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# INTI Project: One-Stop Shop: A New Answer for Immigrant Integration?

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## Working Document 2

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## 0. Abbreviations

European Union	EU
Germany	DE
Greece	EL
Ireland	IE
Italy	IT
Netherlands	NL
Non-Governmental Organisation	NGO
One-Stop Shop	OSS
Portugal	PT
Spain	ES

## 1. Background and contextualisation

Immigrant integration has been increasingly present in the worldwide debate on international migrations, and therefore integration policies have become an essential component of any migration management system. The Common Agenda for Integration was the European Commission's first response to the recommendation of the European Council to establish a coherent European framework for integration. The Common Agenda 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 carried out so far, aiming to help all EU countries in dealing with various kinds of integration challenges.

Chapter 6 of the "Common Agenda for Integration: Framework for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals in the European Union" (see Table below) deals with access

for immigrants to institutions and services, with a view to facilitating this process. This will contribute to integration by developing a number of instruments that should guarantee accessibility, equal treatment and the provision of coherent information. Putting into practice some of the Common Basic Principles on Integration (CBPs) agreed upon by the Justice and Home Affairs Council in November 2004 ([http://www.migpolgroup.com/multiattachments/3769/DocumentName/Principles\\_to\\_Practice\\_CBP\\_Handbook3.pdf](http://www.migpolgroup.com/multiattachments/3769/DocumentName/Principles_to_Practice_CBP_Handbook3.pdf)), the proposed actions under this heading are set out both at national and EU level.

These actions are linked to the One-Stop-Shop model, in relation to its overall characteristics (stimulating partnerships between public and private institutions in order to promote integrated responses), and its specificities (involving cultural mediators from civil society institutions and developing the intercultural competences of service providers).

This second Working Document of the INTI One-Stop Shop Project therefore seeks to provide a succinct and comprehensive outline of the results and conclusions of the Project, in the context of seeking to fulfil the aims of Chapter 6 of the Common Agenda for Integration in relation to the provision of services to immigrants on an equal and non-discriminatory basis, as a crucial integration objective. In doing so, the Document draws on the six Country Reports produced for the OSS Project, and available on the Project website, [www.oss.inti.acidi.gov.pt](http://www.oss.inti.acidi.gov.pt), covering Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Spain.

**Chapter 6 of the Common Agenda for 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 a critical foundation for better integration’**

National level	EU level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strengthening the capacity of public and private service providers to interact with third-country nationals via intercultural interpretation and translation, mentoring, intermediary services by immigrant communities, ‘one-stop-shop’ information points;</li> <li>- Developing comprehensive information tools, e.g. manuals, websites, registers of staff’s diversity skills;</li> <li>- Building sustainable organisational structures for integration and diversity management and developing modes of co-operation between Government stakeholders, enabling officials to exchange information and pool resources;</li> <li>- Introducing schemes to gather and analyse information about the needs of different categories of third-country nationals at local and regional level through platforms for consultation, exchange of information between stakeholders and surveys of immigrant communities;</li> <li>- Engaging companies in debates on integration and linking governmental programmes with companies’ corporate social responsibility programmes;</li> <li>- Integrating intercultural competence into recruitment and training policies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Monitoring the application of the Directive on third-country nationals who are long-term residents and on equal treatment irrespective of racial or ethnic origin;</li> <li>- Furthering co-operation in implementing Community law in the field of immigration and good practices in the area of integration;</li> <li>- Supporting studies and exchange of best practices;</li> <li>- Promoting the development of transferable intercultural training activities for public officials.</li> </ul>

Source: <http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2005:0389:FIN:EN:DOC>

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## 2. OSS Partners' general considerations

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### 2.1 Services dispersion

Integration services are spread out among various Government Ministries and NGOs (all countries);

- Strong division between Government offices and branches of Government agencies, on the one hand, and NGOs or volunteer organisations on the other (DE, IT);
- Need for a stronger cooperation and coordination among the existing integration service-providers in general (all countries).

### 2.2 Costs

- NGOs provide a wide range of integration services with very limited funds, which renders their resources limited (DE, IE, PT);
- Local Government services such as town councils often also provide integration services on tight budgets (ES);
- The cost, both in financial terms and in terms of time, of integration services is increased by the dispersion of services (all countries).

#### **Cost-saving aspects of the implementation of the One-Stop Shop:**

A One-Stop Shop can ease pressure on mainstream services and provide for better pooling of resources and information between organisations with expertise in the area. Cultural mediators could also help to reduce the State's often high interpretation costs (IE, EL, PT);

### **2.3 Procedures and provision of information:**

- Difficulties in information provision – the need to bridge the information gap between services and immigrant clients (all countries);
- The importance of sharing expertise and best practices between State and non-State services (all countries). Coordination and rapid exchange of information among municipalities in order to enhance experience and communicate ideas for implementing new best practices (EL);
- The need for simplification and acceleration of administrative procedures (all countries) – time-consuming and costly procedures could be ameliorated by the use of Information Technology in public administration, sharing common databases on users, better communication among Government services and the reinforcement of the role of civil society organisations and immigrant associations (EL, ES); simultaneous simplification of access to services and procedures for immigrants through the processing of procedures by telephone or internet (ES).

#### **Quality improvement aspects of the implementation of the One-Stop Shop:**

1. It can contribute to the reduction of bureaucracy and to minimising the difficulties of coordination between different stakeholders (which renders services inefficient and expensive) (IE, EL, PT);
2. The One-Stop Shop could contribute to improving coherence in service provision and reducing waiting times (IE, EL, PT);
3. A holistic, comprehensive model such as the One-Stop Shop contributes to improving efficiency in coordinating different actions and services and simplifies both access and resolution, responding to the intention to group together, in one single public agency, all of the formalities pertaining to one single reference group within the Government Administration (while not focusing specifically on grouping them under one single heading on the basis of the ultimate policy intentions) (ES).

## **2.4 Relationship between the State, Society and Immigrants:**

### **Potential contributions of the One-Stop Shop:**

- Since contradictory and insufficient information can increase immigrants' distrust towards the receiving State and its services, the One-Stop Shop will contribute to minimising this distrust (IE, EL, PT);
- The One-Stop Shop should contribute to the dissemination of a positive message to the receiving society in relation to immigration; and of a positive image of the State to the immigrant population (IE);
- The One-Stop Shop should serve to enhance a climate of cooperation and consultation between all of the stakeholders: Government, immigrants, immigrant-led associations, NGOs, employers, trade unions and the public (IE, EL, PT).



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### **3. Identified needs to be taken into consideration for the implementation of a One-Stop Shop**

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- Need to integrate information and advisory services regarding the different procedures that immigrants need to undergo for a range of issues (permits, insurance, etc) (EL);
- Need to integrate the health sector (current shortcomings in this field) (EL);
- Need for specific advice to immigrants on housing and childcare (IE);
- Information should be provided in many languages - need to identify the most important languages (IE, EL, ES and PT);
- Need for the use of Information Technology for the de-bureaucratisation of procedures (EL, ES); in this context, it would be necessary to ensure that immigrants are computer-literate to a sufficient degree, by for example by including Information Technology and internet sessions in integration training/plans (ES);
- Need for the decentralisation of immigrant services through local branches (EL, IT);
- Need to take into account that immigrant integration mainly takes place at a local level (towns and neighbourhoods where newcomers settle and interact with the receiving population), and that multiple services supporting integration exist in regional and local contexts, often with limited resources (PT, ES);
- Provide services on methods of redress against racism (IE).

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#### **4. Difficulties and worries concerning the implementation of a One-Stop Shop**

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- Obtaining funding for its implementation (EL, IT);
- Highly diversified structure of Governmental and non-Governmental immigration and integration organisations (all countries) – mistrust between Government and immigrant organisations/NGOs (DE);
- Competing interests; difficulty in relinquishing part of each Department's and agency's responsibilities (DE, IT);
- Lack of flexibility among Government institutions (EL);
- More useful to newcomers – inadequacy of such an administrative structure for long-term immigrants' needs (DE); long-term residents should be able to use general public services (ES);
- The inexistence of a single Government authority that deals with immigration and integration and the fragmentation of responsibility within public administration at national level makes it difficult to combine the different sectors and address all procedures related to immigrants at a single point – in the light of past experiences this model seems difficult to implement (IT). It is difficult to bring together officials from different areas (IT, PT – at an early stage); the decentralised State in the autonomous regions makes the coordination of services more difficult (ES);
- There is a fragmentation of nationalities among immigrants in the country and their distribution throughout the territory is widespread (different contexts of proportions of immigrants around the country), in addition to a high total immigrant population (IT, ES);
- Accessibility - one or two central offices is not the proper response in terms of providing immigrants with easy access, since different cities have different levels of accessibility and transportation infrastructure (IT);

- It may prove problematic to set up a One-Stop Shop for immigrants alone. A physical One-stop Shop might be difficult to establish (IE, IT);
- Risk that positive discrimination of immigrants compared to the native community may bring about rejection of the idea by the general population (ES);
- Risk that the approach could be seen as considering immigrants as a needy group, deprived or at risk of social exclusion, therefore not contributing to an active, independent and efficient integration process (ES).

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## 5. Suggestions and recommendations for the implementation of a One-Stop Shop

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- Handover of responsibilities regarding residence permits from the police to the town/city council - this reform would only be possible through a legislative change and the reorganisation of agencies, including the provision of adequate resources and employee training (IT);
- Make clear, through written and enforced legislation, the duties and responsibilities of the different sectors of Government, in order to reduce the spread of erroneous or partial information and to prevent the exercise of discretionary power at local level (IT);
- At a first stage, the OSS could have the role of intermediary in immigrants' access to services, instead of providing all services on the same premises – initial implementation on a pilot basis of *integrated information and advisory services* (EL);
- Develop some already existing agencies (namely local Government agencies) towards a One-Stop Shop as a first step, for example, the Foreigners Service Centre in Athens; the Citizens Information Centres in Ireland; the Foreigners Office in Berlin; and the Regional Centre on Discrimination in Emilia Romagna in Italy, the latter of which coordinates a network of Government and third sector offices (EL, DE, IE, IT). The Office of the Minister for Integration in Ireland and the Central Service in Italy established by the Ministry of the Interior and working with local authorities to provide support to the municipalities in order to bring together all integration measures, are examples of this principle applied to national-level agencies.
- Following the same approach, the importance of adding new resources to already existing services – where the cultural mediator plays an important role – is also highlighted, for example the Integral Reception Programme or Integrated

Immigration Offices. General public services should also adapt to the specificities of a multicultural population (ES);

- The creation of further OSSs in different regions, in order to decentralise services, with economic support to local authorities aiming to acquire the necessary infrastructure in material and human resources (EL); in particular rural or geographically isolated areas (ES);
- Creation of the OSS in a central accessible location (IE);
- Involve local authorities in the establishment of an OSS and in the extension of services to local areas (network of local centres) (IE);
- The services of the One-Stop Shop should be available to both EU and non-EU immigrants (IE);
- Use technology to improve a strong virtual connection and cooperation between different offices, as well as a user-friendly interface between immigrants and the Government – “multilingual e-one-stop-shop (*portal*)” / “virtual integration desk” (IE, IT). In Italy, the “*virtual integration desk*” would provide reliable information by email or websites in various areas: work, health, school and social housing at a first stage. It would then also become an operative desk at a second stage, able to start the first phase of administrative procedures (IT);
- Use of a common database by integration services (EL, ES);
- Importance of partnerships with NGOs and use of cultural mediators or translators, or trained cultural mediators to provide ongoing training on cultural competence to service providers (EL, IE, ES, PT); Importance of agreeing on a definition of the term “Intercultural Public Service” – cultural mediators as merely service providers or with an active participation in the design of services and the training of civil servants (ES);
- Use already existing expertise in terms of human resources, for example, there are graduates from the Department of Migration Policy of the National School of Local Government (NSLG) in Greece who are specialised in migration issues

and could offer their expertise, and there are qualified Intercultural Mediators in Spain (EL, ES);

- Create a standardised professional profile of cultural mediators (ES);
- Create a central budget for the activities of immigrant organisations (DE);
- Use European Fund for the integration of third-country nationals for the period 2007-2013 for OSS implementation (experimental project) (IT).