shop. The media also have a crucial role, particularly with regard to the integration of the local population, and the provision of accurate and unbiased information on migration. Partnerships with the private sector and the media should be based on maximising the benefits for the One-Stop-Shop services, publicising its existence, and – more generally – stimulating awareness and promoting positive attitudes towards integration.



Handbook on how to implement a One-Stop-Shop



3. MEDIATION SERVICES BY IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES



"One-Stop-Shop: A New Answer for Immigrant Integration"




3.1. Who are the cultural mediators?

The cultural mediator operates to promote immigrant reception and integration, aiming to reduce distance and distrust in Government services. Translation, interpretation and mediation are the cultural mediator's main tasks in order to achieve these goals. In the Common Agenda for Integration, *"strengthening the capacity of public and private service providers to interact with third-country nationals via intercultural interpretation and translation"* is one of the recommended actions for guaranteeing *"access for immigrants to institutions, as well as to public and private goods and services, on a basis equal to national citizens and in a non-discriminatory way"* (COM (2005) 389 final).

In other words, Member States should promote equal access to services for all. Public service providers have the responsibility for guaranteeing that basic requirement of an egalitarian society, and for eliminating possible access barriers faced by certain groups in society. The European Commission recommends that the main strategy to achieve these goals is through the creation or reinforcement of intercultural competences among the staff of Government services. As further argued in the first edition of the *Handbook on Integration*, changes in organisational culture of this nature bring important and positive outcomes both for immigrant integration and public service provision.

The advantages of immigrant service provision with cultural mediators are widely documented as a good practice.



In Luxembourg in 2008, the Ministry of National Education and Professional Training created the Reception Desk for Newly-Arrived Pupils – CASNA (*Cellule d'Accueil Scolaire pour élèves Nouveaux Arrivants*). The Reception Desk acts as the first intermediary between new foreign pupils and educational institutions. During the reception process at school, parents, teachers and other actors can request support free-of-charge from an intercultural mediator who speaks Albanian, Cape Verdean Creole, Chinese, Italian, Portuguese, Serbo-Croat or Russian, as well as the languages spoken in Luxembourg. The intercultural mediators provide support in the following areas: translation/interpreting in individual interviews between teachers, pupils and parents; provision of information; provision of oral or written translations where necessary; and accompanying pupils in cases where psychological support is necessary.



Located within the Centres for Employment, the *Immigration Service Centres* in Italy provide information about: jobs available in the Province of Rome; getting assistance for the initiation of the administrative procedures related to a request for citizenship; and stay permits, family reunification and residence cards. Service users include immigrants and Italian citizens needing information for the regularisation of their foreign employees. Mediators are present at the centres on a rotation basis and the languages spoken are Aramaic, Arabic, Albanian, Bengali, Bulgarian, Chinese, Creole, Croatian, English, French, Georgian, German, Moldovan, Polish, Russian, Romanian, Serbian, Spanish, Turkish and Urdu. The service is free-of-charge.



The German Federal Commissioner for Integration started a national mentoring programme for immigrants in 2008. It provides advice to local actors mentoring immigrants. Moreover, the Federal Office for Integration and Refugees currently runs a pilot project in three German cities (Aachen, Berlin and Frankfurt) in which the idea of using mediators is tested out. Several German foundations that are very active in integration projects run local mediator programmes, particularly in schools.

Cultural mediators should preferably – though not exclusively - be immigrants themselves, revealing mediation competences and knowledge of the socio-cultural and religious characteristics of the target communities. Mediators contribute in broader terms to:

- a) Promoting the inclusion of citizens from different social, religious and cultural origins, in equality of circumstances;
- b) Promoting intercultural dialogue by stimulating respect and deeper mutual knowledge of cultural diversity and social inclusion; and
- c) Cooperating in the prevention and resolution of socio-cultural conflicts and in the definition of social intervention strategies.



The “Voices of Aston” Peer Mediation and Intervention Project works with young adults aged 18 to 24 in the Aston area of Birmingham in the United Kingdom, principally with people of Pakistani, Indian and Bangladeshi origin. It is intended partly as a response to a negative portrayal by the media of the district and its residents. It functions in partnership with Barrow Cadbury Trust, developing mediation by the target community. Mediation explores the causes for conflict and also provides referral to the appropriate services for participants who are not in education, training or employment. The objectives of the Project are to provide: an introduction to conflict management skills, basic mediation training, a framework for passing these skills on to other people and guidelines for establishing a peer mediation scheme. The young adults involved learn time management and communication skills, working with a diverse group of peers. Through this process, they themselves identify solutions to the issues of their community.

Aiming to formally recognise the role of cultural mediators in improving the immigrants’ access to public institutions and the service provision, several Members States officially defined the professional category of mediator by law.



In Italy, cultural mediators were officially recognised by the Immigration Law of 1998 (Law no. 40/1998 and T.U., art. 38), which mentioned cultural mediators for the first time. The official recognition of cultural mediators occurred after a rich experience with the training and employment of these new cultural operators in the 1990s. Cultural mediators were mostly used during the 1990s in central northern regions, promoted by regions, provinces, cities, and volunteer associations. Often the foreign citizens were key players in the movement to train and employ cultural educators. The sectors that had positive experiences with the use of cultural mediators are quite varied: health, schools, social services, integration services (notably those focusing on women and minors), cultural initiatives, reception centres for foreigners awaiting forced repatriation, police, prisons, offices for foreigners, the city registrar’s office, provincial employment offices, and business organisations.



Socio-cultural mediators were introduced in Portugal during the 1990s, but the role of the socio-cultural mediator was officially established by Law no. 105/2001 of 31 August 2001. In that Law the role of the mediators is characterised as to collaborate in the integration of immigrants and ethnic minorities, reinforcing intercultural dialogue and social cohesion.



3.2. The role of cultural mediators in the One-Stop-Shop


The role of cultural mediators is, at its most basic level, to provide a cultural and linguistic bridge between the machinery of State as it relates to immigration, and the immigrant communities and individuals who use the services of the One-Stop-Shop. The mediators' cultural and linguistic proximity to the service-users is the central benefit of their role in service provision. In other words, the cultural mediators collaborate in immigrant integration based on the reinforcement of intercultural dialogue and social cohesion.

From the perspective of Government agencies, should problems or misunderstandings arise in their service provision to immigrants, the mediators are on hand to assist in resolving these questions, due to their greater knowledge of the relevant issues and to better explain immigrant rights and duties due to their cultural and religious awareness. The fact that the agencies have access to the service provided by the mediators brings concrete benefits in terms of efficiency. For immigrant service-users, the staff of cultural mediators provides a more familiar face for immigration procedures and other processes that they must undertake.



In Portugal cultural mediators play a central role in facilitating interaction between State services and the immigrant population, and form an integral part of the procedures of both the Foreigners and Borders Service (SEF) and ACIDI, I.P. Mediators are not directly employed by the Portuguese Government institutions, but by immigrant associations, which in turn receive grants from those institutions. Cultural mediators usually come from immigrant communities themselves, speaking fluent Portuguese as well as at least one other language. Since 2006, SEF has had at least thirty cultural mediators at its reception centres. Mediators are facilitated in providing advice to all immigrants, regardless of their status. The role of the cultural mediators at ACIDI, I.P.'s National Immigrant Support Centres is to establish a closer relationship with immigrants, to speed up procedures, and also to provide translation and interpretation where necessary. Mediators generally rotate among tasks within the Centres.

At a more general level, the presence of the cultural mediators at the One-Stop-Shop contributes to involving immigrant communities in the drawing up and implementation of integration policies, with all of the added benefits that brings, as analysed in the previous chapter.



Taking as an example the Portuguese experience, the participation of cultural mediators is fundamental to the One-Stop-Shop strategy. These mediators guarantee not only a cultural and linguistic proximity to each immigrant accessing the services of these One-Stop-Shops, but also provide an essential link between public administration and immigrants. Furthermore, the participation of non-Governmental organisations, as partners in the management of the service, brings important outcomes. This results in the development of immigrant integration policy becoming a shared responsibility.

In sum, cultural mediators have an important role to play at the One-Stop-Shop, since this structure includes different services where mediation and translation tasks are necessary for guaranteeing accessibility, reception and integration goals. Cultural mediators should be qualified and willing to contribute specifically to:

- a) Facilitating communication between agency staff and users of different cultural origins;
- b) Assisting users in their relations with public and private services and respective staff;
- c) Respecting the confidentiality of all information related to families and population groups within their activities;
- d) Training working teams on intercultural approaches;
- e) Participating in developing projects and programmes addressed to the community; and
- f) Participating in discussions and working teams to improve or define local policies, as immigrant community representatives.

3.3. How to reach the cultural mediators? How to select them?



Intercultural competence in immigrant service provision can be achieved through training or recruitment. As argued in the first edition of the Handbook on Integration, these two complementary strategies in building up interculturally competent staff should be an ongoing priority to Member States rather than a once-off effort.

Training

Recognising the importance of developing intercultural competence among employees as an ongoing priority, several Member States have formalised the training of cultural mediators by setting up university courses with expert degrees.



In Spain, intercultural mediation is a speciality area, with a diversity of programmes and schools. These include courses organised by NGOs (Red Cross, Andalusia Welcomes) to train their members, or university courses with expert degrees (Autonomous University of Madrid, University of Murcia). There are a great variety of curricula, profiles and competences although there is progress in relation to an agreement to define graduate profiles.

The University of Murcia in Spain is developing the 3rd Graduate Expert Course in Intercultural Mediation, of five months' duration (between December 2008 and June 2009). Graduates will be awarded the Intercultural Mediation Expert University Degree. Carried out jointly with the Official School of Social Work Qualified Students, and with the support of the Ministry for Labour and Immigration, the contents of this course are:

- Module 1: Contextual Framework. Immigration: context, challenges and alternatives.
- Module 2: Conceptual Framework of Intercultural Mediation.
- Module 3: Legal and Competencies Framework: present-day situation and trends.
- Module 4: Knowledge of Origin Culture References: Eastern Europe, Morocco, Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America
- Module 5: Practical.
- Module 6: Scope of Involvement of Intercultural Mediators.
- Module 7: Communication Techniques, Mediation and Intercultural Negotiations.
- Module 8: Immigrant Integration Policy in European, State and Regional Contexts.
- Module 9: Municipal Policies for Immigration.

Furthermore, several civil society organisations acquired a fundamental role in training immigrants to work as intercultural mediators contributing both to their employability and to better service provision in other institutions.



In Ireland, *Access Ireland* has been pioneering work on cultural mediation since 2002. Their work includes training people from minority ethnic backgrounds to work as intercultural mediators and promoting their employment in the health and social services. The role of the intercultural mediators involves facilitating access and outcomes in using services for members of the minority ethnic population, providing training for service providers in cultural competence and assisting in the culture-proofing of information materials. Intercultural mediation is seen as a dynamic process through which a professionally-trained third party acts as a cultural broker between a client and a service provider to assist them both in reaching a common understanding - which will ultimately lead to more satisfactory outcomes in service provision and use. Access Ireland has developed a particularly positive relationship with school liaison teachers, and mediators have also given intercultural training in schools. The team of intercultural mediators currently includes mediators from Africa and from among the Roma population. The languages used by the mediators include English, French, Igbo, Yoruba and Romanes.



The Association of Intercultural Mediators (ASMIN) was founded in 2000 in Andalusia, Spain. It is a not-for-profit organisation, open to all intercultural mediators who wish to work within its principles. The Association runs courses in intercultural mediation through its School of Mediation and Intercultural Competences, a virtual platform for training in interculturalism, immigration, intercultural communication and transcultural psychology, among other themes. The Association thereby promotes cultural diversity, developing new methods of intercultural intervention and mediating in the resolution of cultural and social conflicts between the receiving society and the immigrant population. ASMIN has assisted in school, social, health and labour integration among immigrants, ethnic minorities and refugees. ASMIN participates in the Municipal Council for Immigration of the local authority of Granada and in the social movement Granada for Tolerance.

Hence, training courses must be accessible to mediators, both with generic contents on the promotion of intercultural dialogue and particular modules related to the specificity of each community, as well as on different integration fields – such as employment, labour law or immigration law. The partnerships established with State agencies for the implementation of the One-Stop-Shop can be used for this purpose, as these services have qualified personnel to provide training courses on their specific fields of action.



To work in the Portuguese One-Stop-Shops, mediators were provided with initial training on service techniques and immigration issues by ACIDI, I.P. A continuous investment is made in training cultural mediators, as they undergo an intermediate and a full evaluation every year. Because cultural mediators generally rotate among tasks within the National Immigrant Support Centres (CNAIs), they need to be well informed in a variety of subjects concerning immigrant integration laws and programmes. Their provision of accurate advice to immigrants who visit the One-Stop-Shop service depends on their commitment to regular training and evaluation. At the CNAIs, there is a system in place for training cultural mediators and a “Mediator’s Manual”. Mediators undergo a comprehensive training course, as well as committing to keeping up-to-date on developments in the area of immigration and relevant legislation.

Recruitment

As immigrant associations are central actors in the implementation of the One-Stop-Shop service, and processes for recognition of associations need to be established (as described in subchapter 2.3. above), the infrastructure for reaching cultural mediators should already be in place. Through the negotiation of protocols with recognised associations, cultural mediators should be employed at the One-Stop-Shop as representing immigrant communities. Specific criteria must be in place for the recruitment of people from these associations, in order to guarantee their ability to undertake

the role assigned to them. The identification of potential candidates is based on their expertise in the area of immigrant integration, and of providing support to immigrants. The associations that are involved in advisory platforms and consultative bodies are primary sources for identifying potential cultural mediators.

Two specific issues arise in relation to the selection of cultural mediators to work at the One-Stop-Shop. Firstly, the candidate must have relevant school or third-level qualifications, specifically in the areas of mediation, law, international relations, sociology, psychology, and other related areas (depending on the support office to which they are allocated). It must be clear that every cultural mediator recruited has the personal and educational capacities to fulfil their duties at the One-Stop-Shop. Some Member States may choose to require the completion of secondary schooling, while others may choose to require third-level qualifications. Either way, it is essential that the mediators have both the skills and the willingness to work as mediators between the State system and the immigrant communities. A further selection criterion is of course fluency in the language of the receiving country or region, together with fluency in at least one other common immigrant language.

The second issue relates to the **representativeness of the team of cultural mediators working at the One-Stop-Shop**. This is clearly dependent on the composition of the immigrant population of each European Union country. Some countries may have a clear preponderance of certain nationalities or ethnic groups, while others may have a far more diverse immigrant population. This poses the question of whether it will be possible to select a fully representative staff of mediators. From an overall perspective, however, the specific nationalities or backgrounds of each mediator should be secondary to their willingness to work for and with the entire immigrant population, while using their specific linguistic, religious and cultural skills whenever the necessity arises. Therefore each Member State should attempt to select teams of mediators who represent as closely as possible the immigrant composition of that country, while recognising, particularly in countries with very diverse populations, that it may not always be possible to represent every single nationality or linguistic/ethnic group.

A national, regional or local Government, in consultation with immigrant groups, may also choose to appoint cultural mediators from the receiving community, who have personal cultural or linguistic experiences that qualify them for this work.

A further issue for consideration in relation to the cultural mediators' recruitment to the One-Stop-Shop service is the sustainability of their employment. Recruitment and training of the cultural mediators represents a significant investment by the umbrella organisation, as does continuing on-the-job training. The retention of these skilled staff is a central concern for the successful functioning of the One-Stop-Shop service; therefore favourable working conditions, professionalisation of the position and adequate remuneration are essential, adapted in accordance with budgetary constraints.


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4. SERVICES PROVIDED AT THE ONE-STOP-SHOP



“One-Stop-Shop: A New Answer for Immigrant Integration”



Immigrants' access to public services is considered in the *Vichy Declaration* as fundamental for social cohesion. As is clear from the previous chapters, the One-Stop-Shop provides three different types of services:

1. The first comprises branches of Government agencies and Ministries in order that immigrants may undergo necessary procedures for settling in the receiving country directly, and under the one roof.
2. Secondly, this model provides support services to assist immigrants in negotiating these and other procedures.
3. Finally, cultural mediators and private organisations may provide a number of complementary services.

As emphasised above, the implementation of a One-Stop-Shop may be a continuous process that reinforces its activities and role in the integration of immigrants over time. It could, for example, start out as a centralised and coherent information service of the Government, proceed to being a mediation service between different public administration services, and develop into an institution that provides services and resolves problems. In other words it is not mandatory to create a One-Stop-Shop with all the three different types of services.

4.1. Government services



Government services are provided at the One-Stop-Shop by the staff of each particular agency or ministry, often in cooperation with cultural mediators to facilitate an efficient and effective service. The responsibilities and duties of the agency or ministry staff remain unchanged - they simply open a new branch at the One-Stop-Shop - while their salary continues to be paid by the Ministry in question. There is no delegation involved, but the branch has the added assistance of cultural mediators and the cost-saving mechanisms of information-sharing and common procedures in a joined-up government approach.

The provision of services at the One-Stop-Shops therefore builds on existing experience and service provision in each country, geared towards mainstreaming. One of the principal benefits of the location of the Government services within the One-Stop-Shop is that the staff allocated to that branch gain specific skills in dealing with immigration and integration issues, due to their focus on immigrants as a group of service-users along with all other relevant institutions working in the field of integration.



As an example of a service with a local orientation - bearing in mind the high level of local authority in Italy -, the Municipality of Brescia in northern Italy set up the *Office for Integration and Citizenship*. Brescia has one of the highest rates of resident foreigners in Italy (15.3%). The Office was set up with the main objective of reception and orientation of immigrants in the city. It acts as an organ of management of affairs related to immigration, supporting new arrivals in achieving socio-economic independence and in their participation in the public life of the city, developing projects for the reception of people seeking asylum, and promoting the rights and duties of citizenship. The provision of this service essentially relates to legal issues (information and legal advice); needs assessment with the support of cultural mediators and professionals in law and psychology; administrative support in filling in forms, including residence visas; advice in the area of entrepreneurship (evaluation of available opportunities and resources, support in financial analysis and choice of business); support in looking for work or housing; and specialised support for people seeking asylum.

It has been acknowledged in many European Union policy documents that immigration procedures are not distinct and separate from processes of integration: *“Admission and integration policies are inseparable and should mutually reinforce each other”* (COM 2004, 508) and *“the link between legal migration policies and integration strategies needs to be continually reinforced”* (COM 2007, 512). Therefore it is essential for the services that regulate the entry and renewal of immigrants’ residence to have a branch at the One-Stop-Shop, together with all additional public services that immigrants need to contact during their stay in the Member State and Governmental services that have a role in immigrant integration (e.g. employment, housing, health, education).

In sum, the following Government agencies are recommended to be represented at the One-Stop-Shop:

- Immigration Services
- Citizenship service
- Employment Ministry and Labour Inspectorate
- Education Ministry
- Health Ministry
- Social Security
- Housing Ministry
- Voter registration¹⁷
- Tax registration
- Service for language and/or citizenship tests



4.2. Support services



The One-Stop-Shop service should also provide for the establishment of a number of support services specifically designed to give information, advice and accompaniment to immigrant service-users in their dealings with both the Governmental and the private systems of the receiving society.

One of the most relevant support services that the One-Stop-Shop must have is the *pre-sorting and reception office*.¹⁸ This office should provide the first contact that immigrants have with the One-Stop-Shop service, explaining not only the philosophy and procedures of the One-Stop-Shop approach, but also guiding the service-users through the building. Because all the staff in this office are cultural mediators, immigrants feel culturally and linguistically comfortable in explaining the aim of their visit to the One-Stop-Shop. The mediators can then better guide them to the right public service that they need to contact. This support office also plays a crucial role in minimising inaccurate information that immigrants might have and can ultimately reduce the number of unnecessary visits by immigrants to the Governmental services that are available at the One-Stop-Shop. This support service further reduces time-consuming *modus operandi* in implementing the procedures of all the Government services that are provided in the One-Stop-Shop because it provides a prior selection of the procedures that immigrants need to undertake. In addition, while immigrants are waiting to access the competent Government service, they can be undertaking several tasks in advance.



In Portugal, the pre-sorting and reception office has a crucial impact in increasing the efficiency and efficacy of the One-Stop-Shop service provision. The first contact and welcome to immigrant citizens who arrive at the National Immigrant Support Centres (CNAIs) is provided at this office by a team of cultural mediators, who, in accordance with whatever issue is presented, guide the user to the appropriate service in order to resolve it, issuing a service ticket. Because the CNAIs work with a common and shared computer management system, the cultural mediators of this office play a fundamental role in uploading onto the system the immigrant's information (e.g. digitalisation of data and documents) and the purpose of the immigrant's visit - in Portuguese, even if the immigrants explain it in another language. This facilitates the procedures and speeds up the response that the Government services give to the service-users.


The CNAIs also run other support services in seven different areas, operated by cultural mediators, in the same building where Government agencies provide their services:

- (1) Legal support
- (2) Family reunification support
- (3) Social support
- (4) Employment and entrepreneurship support
- (5) Housing support
- (6) Consumer support
- (7) Technical support for Immigrant Associations

All these offices meet the different needs of immigrants. Working under the same roof contributes to guaranteeing coherence of information, and has been recognised by all actors involved as an important benefit for immigrant integration.

Other complementary support services provided at the One-Stop-Shop meet concrete needs of immigrants that are not directly satisfied by the existing public institutions. Occasionally immigrants simply do not know how to fill in the forms or misunderstand them. The creation of support offices to meet these needs is an effective response for both immigrants (who receive support in overcoming these difficulties) and Government agencies (who receive forms that are already properly filled in and thereby save time and expedite the process).

Some services, such as family reunification support and citizenship services, relate directly to immigration procedures and the staff of the One-Stop-Shop service can accompany the immigrant's procedure with the immigration service. Some services may also provide assistance in navigating other State systems, such as access to education for both children and adults. The One-Stop-Shop may also provide support to service-users in relation to the non-State systems of the receiving society.



Support services in the following areas may be provided by the umbrella organisation, staffed by cultural mediators:

- Pre-sorting and Reception
- Family Reunification
- Legal Advice
- Employment (job centre)¹⁹
- Setting up a Business²⁰
- Education (schooling and adult education) and Advice for International Students²¹
- Recognition of Foreign Qualifications²²
- Technical Support for Immigrant Associations
- Language Learning
- Consumer Information
- Emergency Social Support
- Information Phoneline
- Telephone Translation Line
- Reporting Racist and Discriminatory Incidents
- Support for Victims of Human Trafficking
- Voluntary Return (in partnership with IOM programmes)

4.3. Complementary Services



Additional services may also be provided at the One-Stop-Shop, in order to make each service-user's visit more pleasant. The following services may be provided by the umbrella organisation, staffed by cultural mediators:

- Childminding
- Exhibition Space (giving the opportunity to artists – both native and immigrant – to share their work)
- Information Counter
- Immigration Library



Each One-Stop-Shop may also wish to invite private companies or entrepreneurs to set up branches or businesses catering specifically for One-Stop-Shop users, in order that time spent waiting to use a service can be spent fruitfully. There is a further cost-saving aspect to making space available for private services in that this can be rented out at a fee to the private entities involved.

- Post Office
- Bank and/or ATM
- Money Transfer Service
- Call Centre
- Internet Access
- Photocopying
- Passport Photo Booth
- Snack Bar

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5. ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ONE-STOP-SHOP




“One-Stop-Shop: A New Answer for Immigrant Integration”



5.1. Structural accessibility

Each Member State should decide how many One-Stop-Shops are necessary and feasible in each national context. In the case of countries where immigrants are distributed widely around the country, and where State power is quite decentralised, a larger number of One-Stop-Shops would be necessary. Larger cities with high concentrations of immigrant populations are the obvious choice for locating One-Stop-Shops, and so the number depends on the number of cities fitting this description in each country. Nevertheless, local One-Stop-Shops may also be established in more isolated areas with immigrant populations, due to the widespread distribution of immigrants in many EU Member States. In Member States where immigration is largely an urban phenomenon, and there are a smaller number of large cities, an accordingly smaller number of One-Stop-Shops will need to be established to cater for needs in the sector.



The National Immigrant Support Centres network (the Portuguese One-Stop-Shops) in Portugal comprises two national centres in the cities of Lisbon and Porto – both with high concentrations of immigrant residents –, a branch in Faro, where the immigrant presence is similarly significant, and a network of 83 Local Immigrant Integration Support Centres (*Centros Locais de Apoio à Integração de Imigrante – CLAIs*) spread throughout the country. The two National Immigrant Support Centres are located in central zones in the city – in Lisbon the Centre is located in a district with a high number of immigrant businesses and residents, very close to two metro stops and a main artery of the city. In geographical terms, therefore, the network provides a high level of accessibility.

Most cities have a specific district or a number of districts with a higher concentration of immigrants, and if this has good public transport access then it would be a good option in terms of location. The capital cities of many European Union countries have disproportionately high concentrations of immigrant populations. Often there are particular concentrations of immigrants in certain districts or suburbs in cities, meaning that it would be advisable to establish national or local One-Stop-Shops in these areas. It is also important to take into account the location of existing structures, so as to provide a cost-effective solution in terms of the implementation of the One-Stop-Shop.

The location of the One-Stop-Shops is a crucial issue to be considered in implementing the service. Three main concerns arise in considering possible locations:

1. The location should be easily accessible by public transport and in a relatively central location.

As the One-Stop-Shop is intended as a place where immigrants are welcomed, it must be easily accessible. While it may be too expensive to locate the One-Stop-Shop right in the city centre, it should be close to public transport systems (e.g. metro, train, tram or bus stops) and as close as possible to the city centre. In smaller towns it may be feasible to locate a local One-Stop-Shop in the town centre, particularly as the public transport opportunities may be more limited. Although the supports of a virtual One-Stop-Shop and touchscreen information points may be in place, it is essential to facilitate physical access to the One-Stop-Shop by immigrants and by other service users.

2. The specific urban geography of immigration should be considered, leading to the location of the One-Stop-Shop in parts of a city or town commonly frequented by immigrants, or in an immigrant residential area.



In Ireland, one of the busiest Citizens Information Centres is based on O'Connell Street in a convenient location in Dublin city centre, and dealt with 62,630 queries in 2007. A survey of the service-users revealed that 60% were foreign nationals.

3. Finally, it must be considered, in accordance with the governance style of each EU Member State, and with the geography of immigrant settlement, whether one or several national One-Stop-Shops should be established in main cities, or whether a number of One-Stop-Shops should be established at a regional and/or local level, all overseen by the same umbrella organisation or by different regional or local authorities.

As in the previous chapter, the idea of the implementation of the One-Stop-Shop as a process rather than an instant application should be kept in mind here. Depending on whether it is a centralised or federalised State, the implementation may begin at a national, regional or local level – but preferably guided by a national framework. Some municipalities could implement it as a pilot project, demonstrating the attendant benefits in efficiency, lowering costs, and quality of services to other municipalities.



Different approaches to implementing a One-Stop-Shop are expected depending on whether we are dealing with a:

(a) *Centralised state* - in a centralised state it would be expected that the national Government would decide, from the creation to the decision on the location of the One-Stop-Shop. After the location has been decided upon, a dialogue with local authorities will be initiated to start the implementation process.

(b) *Federalised state* - the state would recommend the creation of the One-Stop-Shop and each region would choose to implement it or not. Those regions implementing it would then cooperate with local authorities.

(c) *A state with a high level of local autonomy* - the state would recommend the creation of the One-Stop-Shop, and each local district would decide on implementation, bringing together the necessary partners at a local level.

5.2. Accessibility of services and information



There are a number of issues in relation to the accessibility of the services and of information related to the One-Stop-Shop and immigration in general.

Accessibility

The first and most evident element concerning the accessibility of the One-Stop-Shop service is its opening hours. Opening hours are a key concern, and the One-Stop-Shop should endeavour to provide opening hours that facilitate working immigrants, while still accommodating the existing schedules of the staff of Ministries and agencies. If it is not possible to open every day before and after normal office hours, there should be late and/or early opening on at least one or two days per week. This will avoid the need for immigrants or other service-users to take the day off work in order to avail of the services.

It is further recommended that the service providers at the One-Stop-Shop have access to all relevant and cross-cutting information concerning service provision. In order to guarantee a coherent and holistic approach at the One-Stop-Shop, all the Governmental agencies and support services need to work in partnership and in cooperation, sharing information in relation to integration service provision. Information and Communications Technology can

be a crucial support in that respect and should be used to enhance service provision and increase the coherence of services, such as for digitalising documents, simplifying procedures and simplifying access to services online and by telephone. The umbrella organisation overseeing the One-Stop-Shop should be facilitated in sharing information between the support offices, and with Government agencies, where necessary. As evaluation is a key element of the proper functioning of the One-Stop-Shop (developed in subchapter 1.3), this information-sharing database will serve as a useful tool in assessing the services.




The shared IT system used at the National Immigrant Support Centres (CNAIs) in Portugal deserves particular mention. The system is considered to be one of the innovative features which best contributes to improving the quality of the work and was the reason for the attribution of an award to ACIDI, I.P. on Good Practices in the Portuguese Public Sector in 2004/2005.

At the CNAI pre-sorting and reception office, digitalising the documents brought in by immigrants facilitates and speeds up procedures, especially with regard to the requirements of the Foreigners and Border Service (SEF) office. This agency is one of the services receiving the largest number of enquiries every day in relation to visa renewals, since visa renewals represent immigrants' major service requirement from CNAI offices. Sharing an IT system at the CNAI provides a digital process with relevant information concerning each immigrant, to which the corresponding institutions and offices have access. In addition, the fact that the SOS Immigrant Telephone Line shares the same system also allows immigrants to call and ask for information regarding their own processes.


Information

Several information strategies may be used to disseminate the One-Stop-Shop services and relevant information on immigrant integration:

Publicity campaigns: Information brochures about the One-Stop-Shop and about immigrants' rights and duties should be translated into several languages in cooperation with Ministries and handed out by Government agencies and civil society organisations. A television and billboard advertisement campaign should accompany the opening of the One-Stop-Shop(s) to alert immigrants and others to its services, where the services are presented in a clear and comprehensible fashion. Subsequent to this initial period, it is likely that many more immigrants will continue to find out about its existence by word-of-mouth.



Outreach approaches: Because cultural mediators working at the One-Stop-Shops are often immigrants themselves or come from immigrant communities (as characterised in chapter 3), they also play a key role in disseminating not only the service provision approach but also - due to the training that they receive to work at the One-Stop-Shop - the rights and duties of the immigrants in the country. In other words, mediators can stimulate a multiplier effect in information dissemination.



Outreach teams comprising cultural mediators from the One-Stop-Shops were created by ACIDI, I.P. in Portugal in January 2006. The aim of these teams is to provide a specialised service in various areas relating to the lives of immigrants in Portugal, making visits to local neighbourhoods and institutions with the aim of raising awareness about the existence of, and the services provided by, the One-Stop-Shops. The outreach teams also seek to bridge information gaps among immigrant communities not only about their rights and duties in Portuguese society, but also about integration services available.

Virtual One-Stop-Shop: A virtual One-Stop-Shop may also be created to complement the physical one. On this website, appointments could be made for the services of the One-Stop-Shop and information could be obtained. According to the capabilities of each Government Ministry or agency, procedures may also be undertaken online. Progress in the modernisation of access to information and services at the One-Stop-Shop will form part of existing general strategies in Member States to use Information Technology in public administration. Due to varied levels of computer literacy among immigrant populations, and the need for mediation and information-sharing, however, the virtual One-Stop-Shop is not a substitute for the physical One-Stop-Shop. Procedures could also be possible by email, by phone and through the post office.

A service-user of the *National Immigrant Support network* in Portugal does not necessarily have to visit one of the national or local centres in order to receive a response to their query or situation. Officially opened on 13 March 2003, the SOS Immigrant phoneline functions Monday to Saturday from 8:30am to 8:30pm providing a general and specific information service, staffed by cultural mediators, with the additional service of making appointments for visiting the National Immigrant Support Centres. The service is provided in nine languages, with the possibility of being provided in 60 languages through the Telephone Translation Service.



In Ireland the *Citizens Information Board* provides an Information Phone Service and a comprehensive information website (www.citizensinformation.ie). The newly-branded website received a UN World Summit Award in the e-Government category in 2007 and was cited as an EU best practice model at an e-Government summit. The content of the website is available in English and Irish, with many relevant documents also available in Polish, Romanian and French. The Citizens Information Board supports the delivery of information through three channels: online, telephone and face-to-face. The public can access integrated information directly through the Citizens Information website. The Citizens Information Phone Service (CIPS) provides a telephone service, and the nationwide network of Citizens Information Services (CISs) provides the face-to-face service. These three channels ensure that the public have access to information, advice and advocacy services.

Touchscreen One-Stop-Shop information points may also be installed in strategic locations, providing access to relevant and official information provided by the different Ministries involved in the One-Stop-Shop, including legal information in several languages and information about service providers (such as the kind of services provided and their location). These info-points could be available in different locations, including different cities and towns, and different institutions (Governmental and non-Governmental).


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6. ECONOMIC AND PUBLIC FINANCE ASPECTS




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As highlighted in the *First Annual Report on Migration and Integration* (COM 2004 508), better integration of immigrants ultimately improves public finances. In other words, the Member States' investment in integration services provision has positive budgetary impacts in the long term, accruing from the existence of a more integrated society. For the individual services involved, the enhanced efficiency and efficacy of service provision at the One-Stop-Shop ultimately provides benefits. Furthermore, the implementation of the One-Stop-Shop may not necessarily be a once-off large outlay of funds but rather a continuous, sustained process. **It is ultimately a cost-saving measure in the medium term, due to savings at the Government agencies and in the long-term, due to improved integration outcomes.**


The implementation of **One-Stop-Shop services in Member States is a rational way to optimise State resources**, as the several public services that immigrants need to contact during their daily lives in European societies are available in one single building. The direct contact between different institutions becomes more efficient and a more coherent response by the State to immigrants is expected. Unnecessary bureaucracy and misunderstandings are reduced, and information is shared in order to provide a more efficient service.

It does, however, require an initial investment, which will be detailed here. The implementation of One-Stop-Shops requires a significant initial investment in human resources – particularly in recruiting and training mediators, and in terms of material resources – in relation to the building and its equipment. Effective implementation therefore requires the commitment of funds at an initial stage, as well as a sustainable source of funding for the functioning of the One-Stop-Shop service.



In Portugal the implementation of the National Immigrant Support Centres in 2004 represented a commitment of €1.4 million by the High Commission for Immigration and Ethnic Minorities. In 2007, the majority of ACIDI, I.P.'s annual budget of €5.51 million came from the Ministry for Labour and Social Solidarity. Just 20.9% of this budget was spent on staff costs (essentially cultural mediators). €1.88 million, or 34.1% of the budget, was spent on various integration services, including the National and Local Immigrant Support Centres network.

The sustainability of funding should be guaranteed by the national or regional budget, through Government services, with a particular fund for running the One-Stop-Shop allocated to the umbrella organisation. It is expected that the different State services will maintain their budget expenses in human resources and service provision, while channelling them to a specific location where other state agencies and support services are also concentrated.





Some Member States may wish to make an investment at an initial stage in a pilot of the One-Stop-Shop for a specific region or district. This would require a lower initial investment of funds, and further investment in the medium term to expand the model, based on the results and evaluation of the pilot project.

6.1. Human Resources

The investment of State resources in the One-Stop-Shop is limited in the sense that each branch of a Government Ministry or agency maintains its own funding in terms of human resources. From an overall and long-term perspective, Government services will improve their cost efficiency because of their enhanced ability to provide clear and definitive responses to service users at the One-Stop-Shop, with the benefit of the assistance of cultural mediators. From the perspective of Government agencies' human resources costs, it is clear that cost-saving and efficiency are features of having a branch at the One-Stop-Shop.

There are potential savings for the Government in relying on the services of cultural mediators, in bridging the information gap, and in building on the existing experience of various Government and non-Government service providers. This will facilitate the necessary training needed for both mediators and Government staff in order to provide an effective and interculturally competent service.

Therefore the main staff costs incurred will be in relation to training cultural mediators and funding immigrant associations to employ cultural mediators. The number of mediators employed will depend on the size of the One-Stop-Shop. It will be necessary to make an estimate in advance of the number of daily visits, in order to properly staff the One-Stop-Shop. This will then provide an indication of the staff costs in relation to mediators.



On average the One-Stop-Shop in Lisbon currently receives 782 users per day, and for that number of users the service is directly provided by 65 cultural mediators, 19 civil servants and 5 security guards. The added benefits for State institutions working at the One-Stop-Shop in Lisbon are clear from the IOM Evaluation of the National Immigrant Support Centres (CNAIs) project. Prior to its implementation, employees of Government agencies themselves often found it difficult to keep pace with changes in regulations and procedures. Joint efforts at the CNAIs contribute to harmonising and simplifying these procedures, a process that is not always easy. Those employed at the CNAI, including Government employees, reported on the benefits of cooperation between agencies. Concerns that agencies originally had were gradually eliminated, leading to better quality and more efficient work, benefiting both users and the agencies themselves. Indeed, while some staff shortages were felt by Government employees, the cultural mediators were often on hand to provide assistance in these situations (IOM, 2007: 13-15).

The implementation of the One-Stop-Shop will involve training costs for both the staff of Government agencies and for the cultural mediators. There will also be ongoing training costs in order to keep staff up-to-date on legislation, procedures and new services to be provided. This investment in staff costs, as mentioned above, is essential to guarantee the recruitment and retention of staff with specific expertise.

6.2. Material Resources



There will be a significant initial outlay in buying or renting the building for a One-Stop-Shop service (taking into account what was examined in subchapter 5.1). Some of this may be compensated for by renting out space to private companies and entrepreneurs for complementary services (as suggested in subchapter 4.3). The purchase or rental should be undertaken by the umbrella organisation in charge of the overall running of the One-Stop-Shop. The upkeep of the building must also be financed, together with cleaning and potential renovation costs. However, this may be facilitated by adapting existing ministerial or municipal buildings that are already available.

The building must also be equipped with a common computer system for the staff to process individual cases, sharing information with colleagues in other offices where necessary and appropriate. The shared digital management system at the National Immigrant Support Centre in Lisbon was considered of great benefit to the functioning of this One-Stop-Shop by those interviewed in the IOM evaluation (IOM, 2007: 25).



Office furniture must also be invested in. The One-Stop-Shop will need a ticketing system with information screens to show when each ticket is to be attended to.

Should *touchscreen* information points be installed, this will also require an initial investment in design and installation and a further investment in maintenance. Information brochures, advertisement and web design will also represent significant costs.



Endnotes

¹ For further details about the project and its main activities and other outcomes visit the official website at www.oss.inti.acidi.gov.pt

² For further details about ACIDI visit the official website at www.acidi.gov.pt

³ For more see <http://www.oss.inti.acidi.gov.pt>

⁴ For more see <http://www.oss.inti.acidi.gov.pt>

⁵ All country reports developed within the context of the project are available to download at <http://www.oss.inti.acidi.gov.pt>

⁶ During the project three transnational workshops were organised. Each workshop dealt with a specific theme related to the Project: *The Role of Socio-Cultural Mediators in the One-Stop-Shop* (Dublin, 26 February 2008), *Integrated Services Provision to Immigrants: examples of One-Stop-Shops in Europe?* (Athens, 6 June 2008), *Partnerships between NGOs and Government actors in providing services to migrants* (Berlin, 8 July 2008). For further details about the workshops see <http://www.oss.inti.acidi.gov.pt>

⁷ All country reports of the INTI project “One-Stop-Shop: a new answer for immigrant integration?” (JLS/2006/INTI/148) are available at www.oss.inti.acidi.gov.pt

⁸ Further details on those workshops are available at www.oss.inti.acidi.gov.pt

⁹ R. Penninx (2005), “Integration processes of migrants: research findings and policy challenges”, Article presented in the European Population Conference 2005, Council of Europe Conference organised by the European Population Committee.

¹⁰ Third Annual Report on Migration and Integration (COM (2007) 512 final).

¹¹ The second Common Basic Principle on Integration argues that “*integration implies respect for the basic values of the EU*”. European values are further defined in the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum as, among others, “*human rights, freedom of opinion, democracy, tolerance, equality between men and women and the compulsory schooling of children*” (13189/08 ASIM 68: 6).

¹² “*Migration Nation*” is available to download at:

www.diversityireland.ie/Publications/Publications/Migration_Nation.html.

¹³ For more information, please see: <http://www.interno.it/mininterno/export/sites/default/it/temi/immigrazione/sottotema005.html>

¹⁴ A European Integration Forum was proposed for the first time in 2005 by the European Council as a tool for European integration policy based on the belief that integration policies and programmes for immigrants should go hand-in-hand with the direct involvement and strong participation of social organisations and immigrant associations. This approach was reiterated in the *Third Annual Report on Migration and Integration* (COM (2007) 512 final, point 3.1) and the establishment of such a Forum, in which stakeholders working in the field of integration in the EU could exchange experiences and recommendations, was once again flagged.

¹⁵ For more information, see: www.minderhedenforum.be

¹⁶ R. Penninx (2005), “Integration processes of migrants: research findings and policy challenges”, Article presented in the European Population Conference 2005, Council of Europe Conference organised by the European Population Committee.



¹⁷ Third-country nationals can vote, under certain conditions, in Belgium, the Czech Republic, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden. (COM 2007, 512: 17).

¹⁸ Pre-sorting involves the immigrant explaining the purpose of their visit to the One-Stop-Shop and the allocation of a ticket for the specific service required.

¹⁹ See COM 2007, 512: 6 and Common Basic Principle 3.

²⁰ See COM 2007, 512: 6 and SEC 2006, 892: 6.

²¹ See COM 2007, 512: 7.

²² See: SEC 2006, 892: 6.







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