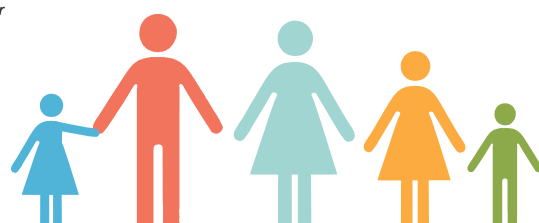




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GUIDELINE TO ACTIN SOLIDARITY CAFÉS



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Introduction



1.1 Purpose and Scope of the ACTIN Solidarity Cafes Guidebook

The ACTIN Solidarity Cafés Guidebook serves as a comprehensive resource designed to foster language acquisition, community integration and cultural exchange through the establishment and operation of ACTIN Solidarity Café.

But First, What Is A Solidarity Café In The Context Of Actin?

There is comfort in a cup of tea or coffee or a traditional drink. We wrap our hands around that cup, mug or glass, and sometimes we breathe a little easier in that moment. A Solidarity Café In the Context of ACTIN is a space where the simple act of sharing a beverage becomes a powerful symbol of community and support. Here, individuals from diverse backgrounds — locals, migrants, and refugees alike — come together in a welcoming environment to share their stories, cultures, and experiences. And while doing that, they learn from each other and build cohesive communities.

Purpose of the Guidebook

- Provide a blueprint for setting up an ACTIN Solidarity Café that acts as a language, cultural and social inclusion integration hub, offering opportunities for migrants, refugees and local residents of all ages to interact in a friendly, informal setting.

Support Language Learning and Practice

- Create environments conducive to informal language practice, helping non-native speakers improve their language skills through regular, real-world use.

Promote Cultural Exchange

- Use the universal language of a refreshment and the casual ambience of a cafe to encourage the sharing of diverse cultural heritages, fostering mutual understanding and respect.

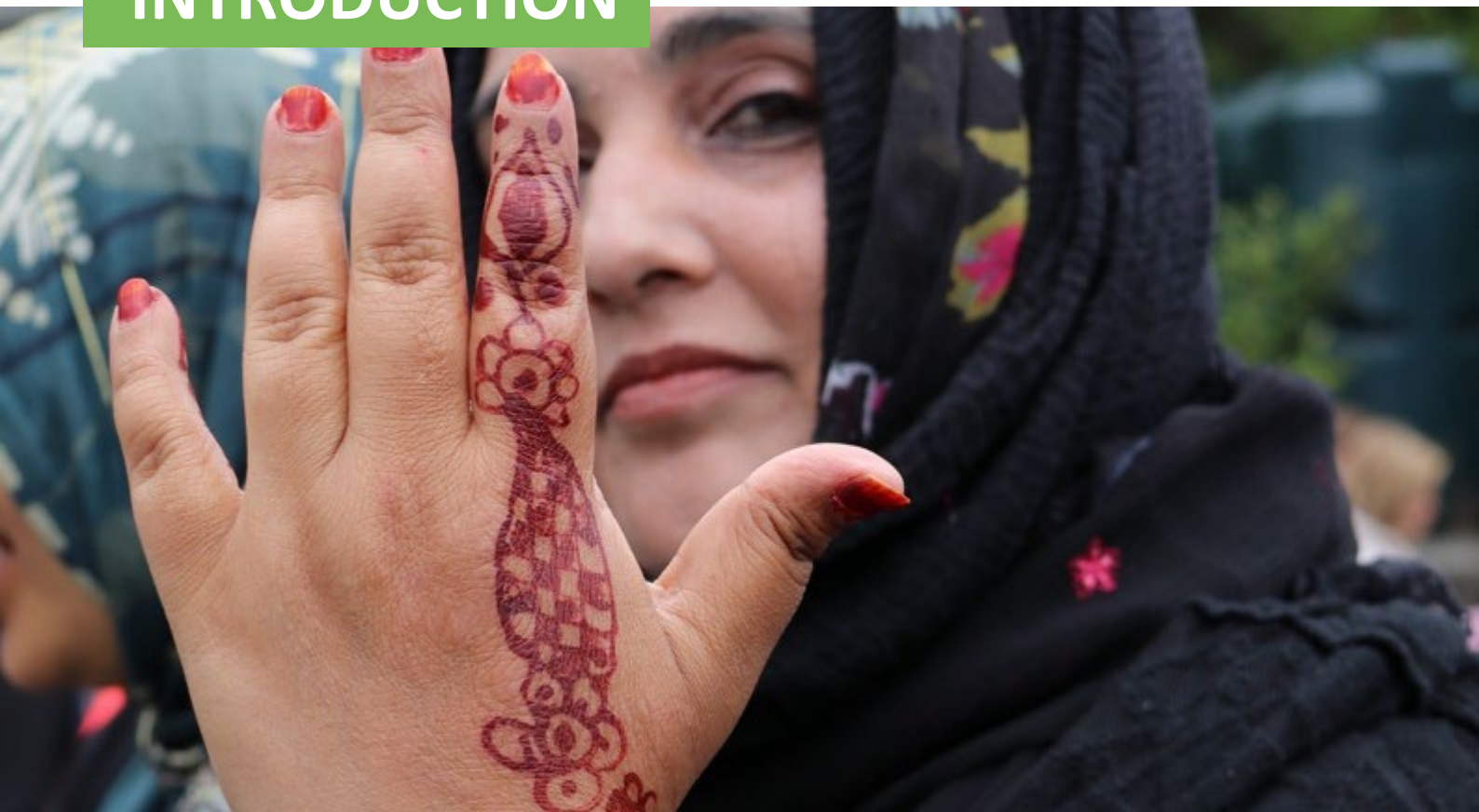
Assist in Transition

- Some cafés may be interested in assisting migrants and refugees (if permitted) in gaining employment or volunteer opportunities within the community, providing them with valuable local work experience and skills.

Enhance Social Cohesion

- Ultimately, build stronger, more connected communities by facilitating regular interactions among individuals from various backgrounds, reducing isolation and increasing social networks.

INTRODUCTION



1.2 Overview of the ACTIN Project

A significant amount of discussion is ongoing across the EU regarding immigration. Concerns, misperceptions, and a general lack of information have fostered a climate of uncertainty about extending support, services, or a welcoming hand to many groups of newcomers.

The **ACTIN** project aims to support and reinforce the integration and inclusion of migrant and refugee children and adolescents in education and, by extension, in European society as a whole. As a project funded under the EU's AMIF programme, ACTIN will achieve this by bringing together expertise from seven European countries and also by consolidating connections between Universities and NGOs involved in migration and education.

ACTIN aspires to approach migrant education holistically and to empower migrant young learners but also the relevant stakeholders, i.e., educators, migrant parents etc., by employing a series of activities in formal and informal educational settings.

ACTIN aspires to a holistic approach

01 IN SCHOOL

ACTIN specialist team is developing formal education approaches and activities that aim to empower migrant and refugee young learners and relevant stakeholders in crucial domains such as vocabulary and grammar learning, language-and-content learning, and cultural awareness in formal educational settings. Our approach draws from cutting-edge language learning activities, such as pedagogical translanguaging, focus on form, language-and-content learning activities, and socio-cultural facilitative activities. The activities use evidence-based and innovative methods and take into consideration learners' individual variability to promote agentivity, critical thinking, inductive learning and analytical skills. ACTIN is also developing an online open-access resource for teaching staff and other professionals as well as for students who want to practice their languages.

02 IN COMMUNITIES

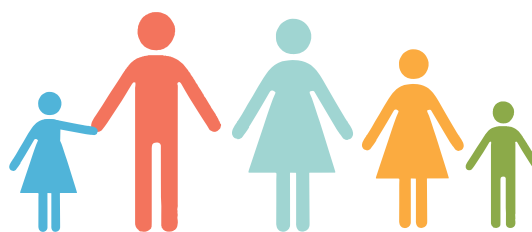
From a non-formal education perspective, ACTIN, led by a team of experienced NGOs are developing three key resources and guidelines to their adoption:

1. The subject of this Guide, ACTIN SOLIDARITY CAFES
2. the ACTIN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES
3. ACTIN BUDDY SCHEME



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1.3 The Role + Expected Outcome of Solidarity Cafés in ACTIN

Role of Solidarity Cafés

The role of Solidarity Cafés in the ACTIN Project is powerful, serving as one of the three deliverables focused on **non-formal activities** designed for the ACTIN framework to address the complex needs of migrants and refugees through informal yet structured engagements. On the surface, our ACTIN Solidarity Cafés will serve as essential platforms to foster community engagement, enhance language learning, and promote social and cultural integration, but these cafes in five partner countries, Greece, Ireland, Poland, Germany and France, will be offering access to informal language learning environments and creating more inclusive communities.

Expected Outcomes for Target Groups and Stakeholders

Each ACTIN Solidarity Café will involve a strategic coalition of NGOs, universities, regional organisations, migrant communities, and local residents. Each has a vital role to play, and each will benefit in different ways from their involvement.

Local Outcomes for Migrants and Refugees	EU wide Outcomes
Migrants and refugees participating in the Solidarity Cafés gain direct access to safe, supportive spaces where they can practise languages, learn about local customs, and integrate more comfortably into their new environments. These interactions enhance their social networks and provide practical support as they navigate their new community.	Solidarity Cafés deliver EU learning as a model for successful integration initiatives, demonstrating the benefits of linguistic advancement, cultural diversity and the positive impacts of active social inclusion. The café outcomes will extend beyond immediate locales to foster a pan-European ethos of multicultural acceptance and cooperation.
Local Outcomes for Local NGOs and Community Organisations	EU wide Outcomes
Local NGOs and community organisations directly benefit from enhanced capacities in managing diverse groups and implementing culturally sensitive integration strategies. They also gain increased visibility and credibility within their communities, which can lead to more local support and resources.	By actively participating in cafés as community-centric initiatives, these organisations can showcase effective, culturally sensitive integration strategies, setting benchmarks for best practices that can be adopted EU-wide
Local Outcomes for Educational Institutions	EU wide Outcomes
Universities and educational institutions involved in the cafés enrich their research and curriculum with real-world data on integration and multicultural interaction. This involvement also provides students and faculty with hands-on opportunities for study and community engagement. See our University of Geneva example for inspiration.	The academic contributions from these institutions inform broader educational strategies and policies across the EU, enhancing the quality of education related to migration and cultural studies. This leads to a more informed and comprehensive educational approach to understanding and facilitating migration across Europe.
Local Outcomes for Local and Regional Governments	EU wide Outcome
Governments at local and regional levels see improved community cohesion and reduced social tensions as a result of effective integration facilitated by the Solidarity Cafés. They also benefit from the empirical data and successful models developed, which can inform local policy and funding decisions.	The success of these integration models can influence national and EU-level policies, providing governments with proven strategies to enhance migrant integration and community harmony. This can lead to more effective and humane migration policies across the EU.

1.4 The Ethos and Values We Adopt

Drawing inspiration from the impactful work of our ACTIN project partner **SolidarityNow** ([SolidarityNow](#)) in Greece, which works to empower refugees and vulnerable populations, we have refined and contextualized the ethos and values of the ACTIN Solidarity Café. Solidarity Now is effective in promoting integration, supporting individual rights, and providing critical services through community centres and solidarity initiatives. By adapting some of their approaches, we can enhance the operational framework and ethical grounding of the ACTIN Solidarity Café.

01

Inclusivity

Universal Welcome: Our café is a sanctuary for all, especially migrants and refugees seeking community. We commit to creating a space where every individual, regardless of their background, can feel accepted and valued.

Accessibility: We ensure that our café and its activities are accessible to people of all backgrounds and abilities, providing the necessary accommodations to foster participation and engagement.

02

Human Rights and Dignity

Equal Rights for All: Inspired by Solidarity Now's commitment to human rights, our ACTIN Solidarity Café emphasizes the importance of treating every individual with dignity and respect, ensuring that all participants, especially the most vulnerable, have access to the same quality of services and opportunities.

Protection and Safety: We ensure a safe and protective environment for everyone, drawing on practices that safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees and other marginalised groups.

03

Comprehensive Support Systems

Holistic Services: Following the example set by SolidarityNow, our café offers social interaction, but vitally, it serves as a gateway to a range of support services, including legal aid, healthcare information, employability services, and educational programmes.

Mental Health Focus: Through partnership, we will incorporate mental health support into our offerings, recognizing the psychological strains often faced by migrants and refugees, and providing access to counselling and therapeutic activities.

04

Community and Solidarity

Fostering Local Integration: Like SolidarityNow, which works extensively with local communities to foster acceptance and integration, our ACTIN Solidarity Café promotes activities that bring locals and newcomers together, facilitating mutual understanding and shared experiences.

Volunteerism and Active Participation: We encourage active community participation, involving locals and migrants alike in the running of the café and decision-making processes, strengthening the sense of ownership and community solidarity.

Promoting Independence: In line with SolidarityNow's initiatives that promote economic self-sufficiency, our café provides training and employment opportunities for refugees and migrants, helping them build new careers and integrate economically into the community.

Environmental Responsibility: We commit to sustainable practices, minimizing our environmental impact and teaching sustainable habits through workshops and daily café operations.

1.5 Learnings from others and academia

To visualise what a Soliditary Café looks like, let's share some inspiring examples ...

Le Café des Parents, France



The Café des Parents, introduced in the 1990s, offers a safe, non-stigmatising setting where parents can share their experiences and receive support from professionals on a range of educational issues.

This practice retraces the emergence of the 'Café des Parents', drawing on the traditions of bistros as places for socialising and public debate. Historically, cafés were places where social mixing and intellectual exchange developed. L'École des Parents, founded in 1929, has evolved to offer parents a place to exchange ideas and receive educational support.

Following is a presentation of five Cafés des Parents initiatives in regions of France. The aim of these spaces is to provide a place where parents, grandparents or future parents can talk freely in a variety of contexts (priority neighbourhoods, single-parent families, parents of teenagers, etc.). Each initiative is based on local needs, and meetings are often run by volunteers and professionals (psychologists, educators, and psychiatrists).

The topics covered range from parenting issues to practical social challenges, with the main aim of creating links and support between participants.

- In **Albi**, the Cafés focus on the needs of isolated mothers and immigrant families. They are held in a variety of locations (schools, associations).
- In **Olivet**, the Grandparents' Café supports grandparents, who are often involved in the education of their grandchildren.
- In **Granville**, the 'Devenir Parent' Café helps new parents to share their experiences.
- In **Bourges**, the Café des parents d'adolescents supports parents in this complex phase of life.
- In **Saint-Étienne**, the Café, taking place in a school, helps to strengthen the parent-school partnership.

A lesson learned by this practice are the social benefits of Parents' Cafés, which provide a forum for parents to discuss and share their experiences in a caring and confidential setting. These cafés encourage the creation of social links, the strengthening of self-confidence and solidarity between participants. Parents and professionals are seen as 'co-seekers' in resolving educational or personal problems. They also aim to fight isolation, overcome parenting difficulties and strengthen social cohesion. To guarantee anonymity and the well-being of all, the association (EFE) has created a charter that must be signed by all partners.

Reference : Marcelli, D., Lanchon, A. (2019) Le Café des parents, l'Intelligence du collectif, L'école des Parents, Eres

For more detailed insights, you can read the full publication on

[Les cafés des parents - L'intelligence du collectif L'intelligence du collectif - broché - Daniel Marcelli, Anne Lanchon - Achat Livre ou ebook | fnac](#)

Learnings from others and academia

ZEIK | ZBBS GERMANY

Project: The Opening of the Family

Through cultural and labour market-related projects, ZBBS pursues two goals:

1. the intercultural opening of the German majority society towards immigrants, and enriching the diversity of cultures in Germany
2. Help refugees and migrants increase their chances of responsibly shaping their lives and coping with the demands that society, work, and everyday life place on them.

"I have been living in Germany with my family for some time now and I still have some questions. Sometimes I feel left alone with them. Do you feel the same way?"

The Opening of the Family project invites families to discuss various topics that concern them. In separate women's and men's groups, they offer native-language workshops (in Arabic, Dari/Farsi, and Tigrinya) on various topics. Together with other families, they can, for example, exchange ideas about social coexistence, the role as parents, and dealing with new ideas from their children. Together, they develop ways that best suit the different families. In the end, everyone should be able to answer: "Which way of being together feels good for you?"

For many discussions, experts on various topics are invited to share their experiences and answer questions. Of course, participants can also bring up topics and discuss them. Gradually – and of course, taking into account the needs of the participants – these offerings are to be expanded to other topics.

Goal of the Project:

Children and teenagers often have to automatically deal with new structures and requirements at them in kindergarten or school, and thus sometimes live "between worlds" or run into difficulties with their family. The goal of this project is to empower parents in a way that they can move confidently in their new social and societal environment and find a way together with their children to meet the challenges they face as a family. The aim is also to open families to participation in social life and democratic discourse, to educate them about their rights and duties, and to convey to them a diverse society as positive and enriching.

As many families as possible are to be reached through the multi-year project to educate them about German society with its diverse lifestyles and to alleviate their fears of our society. People who do not have children are also warmly invited to participate.

Project Location:

The project takes place in Kiel-Gaarden. Childcare is available on site.

FIND OUT MORE: [ZEIK – Zentrum für Empowerment und Interkulturelle Kreativität \(zeik-kiel.de\)](https://zeik-kiel.de)

Learnings from others and academia

In the context of Buddy Schemes delivered through Solidarity Cafés, we share information of another German study, **Buddy Schemes between Refugees and Volunteers in Germany: Transformative Potential in an Unequal Relationship?**

The study explains that since 2016, many German citizens have participated in so-called ‘buddy schemes’ in which volunteers provide personalised support to refugees to help them build their new lives in Germany. These relationships are characterised by ethnic, gender, and age differences between the two parties. This article looks at buddy schemes from the perspective of both volunteers and refugees and investigates whether their relationships open up spaces for transformative citizenship practices, or rather reinforce exclusionary discourses.

Drawing on feminist theories of care, the article describes how volunteers and refugees attach meaning to their activities and roles in the relationship. On the one hand, values attached to caring relationships, such as emotional closeness, trust, and respect, contribute to migrants’ heightened sense of self-esteem and autonomy and foster volunteers’ sense of responsibility for fighting against inequality.

On the other hand, both parties enter into particular logics of care that potentially reinforce power hierarchies between them. These ambiguous dynamics influence the possibility of transformative citizenship practices on both sides. While some volunteers and refugees develop and take a critical stance on restrictive migration policies in their relationships with others, others reinforce their exclusionist viewpoints on who deserves to be helped and by whom.

Reference: Stock, I. (2019). *Social Inclusion*, 7(2), 128-138.

For more detailed insights, you can read the full publication on
<https://www.cogitatiopress.com/socialinclusion/article/view/2041>



Learnings from others and academia

FEINAMC FEINAMC – Foster Education Inclusion of Newly Arrived Migrant Children

The FEINAMC project, funded under the ERASMUS+ Programme focused on implementing two key initiatives, the "Prior Learning Assessment Tool" and the "Peer Mentoring Programme," to improve the inclusion of newly arrived migrant children in formal educational systems across several European countries, including Austria, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, and Spain. The results and outcomes are shared:

Implementation

- Peer mentoring programme: In the 2021/2022 school year, the programme was implemented in 20 schools across the five partner countries, directly involving 212 students (104 pairs of mentors and mentees) and their teachers.
- International exchange seminar: An event was held in Palermo in May 2022, which included participants from the programme, facilitating further exchange and feedback.

Schools Involved

Austria: Four schools in Vienna.

Cyprus: Three schools in various cities.

Greece: Six schools in Thessaloniki.

Italy: Four schools in Palermo and Bologna.

Spain: Three schools in different locations.

Programme goals

- The project aims to scale successful practices from prior projects to a broader European context, adapting them to different educational systems and cultures.
- The initiative seeks to facilitate the inclusion of migrant children and enrich the educational experience for all students by broadening cultural understanding and cooperation.

Feedback and impact

- Feedback from teachers and students who participated in the pilot phase was instrumental in refining the guidelines for broader application across European schools.
- The guidelines aim to help educators across Europe understand and implement the Peer Mentoring Programme in their schools to enhance the inclusion of migrant children.

Challenges and Solutions

- Challenges in integrating migrant children into education systems include appropriate grade placement, language barriers, insufficient learning support, and the need for teacher training on diversity and inclusion.
- The project addresses these challenges by promoting mentoring programmes, supporting local language acquisition, and recognizing prior learning to smooth the educational journey for migrant children.

Learnings from others and academia

Mentoring programme specifics

- Structure and Implementation: The programme involves the creation of mentor-mentee pairs, where mentors are more experienced students (either migrants or natives) who help newly arrived migrant students adapt to the new educational and cultural environment.
- Intercultural and social benefits
- The mentoring relationship fosters social and emotional skills, reduces anxiety, and enhances self-confidence among mentees.
- Mentors gain personal fulfilment and develop key skills such as leadership, communication, and empathy.

While a different channels (schools instead of community), there is learning to be gleaned from

How schools are integrating new migrant pupils and their families publication which explains the different strategies for welcoming and including migrant children and parents in schools in the UK.

It shares various peer education and mentoring programs used to support integration and improve the school climate. Examples include

- peer mentoring for migrant students (Older students with migrant backgrounds support younger peers, improving social integration and academic progress),
- buddy schemes to welcome new arrivals (One-on-one peer support for new students, helping them adjust to school life),
- young interpreter/Language Ambassador programs (students help peers and parents with translation, benefiting both migrants and non-migrants),
- the Circle of Friends method for building peer support networks (A group of students provides emotional and social support to peers facing difficulties), and
- peer mediation to address social challenges (Trained pupils help resolve conflicts or bullying incidents).

The evaluations highlight positive impacts, such as increased social cohesion, confidence, social integration and friendship development for both migrant and native pupils.

Reference : Manzoni, C., Rolfe, H. (2019) How schools are integrating new migrant pupils and their families, National Institute of Economic and Social Research.

Learnings from others and academia

Dyadic relations between refugees and volunteers: Support exchange and reciprocity experienced in buddy projects in Flanders

This article examines how buddy projects facilitate integration through one-on-one relationships between refugees and local volunteers. The study explores the asymmetry of these relationships, where volunteers often provide practical and informational support (e.g., with paperwork or learning Dutch), while emotional support and reciprocity remain less frequent. Despite power imbalances, the relationships are described as largely positive. The article offers recommendations for promoting more reciprocal and mutually enriching interactions.

The recommendations for buddy initiatives and institutions promoting buddy projects highlight the following points:

- Volunteers often feel pressured because refugees rely on them for administrative, legal, and bureaucratic tasks. These responsibilities should ideally be handled by formal organizations, allowing volunteers to focus more on building social relationships with refugees.
- Buddy projects should enhance communication among volunteers to share strategies for managing pressure and establishing reciprocity in relationships with refugees.
- Organizations should promote opportunities for refugees to reciprocate support. This could be done by organizing group activities that value refugees' contributions.
- Buddy projects can act as whistle-blowers by informing policymakers and integration organizations about system deficiencies. This can be achieved through structured feedback sessions with both volunteers and refugees.
- Structural and bureaucratic obstacles must be addressed to ensure buddy projects fulfil their potential in fostering refugee integration. Policymakers should not place the full burden of integration on these projects but instead, develop inclusive policies that engage multiple actors to create supportive social environments.

Reference : Vescan, I., Van Keer, R., Politi, E., Roblain, A., Phalet, K. (2023) Dyadic relations between refugees and volunteers: Support exchange and reciprocity experienced in buddy projects in Flanders, Belgium, *Current Research in Ecological and Social Psychology*, 5

Similar studies have been carried out in other countries. Here are some examples:

- Alberta. Alberta Education. Direction de l'éducation française. Programme de mentorat au secondaire : Manuel de mentorat. (<http://alis.alberta.ca/pdf/cshop/aaet/mentorhandbook.pdf>)
- Centre de transfert pour la réussite éducative du Québec, "Guide d'implantation d'un programme de mentorat en milieu scolaire", available at: <https://www.ctreq.qc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Guide-Mentorat.pdf> (last visited on 20/09/2022)
- Messiou, K., & Azaola, M. C. (2017). A peer-mentoring scheme for immigrant students in English secondary schools: a support mechanism for promoting inclusion? *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 22(2), pp.142-15

Steps in Initial Assessment and Café Feasibility

1. Define Objectives and Scope

- Clearly articulate the specific and localised goals of the Solidarity Café, emphasising support for migrants and refugees in areas such as social integration, language acquisition, and cultural awareness and exchange.
- Be very clear who the Café will specifically serve, what age, catchment area

2. Community Needs Assessment

- There is great benefit in conducting targeted surveys and interviews with migrants, refugees, local community members, and other stakeholders to gather detailed insights into their needs, preferences, and potential barriers to participation.
- Build on the survey findings, host a Focus Group with target groups to explore their expectations and the preferred scope of the Café

3. Who needs to be involved

- The success of the Solidarity Café, particularly one that relies heavily on a volunteer model, hinges on the involvement of a diverse and committed group of stakeholders. These individuals and organisations play crucial roles in ensuring the café operates smoothly and effectively meets the needs of the migrant and refugee populations it aims to serve. Research your potential volunteer base. Will it be adequate? Will it dictate how often the Café can convene?

4. Location Scouting

- What are your location options? Where will you be based? Consider how accessible café location is for migrants and refugees, considering factors like proximity to their living areas, public transport links, and safety.
- Does your location comply with all relevant laws and regulations, including accessibility standards?



5. Financial Planning

- Work out the costs associated with the operation of the Solidarity Café – use our workbook to get to grips with the costs you will have for the setup and ongoing operation of the Café.
- Explore funding opportunities specifically available for refugee and migrant support programs, including grants from governmental and international bodies.

6. Resource Assessment

- Human Resources: Assess the need for staff and volunteers who are culturally competent and possibly multilingual, capable of addressing the specific needs of migrants and refugees.
- Material Resources: Determine the need for materials that are culturally appropriate and multilingual, from kitchen equipment for international cuisines to educational resources for language learning. Reference our Guide to Extracurricular Activities to assist you.

7. Stakeholder Engagement

- Building Partnerships. Who needs to be embedded in supporting the Solidarity Café from the outset? Here are some ideas ...
 - Local Community Organisations and NGOs (Specialising in refugee and migrant services and local resident interactions)
 - Local Government Agencies (Departments focused on immigration, integration, and social services for refugees and migrants)
 - Educational Institutions – from childcare providers to universities
 - Cultural Associations
 - Local Businesses (Engaged in supporting workforce integration for refugees and migrants) (
 - Healthcare Providers (Offering accessible services tailored to the health needs of refugees and migrants)
 - And careful consideration as to whether to involve Faith-Based OrganisationsThese partnerships can bring essential resources, expertise, and community connections that are vital for the café's success.
- Community Support: Develop strategies for engaging both the migrant and local populations directly to foster mutual understanding and support, enhancing the café's role as an integration tool.

8. Risk Management

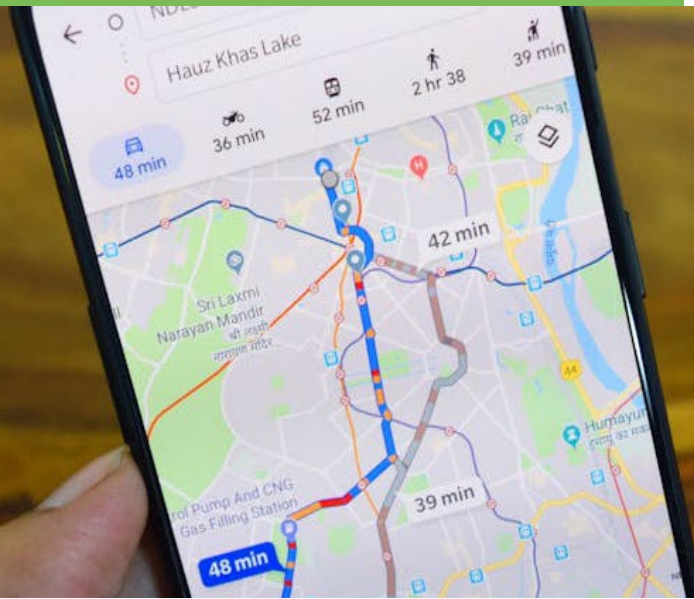
- Identify Risks: Consider specific risks related to working with vulnerable populations, such as issues related to privacy, security, and cultural sensitivities.
- Negate risk by creating robust strategies to address these risks, ensuring a safe and welcoming environment for all patrons.

9. Test Run

- A trial can yield great learning. Practical learning. Before committing to a full launch of a Solidarity Café, consider implementing a pilot phase focusing on specific language, culture and social inclusion needs of the migrant and refugee communities. Use the learning and feedback to refine the café's offerings.

In the section that follows, we go into many of these areas in detail.

Solidarity Cafe Site Selection



3.1 Criteria for Choosing Solidarity Cafe Locations

Choosing the right location for a Solidarity Café is crucial to its success, particularly in effectively serving the refugee and migrant communities. Based on your research, determine the scale that will get your café up and running.

1. Capacity Needs: Consider the size needed to accommodate the expected number of visitors comfortably, including space for group activities, workshops, and dining areas. The interior layout should support the café's operational needs, ideally including a kitchen, storage, and flexible spaces for different types of events and activities.

2. Find a Host Partner if Possible: Finding a host partner willing to provide a facility free of charge for your Solidarity Café involves a targeted approach to identify and engage potential partners who share your mission of supporting migrants and refugees. Here's a step-by-step strategy to help you identify and secure such a partnership:

1. Identify Potential Partners

Community Centres and NGOs: Start with local community centres and non-governmental organisations that are already engaged in community service and support for migrants and refugees.

Educational Institutions: Universities and schools often have space that they might be willing to offer for community-focused projects, especially if there is an educational component involved.

Local Government: Some local government agencies might have underutilised properties or might be interested in fostering community initiatives to align with their other work.

Businesses with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Goals: Companies looking to enhance their community involvement might be open to providing space as part of their CSR initiatives.

2. Craft Your Proposal -Value Proposition:

Clearly articulate the benefits the host will gain from supporting your café. This could include positive community impact, enhanced public image, and alignment with their corporate social responsibility goals.

3. **Community Impact:** Emphasizes the social value of the café, particularly its role in aiding integration, providing employment, and enhancing cultural exchange.
4. **Initial Contact:** Reach out through official channels, such as formal emails or letters, to introduce your project and request a meeting.
5. **Presentation:** Prepare a compelling presentation to share during meetings that visually demonstrates the potential impact and operational model of the café. Gather endorsements from other community organizations, leaders, and stakeholders to bolster your proposal, showing widespread community support.
6. **Tour Possible Spaces:** If a potential partner shows interest, arrange to tour the available space to ensure it meets your needs and discuss how it could be utilized effectively.
7. **Negotiate the Agreement and Terms of Use:** Discuss and agree on the terms of use, including duration, responsibilities regarding utilities and maintenance, and any conditions tied to the use of the space.
8. **Formal Agreement:** Have a formal agreement or memorandum of understanding drawn up to capture the details of the arrangement, ensuring both parties are clear on expectations and responsibilities.
9. **Visibility for Host:** If the host is interested, offer to highlight the host partner in all promotional materials and public communications regarding the café to enhance their visibility and demonstrate public acknowledgement of their support.
10. **Regular Updates:** Once a host venue partner is secured, provide them with regular updates on the café's progress and impact, reinforcing the value of their support.

If you are in a position to choose a location, some more considerations are

2. Accessibility is a huge issue for migrant and refugee populations who may be dispersed in urban and rural locations. Ideally, the location should be readily accessible via public transportation, ensuring that refugees, migrants, and local community members can reach the café without difficulty. In the case of rural Roscommon, Ireland, the Café hosts are paying for transportation to bring people to the regular café meet-ups. There is simply no other way.

3. Check the Physical Accessibility of the Space: Ensure the facility is accessible to people with reduced mobility and disabilities, complying with all local accessibility laws and regulations.

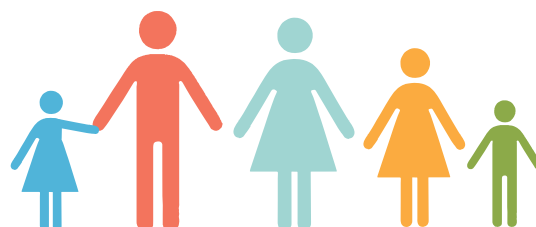
4. Community Proximity: it is important to locate close to your volunteer and local community base. Consider proximity to other community hubs like schools, markets, religious centres, and social services that are frequently accessed by the target communities.

5. Safety and Security: The location should be in an area perceived as safe by the community to encourage regular visits. This is especially important for families and individuals concerned about safety due to their past experiences. Privacy is also a factor. Ensure that the location offers a degree of privacy for users, particularly for those who may be dealing with sensitive issues.

6. Terms of Occupancy: Obviously, for a new Solidarity Café, you want flexibility, particularly in the early stages when the café's needs and operational dynamics may evolve. Do not be afraid to ask for short-term leases with renewal option, break clauses and rent free periods.

7. Cost Effectiveness

Of course, cost has to be a major location choice factor. Ensure the cost of renting the space aligns with the café's budget constraints and funding capabilities. Factor in the cost of utilities, maintenance, and other operational expenses that will be impacted by the location choice.



3.2 Design and Layout for Optimal Functionality of the Solidarity Cafes

Designing and laying out a Solidarity Café for optimal functionality involves careful consideration of the space's aesthetics, flow, and usability, particularly given the café's role as a community hub for migrants and refugees and local residents. Some ideas to think about in terms of design and layout to ensure the space is welcoming, functional, and cost-effective:

1. **Open and Welcoming Entrance.** Ensure the café entrance is visible and inviting with clear signage.
2. **Versatility is key!** Use lightweight, movable furniture that can be easily reconfigured for different events, such as workshops, meetings, or casual dining. Provide a mix of seating options, including group tables, individual seating for quiet contemplation or work, and comfortable couches for relaxed discussions.
3. **Cross-generational functionality. Prioritise Child-Friendly and Elderly-Friendly Facilities:** Equip the café with facilities that cater to families with children, such as a play area or children's books, and amenities for the elderly, such as extra assistance seating and easily accessible restrooms.
4. **Community Board and Interaction Areas.** Install a large community board for posting upcoming events, notices, and resources available to migrants and refugees. Consider areas with interactive displays or information about local services, cultural facts, or language tips.
5. A café really should have even a **small kitchen area**, with easy access to storage, refrigeration, and cooking appliances.
6. **Imaginative Cultural and Artistic Elements.** Decorating with art and crafts reflects the diversity of the community.
7. **Lighting and Ambience.** Maximize natural light to create a warm, inviting atmosphere. Provide adjustable lighting to cater to different times of day and types of events, enhancing functionality and mood.
8. **Technology and Connectivity**
 - Wi-Fi Access: Provide free Wi-Fi to support guests needing internet access for education, work, or staying connected with family.
 - Charging Stations: Equip the café with multiple charging stations for electronic devices, accommodating those who may stay for extended periods.
8. **Sustainable and Cost-Effective Materials.** Use recycled or reclaimed materials for furniture and décor to reduce costs and support environmental sustainability.

USE OF ACTIN SOLIDARITY CAFÉ SIGNAGE

The ACTIN partners use branded signage and popup banners to share the overall project. Here is our Roscommon, Ireland example. Note how we have incorporated the logos of our host partner. More about Marketing and Community Involvement in Section 7 of this Guideline.



Partnership Development



4.1 Identifying and Engaging Key Local Partners

In section 3.1, we highlight the opportunity to link with local partners in the context of them providing a host premises, but their involvement should be much wider in terms of creating a broader support network that enhances the café's impact on the community.

A strategic approach to partnership can amplify resources, increase community reach, and integrate various services that benefit both the café and its patrons. The partners you should consider....

- **Educational Institutions:** Collaborate with schools, colleges, and universities that can provide volunteers, interns, and educational resources, and may also participate in collaborative projects or research.
- **Community and Cultural Organisations:** These organisations can help with cultural programming and community outreach and provide links to specific ethnic or cultural groups.
- **Local Government and Public Agencies:** Engage with local authorities that can offer support in terms of funding, policy advocacy, or logistical assistance.
- **Healthcare Providers:** Partnerships with healthcare providers can bring health and wellness services directly to the café, offering screenings, mental health support, and health education.
- **Non-profit and Charitable Organisations:** These can offer a range of support from volunteer services to funding and expertise in handling social issues, particularly those affecting migrants and refugees.
- **Faith-Based Organisations:** Often deeply embedded in local communities, these groups can offer a host premises, volunteer support, and a connection to a broad network.



4.2 Engagement Strategies

Understand Partner Goals:

Understand what each partner aims to achieve through their involvement. Aligning your café's needs with their goals ensures a mutually beneficial relationship.

EXAMPLE

Partner's Goals: A local university may aim to increase community engagement and provide practical learning experiences for its students.

Alignment with Café's Needs: The Solidarity Café can align with these goals by offering internship opportunities for students in social work, culinary arts, or cultural expression, providing them with real-world experience while supporting café operations.

Develop Joint Activities:

Plan activities that can involve partners directly, such as cultural events, workshops, which can be hosted at the café.

EXAMPLE

Partner's Goals: Local artisans and cultural organisations aim to showcase cultural diversity and promote local arts.

Alignment with Café's Needs: The café needs to create a culturally rich environment that celebrates diversity and educates the community. Organise monthly cultural heritage days in partnership with these stakeholders with performances or workshops in music, dance, traditional crafts, and cooking demonstrations, turning the café into a vibrant hub of cultural exchange that draws in a diverse attendance and promotes multicultural understanding.

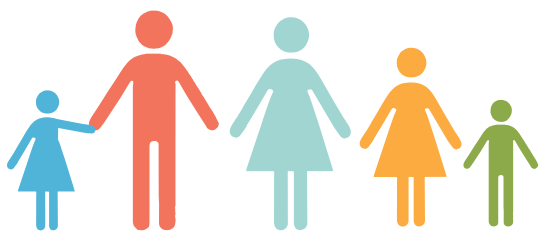
Host Networking Events:

Regularly bring together all partners for networking events to discuss progress, share insights, and deepen relationships.

EXAMPLE

Partner's Goals: Healthcare providers may aim to reach wider community segments with health education, while NGOs focused on migrant and refugee services might look to disseminate health information

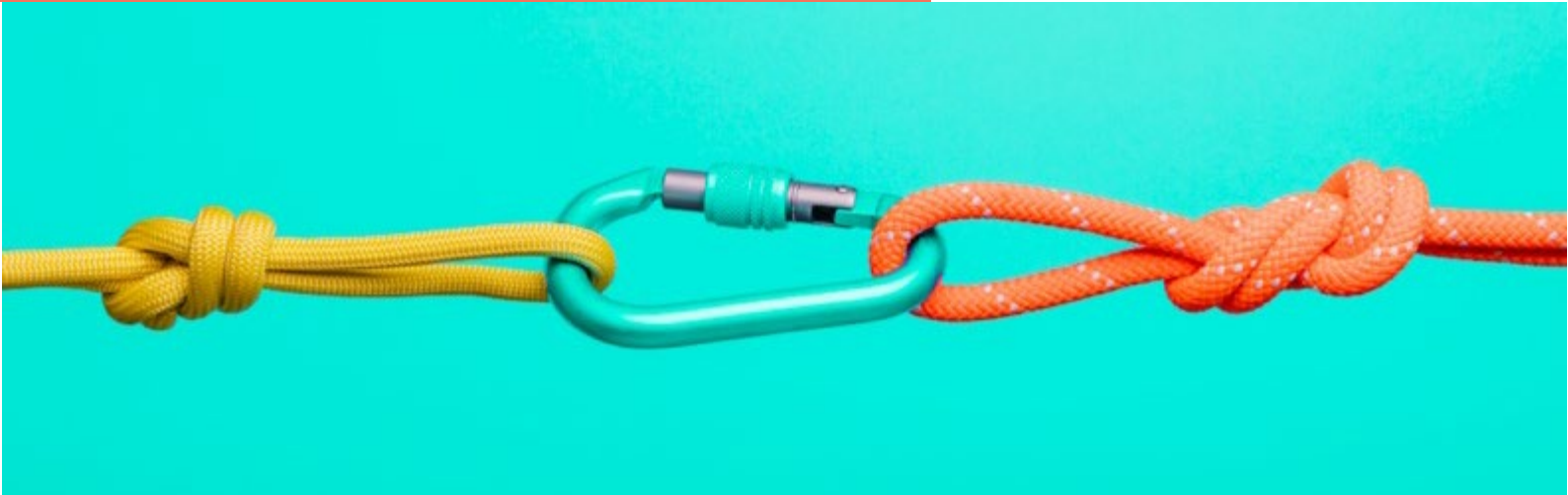
Alignment with Café's Needs: The café needs to support the health and well-being of its patrons and provide valuable information and services. Host quarterly health and wellness days at the café in collaboration with these partners. Healthcare providers could offer free health screenings or wellness workshops, and NGOs could provide seminars on rights and services available to migrants. These events serve as networking opportunities, where café partners can meet each other and discuss how to improve their services, share resources, and plan future collaborative efforts.



4.3 Building and Maintaining Relationships

- **Regular Updates:** Keep all partners regularly informed about the café's activities, successes, and needs through newsletters, reports, or meetings.
- **Feedback Opportunities:** Encourage partners to provide feedback and suggest improvements to ensure the partnership remains responsive and dynamic.
- **Celebrate Successes:** Recognize and celebrate the achievements and milestones of the café with your partners, acknowledging their contributions to its success.
- **Review Partnerships Annually:** Evaluate the effectiveness of each partnership annually to ensure it still meets the needs of the café and to make adjustments as necessary.
- **Ethical Standards:** Ensure all partnerships adhere to high ethical standards, especially in dealings that affect vulnerable populations like migrants and refugees.

Solidarity Café Operations



Creating practical operational guidelines for a Solidarity Café involves outlining clear procedures and standards that ensure smooth day-to-day management while being mindful of the unique mission and community-focused nature of the café. Here are key components to include in your operational guidelines:

1. Staff and Volunteer Management

- **Recruitment and Training:** Develop a comprehensive recruitment strategy for both staff and volunteers that emphasises diversity and inclusivity. Provide thorough training on intercultural supports, language exploration, empathy and cultural sensitivity, and specific tasks relevant to their roles.
- **Schedules and Responsibilities:** You will need to design a reliable scheduling system to ensure adequate staffing coverage during all operating hours. Clearly define roles and responsibilities for each position to avoid overlaps and provide coverage of all necessary tasks.
- **Consider providing staff and volunteers with a branded t-shirt** to create a consistent appearance for all team members, which can make the café environment look more professional and organised. They help in promoting the café's brand and ethos visually. Wearing the same branded attire can foster a stronger sense of team unity and belonging among staff and volunteers. Uniforms can also instil a sense of pride and ownership, motivating team members to perform their roles with enthusiasm and commitment.
- **Regularly evaluate** staff and volunteers to provide feedback and identify areas for improvement. This ensures high standards of service and personal growth for team members.

2. Service Standards

- Set high standards for the café community, emphasising respect, inclusivity, and a welcoming attitude towards all patrons, particularly migrants and refugees.
- If an issue does arise, establish a transparent process for handling problems, complaints and feedback. Ensure staff are trained to respond effectively and equipped to resolve issues promptly.
- Maintain stringent cleanliness standards in all areas of the café, especially when food preparation is involved. Regularly train staff and volunteers on proper hygiene practices.
- Implement safety protocols to prevent accidents and ensure the well-being of both patrons and staff. Include emergency procedures and regular safety drills.

3. Budgeting and Accounting

Maintain detailed records of all financial transactions. Develop an annual budget that covers operational costs, unexpected expenses, and savings for future projects. Regularly review and develop revenue streams, e.g. sponsorship and fundraising to ensure financial sustainability.

4. Food and Beverage Management

Of course, a café has to have a strong food and beverage offering reflective of our multicultural dynamic. Make sure to offer a menu that reflects the cultural diversity of the community. Regularly update the menu to incorporate feedback and seasonal availability of ingredients. Refer to our ACTIN Guide to Extracurricular Activities, which has a dedicated section on Food & Nutrition and a Heritage Recipe Exchange Activity.

Remember, many refugees do not have the opportunity to cook in their accommodation, so collaborate with them to gather authentic recipes. This can help ensure that the food connects them with home and provides them with a platform to share their culture.

5 Cultural and Community Engagement

Plan and execute regular events that engage different segments of the community, such as cultural nights, language exchanges, and educational workshops. Again, refer to our Guide to Extracurricular Activities, which can be a foundation of a diverse and engaging cultural and community engagement programme. Here are some ideas from the Guide

Storytelling, Music & Theatre (Section 3.1)

- Events: Organise regular storytelling evenings and musical performances that reflect the diverse cultures of the community. These events can serve as powerful mediums for sharing experiences and heritage.

Creativity Activities (Section 3.2)

- Craft Workshops: Offer workshops in arts and crafts that allow participants to express their creativity while learning about the artistic traditions of different cultures, giving visibility to diverse cultural expressions and fostering a sense of pride and accomplishment.

Nature (Section 3.4)

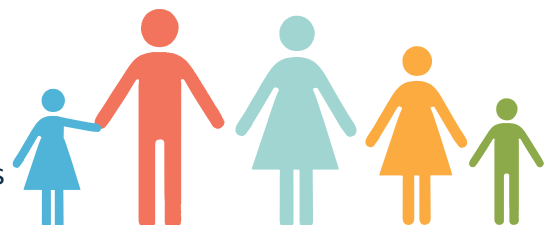
- Outdoor Activities: Organise nature walks, gardening clubs, or environmental awareness events, encouraging our groups to connect with the local natural environment.

Sport & Recreation (Section 3.5)

- Team Building: Use sports and recreational activities to foster teamwork and community spirit among café patrons and volunteers.



The form is titled 'ACTIN Heritage Recipe Exchange' and is designed for contributors to share their recipes. It includes fields for 'Contributor's Name', 'Country of Origin', and 'Cultural Significance'. The recipe details section includes 'Recipe Title', 'Preparation Time', 'Cooking Time', 'Servings', 'Story Behind the Recipe', 'Ingredients List', and 'Cooking Instructions'. The form is decorated with illustrations of strawberries and a whisk.



Programming Informal Activities

06

As just mentioned, our ACTIN team have researched and tested 33 different informal activities across 7 categories that are outlined in detail in our **ACTIN Guide to Extracurricular Activities**. We will add to these as the ACTIN project progresses. There are activities for diverse interests, for inclusive participation of our migrant, refugees, and local populations from young to not so young, and each one reflective of our overall theme of fostering language acquisition, community integration and cultural exchange



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Marketing and Community Involvement



7.1 The Power of Branding

At the heart of the ACTIN Solidarity Café lies a commitment to harnessing the collective power of our community. We are working to empower our own Solidarity Cafes, but also to integrate the strengths of various local organisations and groups to create a vibrant hub of activity and support. The ACTIN brand, a symbol of community and cooperation, guides our approach, ensuring that every initiative and event reflects our dedication to inclusivity and mutual growth.



All great marketing and communications start with our brand which was launched on World Refugee Day in Ireland and used extensively in PR and social media campaigns. We encourage partners to use all the resources of our dedicated ACTIN Dissemination Strategy to ensure maximum visibility.



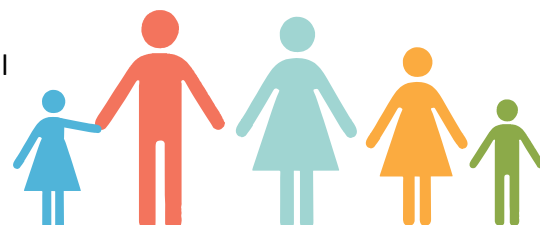
7.2 Empowering Through Collective Marketing

Our marketing efforts need to be deeply community-focused. We leverage the ACTIN brand to amplify our message, using targeted social media campaigns, collaborative event promotions, and partnerships with local media to spotlight the collective efforts of our stakeholders. By sharing stories of collaboration and community impact, we attract a wider audience but also reinforce the value of the ACTIN Solidarity Café initiative.

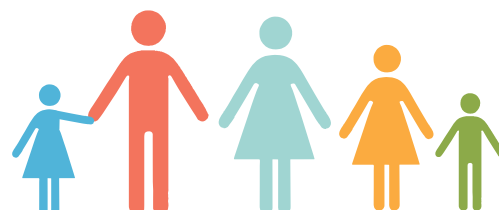
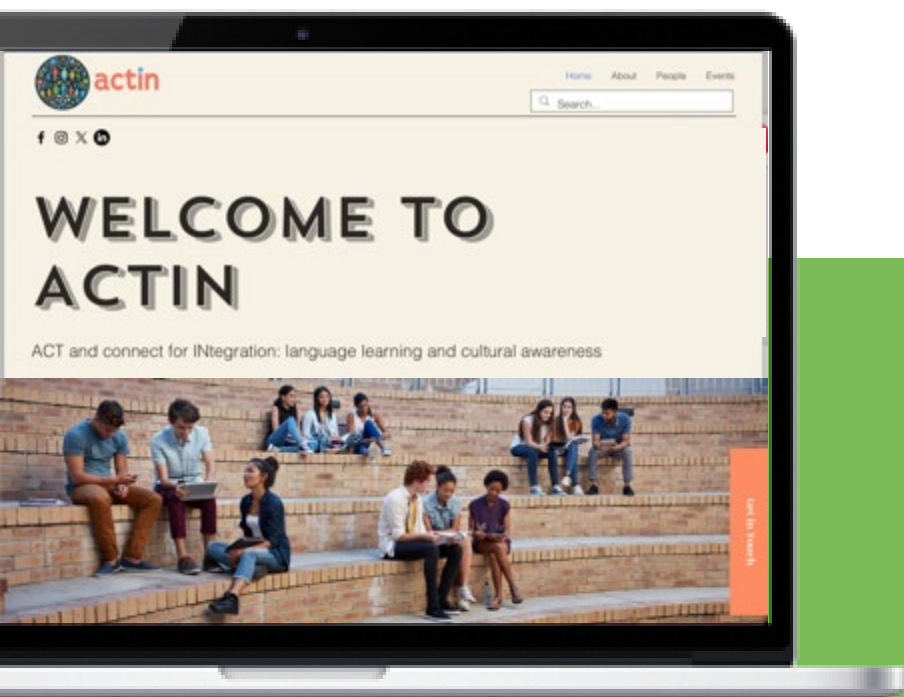
Over the next few years, we will support the ACTIN Solidarity Cafes with

Brand-Centric Marketing Tactics encompassing

- **Brand Visibility:** Ensuring that the ACTIN brand is prominently displayed in all marketing materials, from digital content to physical signage at the café – see example with local stakeholder logos. This includes using the logo, brand colours, and consistent messaging that aligns with ACTIN's mission.
- **Storytelling:** Utilise the powerful narrative of the ACTIN brand's role in supporting migrants and refugees. Share success stories and testimonials in marketing materials that highlight the positive impact of the café and the broader ACTIN initiative. Videos will be produced later in the project, but for now, visit our YouTube page to see storytelling in action.
- **Publicity Materials:** Design and distribute publicity materials such as flyers, posters, and newsletters that feature the ACTIN brand prominently, ensuring consistency in visual and verbal messaging.
- **Digital and Social Media Presence:** We would encourage each Solidarity Café to establish its own social media presence for local awareness. The central ACTIN social media campaigns will share and highlight their work as the project progresses. All ACTIN campaigns should use hashtags, content themes, and collaboration with influencers who resonate with ACTIN's mission.
- **Interactive Online Content:** Once up and running, we encourage our ACTIN Solidarity Cafes to create engaging online content including virtual tours of the café, behind-the-scenes videos featuring staff and volunteers, and live-streamed cultural events that showcase the ACTIN brand's active community role. Protecting identities and data protection needs to be factored into any content.
- **ACTIN-Themed Events:** Host regular events at the café that are themed around ACTIN's core mission areas, such as "ACTIN Culture Nights" or "ACTIN Language Exchange". These events will reinforce the brand's commitment to cultural and linguistic integration.
- **Volunteer Involvement:** Encourage volunteers to wear ACTIN-branded apparel during events and community activities to enhance brand cohesion and visibility.
- **Outreach and Public Relations.** Engage with local and national media to feature articles and segments about the café's role within the ACTIN initiative, highlighting how the café serves as a practical implementation of ACTIN's objectives.



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