A GUIDE TO INCLUSIVE COWORKING SPACES

Guidelines for creating and strengthening "Inclusive Coworking Spaces" (ICS)

RESOURCES ON THE MOVE (RES-MOVE)

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RES-MOVE PROJECT CONSORTIUM

Academy of Entrepreneurship - AKEP (EL)

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Refugees Welcome Italia - RWI (IT)

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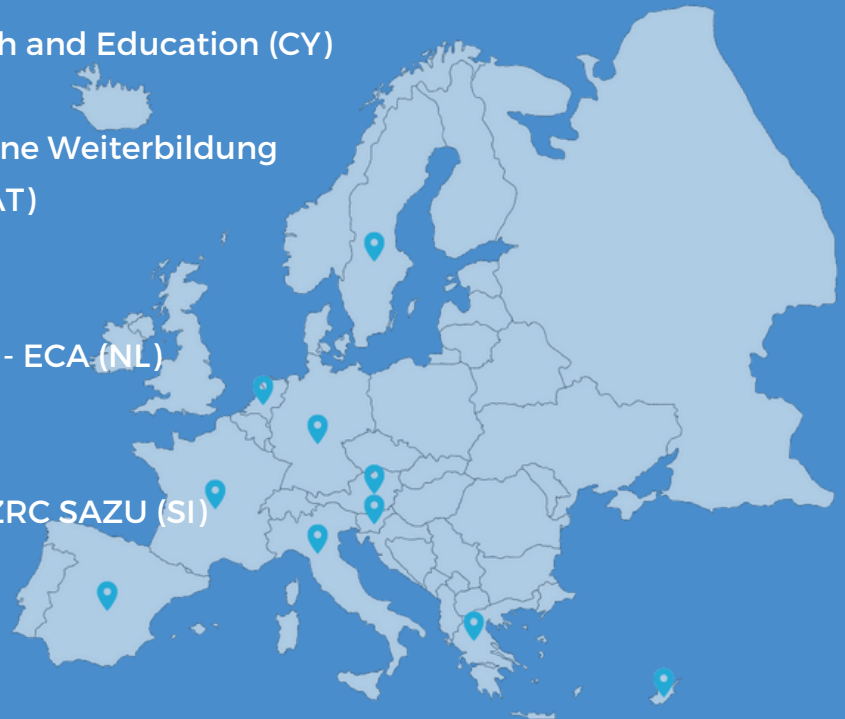und Personaltraining GmbH (AT)

Migrafrica (DE)

Stichting Netwerkpro (NL)

European Coworkin Assembly - ECA (NL)

PLACE Network (FR)

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All materials can be found on the project web page www.resmove.eu

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FOREWORD

The RES-MOVE project seeks to unlock the potential of coworking and collaborative spaces as hubs for the inclusion of migrant communities. Funded by the EU Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund (AMIF), this initiative addresses the growing phenomenon of collaborative spaces—coworking hubs, fab-labs, maker spaces, and similar environments—which are increasingly recognised as innovative platforms for fostering social and economic integration. It includes 13 organisations and institutions across 10 EU countries.

Migrant inclusion is a complex challenge. Migrants often face significant barriers such as language limitations, cultural differences, and restricted access to professional networks, which can hinder their integration into local economies and communities. Collaborative spaces, however, offer a unique opportunity to mitigate these obstacles. They provide accessible pathways for labour inclusion, particularly for target groups such as freelancers, migrants with craft skills, start-uppers, and knowledge workers, including researchers, teachers, and cultural mediators. These environments are not only an expression of social responsibility but also a means to harness the diverse talents and perspectives migrants bring to European communities.

These guidelines are rooted in comprehensive research conducted throughout the RES-MOVE project. The potential of these spaces as a conduit to support migrants and marginalised groups, including women and LGBTQ+ communities was first explored with a desk study titled "Collaborative and Coworking Spaces: A Perspective on Inclusivity". The subsequent field research, implemented across 11 territories in Europe, provided valuable insights through interviews with migrants and coworking space representatives. It aimed to understand perceptions of inclusivity, identify challenges, and uncover opportunities for collaboration between these communities and collaborative and coworking spaces (CWCS).

The findings from this research inform the guidelines, which are designed for stakeholders across Europe—from local authorities and policymakers to coworking space operators and community organizations. The aim is to provide actionable strategies that promote inclusivity, create equitable opportunities, and foster innovative pathways to social and economic integration.

Collaboration knows no boundaries.
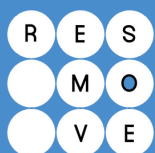
WHAT IS INCLUSION?

In practical terms, inclusion means breaking down barriers that prevent participation, addressing inequalities, and actively creating opportunities for underrepresented groups. It's about recognizing and valuing every individual's unique contributions and ensuring they feel seen, heard, and respected. For marginalized groups, particularly migrant women, inclusion requires targeted efforts to address unique challenges. Migrant women often face additional obstacles to integration compared to their male counterparts, including higher risks of being overqualified for the jobs they obtain.

Inclusion is more than just a buzzword—it's a fundamental principle that drives progress, innovation, and harmony in today's interconnected world. At its core, inclusion ensures that every individual, regardless of their background, abilities, or circumstances, has a voice, a place, and an opportunity to thrive. Inclusion goes beyond compliance or checking a box. It's a strategic advantage that fuels innovation, enhances decision-making, and drives growth.

**PRACTICAL INCLUSION MEANS MEASURABLE OUTCOMES**
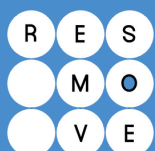
What is an "inclusive collaborative and coworking space"?

Over the years, the coworking movement has surpassed its initial goal of providing flexible office-sharing options. With the rise of hackerspaces, makerspaces, and fab labs, the concept of shared spaces for collaboration and skill exchange has evolved, leading to the addition of "collaborative" alongside the traditional "coworking" label. As a result of new forms of cooperation and space-sharing, coworking and collaborative spaces (CWCS) have become vibrant hubs of community and innovation.

Rooted in the idea of shared space and collective work, CWCS exemplify community-building at its best. For some, expanding the boundaries of their communities and fostering social innovation is not just an outcome but a core mission. In these cases, we can speak of inclusive CWCS—workspaces that actively promote diversity, accessibility, and belonging. These spaces foster equity through inclusive design, respectful collaboration, and anti-discrimination policies, providing supportive environments for diverse populations, including marginalized communities.

CWCS Vocabulary:

- **Traditional Coworking Spaces** – Shared offices with desks, meeting rooms, and event spaces, sometimes part of global networks.
- **Makerspaces & Fab Labs** – Creative hubs in schools, libraries, or private spaces, offering tools for workshops and hands-on projects.
- **Social Innovation and Community Spaces** – Spaces often equipped with cafes and meeting areas, supporting specific social groups such as migrants, LGBTQ+ communities, or ethnic minorities.
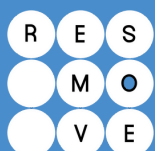
GUIDELINES FOR INCLUSIVE COWORKING ENHANCEMENT OR CREATION

1.) Create INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

A sense of inclusion begins with the very first interaction between potential users and CWCS employees, volunteers, or members. To establish your CWCS as a welcoming space for all—regardless of background—it is essential that those representing the organization understand the importance of cultural sensitivity and embracing diversity.

One key aspect of fostering inclusivity is avoiding labels such as "refugee" or "migrant" and instead recognizing new potential members as equals, valuing their unique experiences and perspectives. This mindset can be cultivated through training sessions, workshops, and open dialogues that encourage the sharing of experiences and mutual understanding.

2.) Create SAFE and INCLUSIVE SPACES

A truly inclusive CWCS should acknowledge and cater to the diverse needs of its members. To foster a welcoming family environment, consider establishing child-friendly spaces, like playgrounds, and offering childcare during workshops. The needs of migrant women are particularly urgent, as they encounter the greatest barriers to employment compared to other migrant groups in the EU.

While collaboration and teamwork are fundamental to CWCS, providing quiet areas for individual work is just as vital.

In promoting inclusivity, it's important to visibly demonstrate your commitment. Showcasing inclusive signs and stickers—such as "Athens for All"—can effectively communicate a message of openness and belonging. To further bolster a sense of inclusivity, design your CWCS with vibrant colors and open spaces that promote interaction while ensuring a warm and welcoming atmosphere.

3.) Develop RECOGNITION OF SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, QUALIFICATIONS and IDEAS

Many migrants work in undervalued positions. To foster an inclusive society, it is essential to implement an assessment that acknowledges both formal and informal skills.

Navigating assessment and employment processes can be challenging due to language barriers. Providing multilingual resources can help clarify these processes.

Inclusion is not a one-off effort. Moving beyond isolated, sporadic initiatives, CWCS should promote continuous engagement. Workshops, professional development sessions, and mentoring programmes can assist migrants in aligning their skills with current market demands. CWCS can even provide informal certificates or, if possible, formal certificates for the completion of their workshops and programmes, offering valuable recognition of skills.

True inclusivity extends beyond one-off assessments. Skills recognition develops over time through participation in local initiatives, volunteering, and professional networks. Encouraging migrants to contribute their expertise strengthens both their professional standing and the community as a whole.
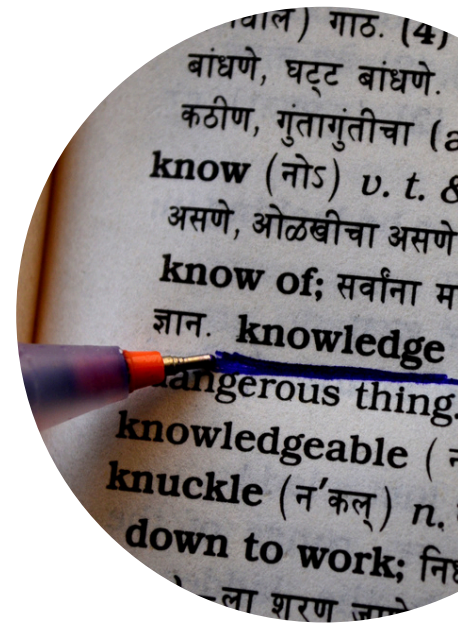
4.) Develop INCLUSIVE MENTORSHIP PROGRAMMES

Inclusive mentorship programmes play a crucial role in empowering migrants. A comprehensive programme can address various needs through diverse forms of language training, vocational training, and maker workshops, ensuring participants acquire both practical and technical skills. Core components of inclusive mentorship include:

- Introductory Employment Workshops: Covering language learning, CV writing, interview techniques, and employment law to assist migrants in navigating the job market.
- Peer-to-Peer Mentorship & Buddy Systems: Offering skill-based support and holistic programmes, particularly for migrant women balancing work and family responsibilities.
- Professional Inclusion: Going beyond surface-level assistance by engaging industry professionals who provide technical expertise, career guidance, and networking opportunities.

5.) Create a DIALOGUE with RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS

To enhance inclusive practices, it is essential to create or join stakeholder groups that bring together a diverse range of actors. These networks play a crucial role in fostering collaboration, exchanging knowledge, and creating opportunities for individuals, particularly in the context of migration.

Strong partnerships between NGOs, state and local authorities, individuals, and potential employers are key to building effective support systems. By working together, these stakeholders can develop policies and initiatives that promote social and economic inclusion.

Advocacy efforts should also be a priority, encouraging local authorities to implement and support integration policies that create a more inclusive society. Public events and open discussions are vital in raising awareness and fostering social cohesion. Creating spaces for dialogue and engagement allows for greater understanding and participation, ultimately strengthening inclusive communities.

6.) Develop STRATEGIC TRAINING for MIGRANT COWORKERS

Develop strategic training programmes for migrant coworkers, ensuring they are actively engaged not just as service users but as co-creators of the coworking community. Training should equip migrants with the skills, knowledge, and opportunities to participate fully, fostering inclusion and collaboration within the CWCS.

Building an inclusive CWCS also means involving migrants as equal members in organizing and preparing activities within the space. Providing training in organizational and leadership tasks for individuals with migrant backgrounds will enhance the overall potential and impact of your CWCS in your locality.

7.) Create EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

To foster inclusivity, it is essential to create equal opportunities for all members within the coworking community. This can be achieved by ensuring equitable access to workspace resources, networking events, training sessions, and pitching opportunities.

Introductions and community events are vital in welcoming new members, encouraging engagement, and strengthening connections. Flexible pricing models and a voucher system can help make coworking spaces more accessible to diverse individuals, including migrants and those with limited financial means. Additionally, securing project funding can support initiatives that promote collaboration, skill development, and long-term sustainability within the community.

8.) Promote DIVERSE HIRING PRACTICES

Promote diverse hiring practices by collaborating with stakeholder groups, including both public and private entities. Actively hiring employees from migrant backgrounds enhances representation, fosters inclusion, and strengthens workplace diversity.

When engaging migrants in your CWCS training and networks, ensure you go beyond one-time interactions. Promoting long-term migrant employment within your CWCS or stakeholder networks guarantees meaningful participation and integration within the local community.

HOW CAN RES-MOVE HELP?

The RES-MOVE project is dedicated to enhancing migrant inclusion and strengthening stakeholder collaboration through the support of key initiatives:

- Providing desk and field research on inclusive CWCS and ensuring it is publicly accessible.
- Building stronger local networks by connecting stakeholders and promoting cooperation.
- Providing training for CWCS managers in diversity, intercultural communication, and equitable community engagement.
- Expanding inclusive services such as mentorship programmes, language support, professional training, and cultural orientation.
- Investing in CWCS staff training focused on diversity, inclusion, anti-racism, intercultural communication, and conflict resolution.
- Enhancing infrastructure and resources to improve and scale existing activities.
- Advocating for sustainable policy-level funding to support migrant inclusion efforts.
- Leveraging digital solutions to establish a network of inclusive CWCS, or "Inclusive Coworking Spaces" - ICS.

How to join the RES-MOVE initiative as a CWCS?

Coworking spaces aiming to enhance their inclusive practices can engage in RES-MOVE activities and collaborate with local partner organisations. If you manage a coworking space, we encourage you to apply for our call supporting local pilot initiatives for migrant inclusion in these environments. Participation in a pilot initiative involves signing the Development Agreement, which grants access to ongoing support for improving inclusion practices during the pilot phase and beyond. By implementing your pilot ideas, your coworking space may establish itself as a model of good practice and social innovation.

As part of the project activities, RES-MOVE will also create a Transnational Network of Inclusive Coworking Spaces, allowing coworking managers, NGOs, and local institutions to develop international collaborative relationships.

RES-MOVE promotes inclusive coworking spaces by providing essential resources, training, and policy support. By joining the initiative, your coworking space can become part of a valuable network, receive tailored assistance, and contribute to a broader movement toward inclusion. Together, we can build a more connected and equitable coworking ecosystem across Europe.

Past publications of the RES-MOVE partnership are publicly available on the offical RES-MOVE website.

Desk research report

Collaborative Spaces: A Perspective on Inclusivity

Field research report

Final Report for Field Research Survey Results

Academy of Entrepreneurship

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Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale CeSPI ETS

EUROPEAN COWORKING ASSEMBLY

GLOCAL FACTORY

Malmö Ideella
Strengthen, Develop & Include

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https://www.resmove.eu

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