



Best Practice Model of Citizenship Campaigns for Immigrants: Naturalisation, Voter Registration, and Political Participation



BEST PRACTICE MODEL OF CITIZENSHIP CAMPAIGNS FOR IMMIGRANTS: NATURALISATION, VOTER REGISTRATION, AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

MIGRATION POLICY GROUP
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1. Introduction

The naturalisation of immigrants promotes democratic participation and societal integration, according to recent MPG research (ACIT) and a growing scientific literature on the topic. Studies are finding that national citizenship improves immigrants' employment rate, income, housing situation, and participation in elections and other political actions. Naturalisation improves their perception in wider society. Naturalised immigrants are less likely to experience discrimination from employers, better legally protected against it, and more likely to report it. Naturalisation also advances immigrants' rights and social inclusion. National citizenship is immigrants' best guarantee of secure residence and equal rights. Restrictionists can take away rights from foreigners, but they cannot easily take away citizenship from naturalised immigrants. What's more, the mobilisation of naturalised voters and their descendants is one effective response against the mobilisation of the far-right electorate. The more immigrants become citizens and can vote in elections, the more likely are politicians to listen to them and support inclusive policies. Immigrants can demand a place at the table as politicians negotiate the most difficult issues of our time, such as budget austerity, welfare cuts, education reform, and cultural, religious, and civil rights.

Immigrants in most European countries simply do not count in national, regional or

European elections. Lower levels of voter registration and turnout are certainly issues. While studies often find that citizens with an immigrant background are on average less likely to register or turn out to vote, their participation generally relates to their age and education level, increases over time, and varies over election cycles depending on their mobilisation around key election issues. Instead, the major unaddressed issue is that most first generation immigrants are not even eligible to vote at most levels. Only naturalised citizens can vote in regional elections in most countries or in national elections in nearly all countries. Low levels of naturalisation and electoral participation among immigrants emerge as major contributors to the democratic deficit in Europe's countries of immigration. The disenfranchisement of immigrants is perhaps the major issue undermining democratic legitimacy in Western Europe. Current voting initiatives around election time do not address this structural democratic deficit.

Unlike in traditional countries of immigration, most immigrants in European countries do not naturalise and thus do not count in national elections. ACIT found that in 2008 only one in three first-generation immigrants had naturalised in the EU-27 or EU-15 countries. As such, most immigrants remain ineligible to vote in regional, national and European elections. As countries facilitate their citizenship laws and procedures, immigrants are not sufficiently

seizing these opportunities to have their voices heard.

Given this democratic deficit and the research suggesting how to fix it, it is surprising that so few integration actors in Europe are promoting naturalisation and electoral participation. Our ACIT research found that naturalisation is promoted by very few national governments or NGOs. Most promotional measures are few and poor-quality, even in countries with liberal naturalisation laws. NGOs do not advocate naturalisation for several reasons. Citizenship may be dismissed as a ‘luxury’ issue that is less important than humanitarian causes like fighting for a legal status and decent life for vulnerable groups. Advocating naturalisation may also be denounced as ‘assimilation.’ Progressive actors in Europe often prefer to talk about long-term goals of EU citizenship and national voting rights for all foreigners—but usually settle for local voting rights.

As a result, immigrants are rarely encouraged to naturalise or defend immigrants’ interests in elections. Instead, integration actors work ‘on their behalf’ on issues such as their employment, language, and education and ignore underlying power issues. This approach is short-sighted. The far right in Europe is paying close attention to power issues and has successfully restricted many countries’ naturalisation and integration policies. Integration actors cannot have inclusive integration and social policies without promoting immigrant naturalisation and electoral participation at regional and national level, where most integration and

social policies are decided. Where the legislation is favourable, governments and NGOs should seize the opportunity to inform, encourage, and support immigrants to become citizens and voters.

Full citizenship is within reach for many immigrants in Europe and this project aims to show that ‘citizenship campaigns’ can stimulate the political participation of immigrants as citizens. A transnational network of practitioners will build and test a best practice model through local multi-stakeholder campaigns in Europe that aim to inform and encourage thousands of immigrants to become citizens, register to vote, participate in politics and turn out for elections. These campaigns will create the missing constituency on immigrant citizenship in cities and countries across Europe. These diverse coalitions can expand future campaigns to other cities and the regional and national level. An internationally-recognised best practice will also promote the idea at European level and in other countries. A campaign will also indirectly facilitate advocacy. Working with immigrants on-the-ground raises stakeholders’ awareness of legal and procedural barriers to naturalisation and voter participation. The coalition can then come up with solutions, drawing on common tools such as MIPEX and ACIT’s indicators and new international standards for naturalisation laws and practices.

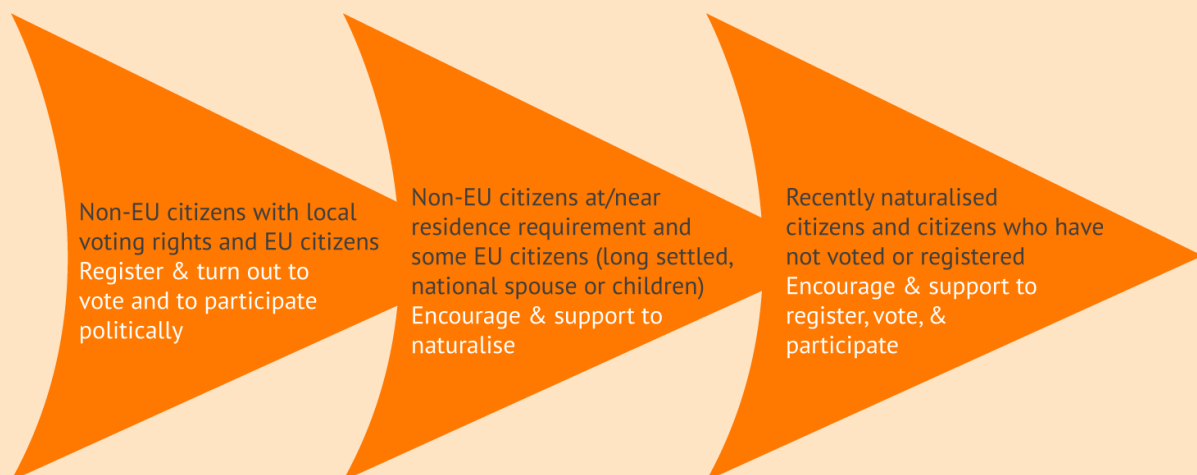
2. Citizenship Campaigns: Why a three-pronged strategy?

Citizenship campaigns consist of a three-pronged strategy targeting a wide range of immigrants, their descendants, and their allies. The objective of citizenship campaigns is to increase the level of democratic participation in Europe by informing, encouraging and assisting eligible immigrants to:

1. Apply for naturalisation and successfully navigate the procedure to become citizens
2. Register to vote (where required for national citizens or foreign citizens with voting rights¹)
3. Participate politically in the country and turn out to vote in on-going elections

These three objectives can be achieved through the same set of simultaneous activities and with overlapping target

groups. The three objectives do not have to be followed in any particular order, as people may be interested in one (e.g. naturalisation) but not the other (e.g. voting). However taken all together, citizenship campaigns aim for legally resident foreign citizens to become politically active to the extent possible, to naturalise as a national citizen, and become even more politically active once they are national citizens. The campaign helps immigrants to move along a 'path to political participation', leading to a more full and equal representation of immigrants in the elections and politics of their country of residence:



¹ In all EU countries except France and the UK, voter registration is not necessary for resident citizens because they are automatically registered on the election roll from other civil register information. Eligible third-country national

voters must voluntarily register to use local voting rights in Belgium, Greece, Hungary, Luxembourg, Portugal, Spain, and the UK.

Window of Opportunity: Many immigrants are eligible to naturalise and to vote

Many immigrants do or can meet the legal requirements for voting or for naturalisation. These current opportunities should be used to the full, especially for naturalisation, where laws and practices can become quickly politicised and restricted. The fact that immigrants meet the requirements (e.g. language and citizenship knowledge) and want to become citizens and voters proves that integration does happen over time and provides the public with successful stories. As citizens and voters, they will be able to define for themselves what policies will improve societal integration. However these legal opportunities need to be made effective through promotional policies and campaigns, so that immigrants have the information and support that they need to take up these opportunities in practice.

The best windows of opportunity for citizenship campaigns are in countries and for immigrant groups with voting rights, facilitated naturalisation procedures, and the option of dual nationality. While every country has its own legal and procedural obstacles, stakeholders should identify where the law and procedure are inclusive enough for significant numbers of immigrants and their descendants to be able to vote and/or naturalise.

The selection of countries and cities must be done to achieve a maximum impact. For

example, high legal or bureaucratic barriers make promotion much less effective than direct advocacy. The decision about whether or not to launch a citizenship campaign can be based on the following criteria:

- 1) Size of eligible immigrant population (large number and share of non-naturalised immigrants, long-settled, many non-EU citizens)
- 2) Inclusive naturalisation legislation or likely reform within 1-2 years
- 3) General openness of national authorities to discuss naturalisation and political participation
- 4) Existence of interested and experienced potential NGO lead partners
- 5) Existence of potential national collaborative partners (immigrant-run networks, interested regional/local political actors, experienced promotional actors)

Effectiveness: Naturalisation and voting are highly effective for boosting the overall level of political participation among immigrants

Naturalisation and the use of voting rights are the two major ways for immigrants to count in the political life of their country of residence. Voting is how most citizens participate in national politics. Far more citizens vote in elections than join associations or political parties, or participate in demonstrations, public meetings, sign petitions or contact public officials. All types of citizens, including the

low-educated, low-income, and youth, are more likely to vote than to undertake other forms of political participation. Naturalisation is useful for promoting political participation among immigrants, as several studies find that naturalised citizens are more likely to vote and participate politically than non-naturalised citizens with a similar profile (e.g. Bevelander and Pendakur 2010, Just and Anderson 2013, Prokic-Breuer et al. forthcoming, Hainmueller et al. forthcoming).

Promoting only naturalisation will limit the campaign's effects on political participation if new citizens do not register and turn out to vote in equal numbers. Voting is one of the most obvious advantages that immigrants gain through naturalisation. Voting is also a major reason that immigrants cite about why they want to naturalise ([Immigrant Citizens Survey](#), 2012).

Promoting only voting will also limit the campaign's effectiveness for political participation. Non-naturalised citizens are generally disenfranchised in elections at national and regional level, where most social, employment, immigration and integration policies are made in most EU countries. For regional or national elections, the campaign would have to target the much smaller number of naturalised citizens and citizens with immigrant background, which will diminish the campaign's overall impact.

Naturalisation and voting not only affect the overall level of political participation among immigrants, but also the responsiveness of politicians to immigrants' concerns.

Integration policies and social policies are usually more inclusive in the cities and countries where immigrants and their descendants punch their weight in elections (see Vernby 2013 for evidence in Sweden and Koopmans et al. 2012 for some European-wide evidence). This 'democratic deficit' argument fits within a broader argument about democratic participation for all legal residents, especially in cities/neighbourhoods with large shares of foreigners within the population.

Immigrants are a diverse group with mixed motives to naturalise and participate politically

Any campaign among immigrants will be addressing a wide audience of native-born, naturalised and foreign citizens, including free-moving EU citizens, legally resident non-EU citizens and undocumented non-EU citizens. Among these groups, people may be eligible and interested to both naturalise and to vote, only to naturalise, or only to vote. While it may be easier to encourage eligible and interested immigrants, more work will be needed to convince those who have lost faith in the system or who are simply not interested in naturalising, voting or participating politically. This latter category will not be your main target group, but you may arouse their interest as you promote your activities to other interested immigrants.

The following chart (see p. 10) illustrates that immigrants have diverse and

overlapping interests in naturalisation and voting. Their interests are highly subjective and not limited to one clear target group. For example, people with and without immigrant background may be interested to register to vote or become more involved in politics. EU citizens are very unlikely to naturalise unless they are very long-settled in the country or spouses/parents of a citizen. But EU citizens may be more easily convinced to register to vote in the country of residence, especially if they were/are politically active in their country of origin. The majority of non-EU citizens are likely interested both to naturalise and to vote (MPG's Immigrant Citizens Survey), though others may prefer one over the other due to personal reasons or certain policy obstacles. The legal and demographic situation in a particular country may lead designers of a citizenship campaign to opt for one activity / group and not another. But it is generally not advised to assign distinct target groups to each activity and thus only focus on one or two activities (e.g. EU citizens for registration in local elections, non-EU citizens for naturalisation support, and naturalised citizens for political and voter mobilisation).

All in all, people will want to choose whether and how they want to participate in the politics of the country. A narrowly-focused campaign promoting only naturalisation or voting is likely to ignore or turn off many politically interested immigrants. Focusing on a narrow target group (e.g. only non-naturalised or only naturalised immigrants) may also be more difficult and costly for the campaign. Campaigns addressing naturalisation, potential voter registration,

and political participation can more easily engage immigrant communities by assisting the widest range of immigrants regardless of their nationality or voting rights.

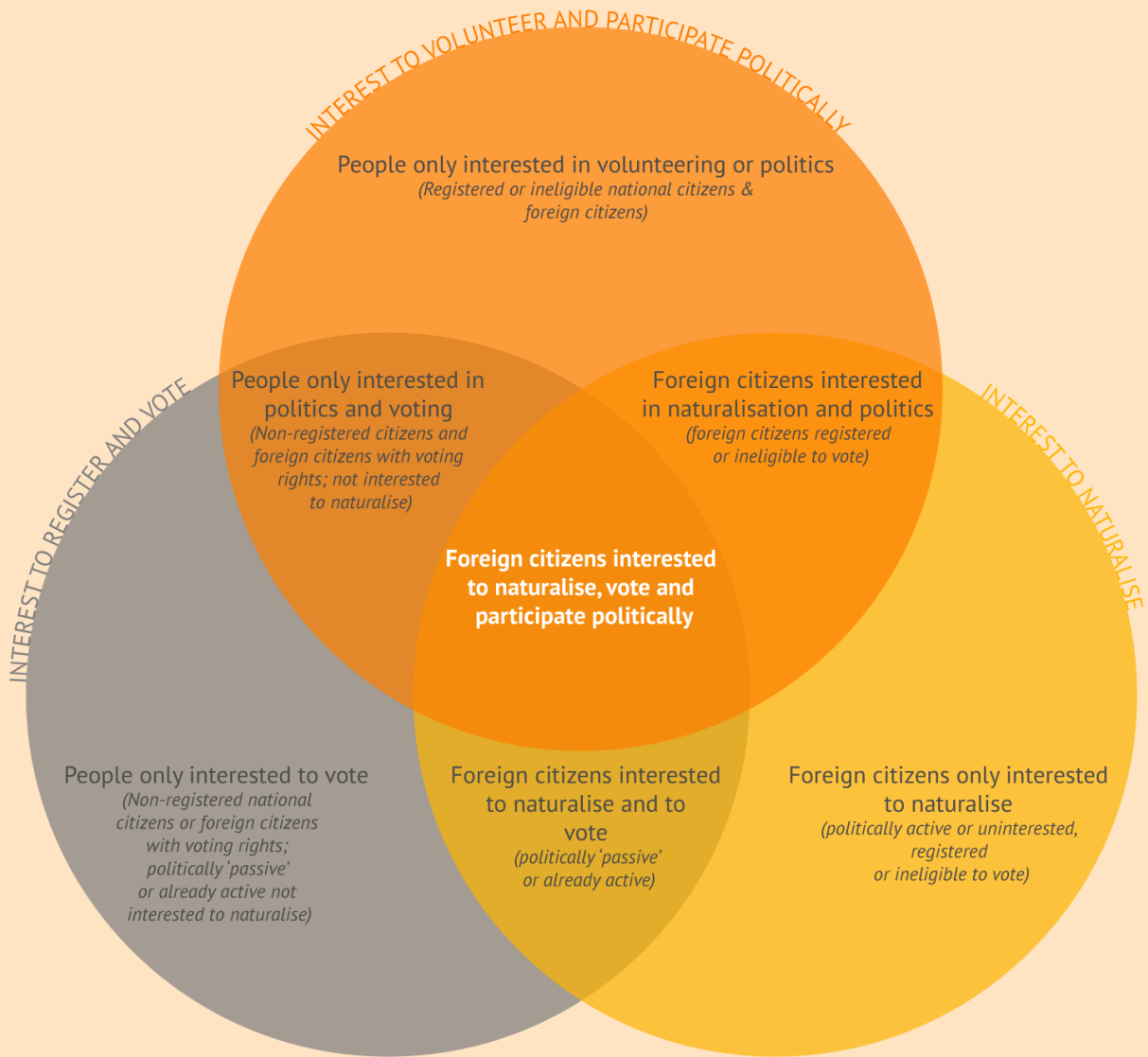


Chart 1: Immigrants' mixed motivations for naturalisation and voting

3. The Citizenship Campaigns

Aim

The objectives of the Citizenship Campaigns are to:

- ⊕ **Inform and support immigrants in their citizenship application process:** provide information (through a website, hotline, group events), help fill out documents, recommendations for legal advice or other service providers as necessary, encourage applicants through the use of positive stories.
- ⊕ **Encourage people to register to vote:** provide information on how to register, hand out registration forms.
- ⊕ **Encourage people to participate politically,** linking participation to relevant political issues that mobilise people of immigrant background in specific local areas.

Key products of the Citizenship Campaigns

Migration Policy Group will centrally support a team of national experts, who in turn will coordinate national or regional Citizenship Coalitions with parties interested in different aspects of citizenship, voting or political participation. Together, we will put together a set of comprehensive packages that directly assists

and supports thousands of eligible immigrants to apply and become citizens, register and turn out to vote and participate politically.

These packages will consist of:

- ⊕ Easy to use **websites** created for each country, covering all of the relevant national information on the citizenship application process, legislation, voting and links to opportunities for political participation.
- ⊕ A **citizenship self-assessment tool** that allows immigrants to assess their eligibility for citizenship. If they are eligible for citizenship, it will inform them what they need to do to apply, while if they are not eligible, it will indicate what steps they should take to become eligible. This tool will be embedded on the Websites for immigrants to use directly or used by staff and volunteers at referral and legal advice centres or at the one-stop-shop events. Each tool will be developed on a national level so that it mirrors national legislation in the partner country.
- ⊕ **Individual Support** in the form of a live hotline or referrals and legal advice services (via a drop-in and appointment system respectively) allow immigrants to get information or advice on a one-to-one basis.

Advice columns in a mainstream or migrant-run media can also be used to answer the questions of immigrants with reference to naturalisation, voting and political participation, whilst raising awareness of the issue amongst other immigrants and the general public.

- ⊕ Mobile group processing **One-Stop-Shop** events ideally held every two months in each country, each focusing on different immigrant communities, if there is sufficient demand in a given community. This will allow the event to run predominantly in their mother-tongue. Specialised NGOs of those communities should be brought on board in order to provide volunteers and encourage members of their community to participate.
- ⊕ **Common promotional material** such as brochures, factsheets and posters in order to have a common visual identity when promoting events and informing people in their respective countries. However, each national coalition will identify and work with a local or national media (preferably immigrant) organisation in order to develop local material for the campaign explaining why people should naturalise, vote or participate politically.

Building a Citizenship Coalition

National coordinators will need to determine which partners should form part of the Citizenship Coalition. The partners should be chosen keeping in mind the tasks that need to be carried out for the campaign, the target group and the capacity of each organisation to take on certain responsibilities. Examples of partners include:

- ⊕ **The authorities responsible for naturalisation and elections:** At the very maximum, the campaign can be run by these authorities, if they believe that their role is also to inform, encourage and assist immigrants to apply. At the very minimum, these authorities must informally support the campaign, e.g. accept and treat applications from immigrants assisted by the campaign in the same way as other applicants. They could also agree to refer confused applicants to the campaign's services. Another simple but critical role for these authorities is to develop and publish clear binding guidelines on the requirements and procedure for naturalisation and voter registration. These guidelines are necessary for the campaign to provide accurate easy-to-understand information to applicants.
- ⊕ **Local or regional authorities:** Cooperate with local administrations

in order to identify those foreign citizens who meet the legal requirements for voting or for naturalisation at least in terms of the required permit and recorded years of residence. A letter from the mayor/minister/president can then be sent informing these people about their eligibility, the requirements, the responsible authority for the application, and the available support services, for example from the campaign. Front-line civil servants can also inform eligible immigrants about the campaign and their rights, providing them with promotional materials and referring them to support services.

- ⊕ **Public figures** (at municipal, regional or national level): These public figures can be high-profile politicians, including citizens with an immigrant background (e.g. mayors, presidents, MPs), but also inspiring well-known celebrities, such as artists, athletes, television personalities, and local leaders. Their role is mostly promotional through the media and campaign posters/materials. They act as spokespeople encouraging immigrants to naturalise, vote and participate politically and, where appropriate, providing information on the benefits and the requirements. Local and regional leaders in particular should take up their role on promotion as they are directly

concerned by this democratic deficit in their cities and regions.

- ⊕ **Immigrant-run NGOs:** Partnership with a wide range of immigrant-run NGOs is essential for a successful campaign. Immigrant youth, particularly those born in the country, bring enormous enthusiasm to helping their community and unique intercultural skills to act as bridges between mainstream NGOs/authorities and their immigrant parents. Immigrant-run NGOs can help to design and translate promotional materials to make them as accessible as possible to an immigrant audience. Outreach from the campaign will depend on these NGOs to identify eligible and interested immigrants, disseminate information about the campaign through their networks, and allow representatives of the campaign to speak at their meetings. Indeed, volunteers from these NGOs/communities are perhaps the most convincing spokespersons to inform and encourage immigrants to naturalise and vote. Even personal choices matter since immigrants are more likely to naturalise and vote if their friends and families do so. That is why immigrant volunteers should also be trained to assist or even run large-scale information or processing sessions targeting their specific community. Several existing citizenship campaigns have

concluded partnership agreements with volunteers from immigrant communities to serve as citizenship pilots/volunteers.

- ⊕ **Immigrant-run media:** These newspapers, newsletters, radio/TV stations are often ignored by the general public due to their generally foreign-language content and amateur-nature. However immigrant-run media are a powerful source of outreach to immigrants through the use of promotional advertisements, editorials, event announcements and advice columns (e.g. actual questions on naturalisation/voting).
- ⊕ **Media organisations:** A media partner will help to design the campaign's media strategy for outreach to immigrants and the public as well as to design specific promotional and web materials, where necessary. This partner can build links with relevant media to spread information about the campaign and present personal stories (e.g. awareness raising about naturalisation/voting obstacles or encouragement through positive stories around citizenship ceremonies). However, it will also be important to identify a local media partner, preferably including migrant youth, which can act as your main communication specialist. Once identified, organize a focus session with them to get their views on the

campaign and then give them specific projects such as videos of 'why naturalise', 'why vote' etc. This will give them a voice directly, get them thinking about the importance of participation and support their work in general.

- ⊕ **Specialised citizenship lawyers:** The campaign must have a few staff or volunteers with a high degree of legal expertise on citizenship law. A specialised lawyer should be consulted to guarantee the design of clear and accurate information on the requirements and procedures. Their expertise may be needed to regularly train campaign volunteers who can be simply students or trainees in the field of law or social work. A specialised lawyer's services (on a voluntary or pro bono basis) may also be necessary for the campaign including the one-on-one legal advice or hotlines, although volunteers may be able to handle all but very complicated or rare cases, especially rejections/appeals.
- ⊕ **Local volunteer organisations:** Civically-minded NGOs and public authorities (citizens' information bureaus, libraries, cultural centres, trade unions, etc.) may be convinced of the importance of immigrant citizenship and political participation. As a result, they can donate space for campaign events

and circulate among its own volunteers the campaign's calls for volunteers for its staff-intensive event-based sessions. Civic organisations can also contribute their own promotional materials on political participation and volunteering, help to design the campaign's materials, link to the campaign on their website, and participate in the campaign's information sessions.

⊕ **Integration service-providers:**

Cooperation with integration service-providers can help the campaign to identify and reach eligible immigrants and develop resources to assist them to meet any requirements for naturalisation. Several EU countries have developed large integration-service providers who can reach thousands of immigrants through their services, courses, and offices across the country. For example, pupils in language and integration courses may be interested to learn about the benefits and procedures for naturalisation and voting as well as the campaign's available resources. Teachers may be

willing to volunteer their time to the campaign, for example to act as citizenship pilots/mediators or presenters at event-based information sessions. Test providers can also provide information and simulations of any tests required for naturalisation through the web, promotional materials, and/or the event-based information sessions.

⊕ **Embassies of countries of origin:**

Applicants for naturalisation often require documentation from applicants' country of origin (i.e. birth or marriage certificate), for which the cost of international travel may be prohibitive for several types of applicants. Embassies from immigrants' countries of origin may be willing to create solutions for their citizens abroad. In some cases, countries of origin may be willing to facilitate dual nationality for their citizens abroad and provide accurate information about this through their embassies.

4. Ongoing Information and Advice Services

Our objective with these Campaigns is to bring together a number of services to give immigrants access to an extensive information and support service on all three aspects of citizenship, voting and political participation. In each partner country, a member of the national Coalition, be it the coordinator or another partner, will already provide an information service to immigrants on the naturalisation process. Perhaps they will also provide them with information on registering to vote and some may even have a service helping immigrants to find volunteering positions, or an advice service on how to join an association or a political party.

The information service that the organisations already provide might be in the form of a Website, self-assessment tool or a more personalised one-on-one service such as a hotline or drop-in service. The idea is that these services are adapted to include additional information on naturalisation, potential voter registration and political participation. Only one partner in each coalition needs to develop the Website and the Hotline as they can then be used by everyone, but there may be a number of drop-in centres set-up across the country, depending on the reach that the Coalition wishes to have.

A. Website

For the Campaign, MPG will, together with an external communications expert, develop a framework for a Citizenship Information Website that could then be adapted for participating country Coalitions. This website – let's say for now it's called www.citizenshipcampaign.xx – will be developed and maintained in each country by the lead partner if they feel that there is currently no such website in their country. Under similar domain names, the different country websites would only be differentiated by the national top level domain (example .be or .ie). The website should be at least in the main national language, and with Google Translator options for English and other immigrant or minority languages.

The advantages of using technology in the campaign are the increase in numbers that you can assist at any given time and the flexibility to offer assistance to applicants whenever they wish to use it. Online services imply that people can access the tools whenever and from wherever they wish and the numbers of users at any given time is unlimited, as well as the fact that only one partner per coalition has to develop/offer this service. At the very least, the website should provide good links to other information websites (such as the Ministry) and links to online tools that encourage voting/participation/volunteering. At most, it would act as a one-stop-shop for naturalization, voting and political

participation and cover the following aspects.

Naturalisation

- ⊕ **Learn about Naturalisation:** A list of the legal prerequisites for citizenship should be available in an easy to understand manner for people with limited education or language skills.
- ⊕ **Benefits of Naturalisation:** This could be developed as a video, such as the one prepared for the [Hamburg campaign](#). It follows the stories of a couple of new citizens and the path they took to naturalisation. This, or other forms of [testimonials](#), will provide personal interest stories for the public at large, while giving immigrants first-hand information on people overcoming obstacles and succeeding in their quest for citizenship. These should be developed with a local media agency using the stories of people that have attended your services.
- ⊕ **Understand Your Eligibility:** Is the person (or their spouse/children) eligible? This can be established via a citizenship self-assessment tool or questionnaire, which allows people to answer questions regarding their circumstances, and duly informs them of their eligibility based on the national legislation.
 - If YES: What do they have to do to apply? What documents do they need? Where can they

go to get help with their application? Include links to download any forms that would be needed.

- If NO: What do they need to do in order to become eligible? Links to services that may support them in becoming eligible (link to Assistance)
- ⊕ **Assistance:** Locator tool to find the local services such as legal assistance or language or civic integration classes that could be used by those who are not yet eligible. There should also be a link to the Contact section here in order to have the details of one-to-one contact points.
- ⊕ **Prepare for the language and/or integration tests:** Explanation of who is required to take the tests, what they should expect, and examples of the tests and test questions. Videos of how the tests or interviews work could also be incorporated here.

Voting

- ⊕ **Voter eligibility:** Who is eligible to vote? When are they entitled to vote?
- ⊕ **Register to vote:** If registration is necessary, what are the benefits of registering to vote? Is it obligatory once they do register? Can they fill out potential voter registration forms online? If not, provide forms for download. Can they register directly

through your organisation? If so, inform them how. An easy to understand example from the UK can be found [here](#).

- ⊕ **Voting system:** For those people who have recently acquired voting rights or first time voters, it would be useful to give them information explaining how the voting system works in their country. This could also interest those people who don't have to register, and should encourage increased voter turnout at upcoming elections and/or referenda. If a national coalition has the appropriate partners, this could even be developed as a democratic citizenship class, and you could lobby for it to be included in mainstream integration courses.
- ⊕ **Why vote?** Explain the main benefits of being able to vote in general, highlighting the work carried out by each different institution (Parliament/Senate/Presidency/Local government/Regional government/Referendum). Make links to any campaigns that are running on this topic, such as the [Bite the Ballot campaign](#) in the UK.
- ⊕ **Your vote:** This section will be developed in association with upcoming elections/referenda. Here, the upcoming voting opportunities will be outlined, and details about each will be given. For example, for upcoming elections, the type of election will be explained,

candidates, their parties and policies will be introduced, and if possible a link will be made to a tool that helps people to match their policy preferences etc. to candidates, such as the [EUVOX voting advice application](#). Where possible, the language should be simple and easy to understand, so that it is easily understood by all users. In a referendum, both sides of the campaign should be outlined with the pros and cons of each clearly explained.

- ⊕ If a good voting website already exists in your country, such as [I can vote in Luxembourg](#) or [Elections Canada](#), links will be established with these websites. Ideally, they would also include a link to the national website.

Political Participation

- ⊕ **Join a political party:** Who is entitled to join political parties? Is it the same for every party? Explain the step by step process to become a member such as those produced by [UK's Electoral Commission](#) or [Scotland's Beyond Barriers](#).
- ⊕ **Become a political candidate:** Who is eligible to run as a candidate? What do they need to do to run? If this section of the campaign is developed in advance of elections, you should include information on candidates and their programmes, or at least link

to another website that gathers this information.

- ⊕ **Join an Association:** Why join an association? What associations could they join? A list of associations that are open to new members could be provided, such as sports or residents associations or community groups in that area. Young people could be encouraged to get involved in their student representative body, while workers could be supported to join their local trade union. See for example the [Northern Ireland Housing Rights Service](#) for an explanation of residents associations or the [Irish Countrywomen's Association](#) for information on this association for women living in rural areas.
- ⊕ **Volunteering:** This section of the website should answer the following questions: What is volunteering? What are the benefits of volunteering? What are the options for volunteering locally? Problem solving for volunteers? Tips on volunteering etc. The [Volunteering England website](#) covers a lot of this information and also offers a [locator function](#) to find volunteering opportunities around England. [Volunteermatch](#) directly links volunteers to openings in areas that they are interested.

Events

- ⊕ **Events:** The section can be used to highlight upcoming Naturalisation ceremonies or One-Stop-Shop events. It can also collect photos and summaries of events that have recently taken place, to give people an idea of what to expect at the next event.

News

- ⊕ **News:** This section should gather news item relating to your campaign, the advice columns in the newspaper and any other newsworthy events linked to the issues of the campaign. If the Coalition does not have the manpower to update this section regularly, they need just to make sure to send this sort of information to the EU coordinator to include in the EU level Newsletters.

Contact

- ⊕ **Personal assistance:** Is there a hotline number for further assistance? If so, publish it, together with the times that it is available. Include a list of any drop-in centres around the country offering one-on-one support to immigrants with their naturalisation and other requests. (See following section on individual advice)

- ⊕ **Public Authorities:** Link to the relevant public authorities websites that offer information on naturalisation, voting and political participation.

Frequently Asked Questions

These Factsheets, will regroup all of the relevant information on naturalisation, voting and political participation together, in the guise of FAQs. These can then be printed out as hand-outs for Group Processing or other information sessions organised by the Coalition.

B. Citizenship self-assessment tool

A self-assessment tool that allows would-be applicants to understand whether or not they meet the requirements necessary to become a citizen will be developed. MPG will develop the tool with national legal experts in order to make sure that the legal basis is correct for each partner country, and a software designer, in order to create the logic tree, and will then be embedded on each national website.

Depending on the most appropriate format as designated by the experts, the tool will either be an interactive tool with a series of yes or no questions that lead you to understand whether or not you are eligible for citizenship based on your circumstances, or a data-protected questionnaire that would allow immigrants to reach the same conclusion (See examples from [Belgium](#) and [Portugal](#)).

When someone goes on the website to the “Naturalisation – Understand your Eligibility” section, whether from home, an information centre or at a one-stop shop event, they have the option to answer a series of easy-to-understand questions regarding their age, country of birth, parent’s nationality, length of residence, married to a citizen etc., depending on the legal requirements of each partner country. The tool will then indicate if the person is eligible for citizenship and the next steps they should take to apply. If they are not eligible, it will explain why and suggest services within the campaign that could help them to become eligible.

One of the main advantages of this tool is that it respects the privacy of each interested party while allowing them to understand the eligibility conditions for citizenship. The results will not be saved in the system in general, although the immigrant will be able to save or print out a summary of their results. They will be encouraged to bring this to an upcoming one-stop-shop meeting (for which they should be given the time and place) or to a one-on-one meeting with a member of your Coalition (referral or legal advice service) for additional advice or support. This print out should include the following information:

- ⊕ Does the applicant meet the requirements? Yes/No (includes list of answers to questions)
- ⊕ If yes: What steps need to be taken to apply for naturalisation? What

documents does the applicant need to assemble in order to finalise the application? Where can they go for personal support with their application?

- ⊕ If no: What requirements do they not fulfill? Does the coalition have any services that can help them fill those requirements (eg. Language learning centres, support with integration exam preparation)? Where can they go for personal support with the preparation?
- ⊕ A summary of the law and complete set of requirements they need to fulfill should be available as further reading, together with any documents that need to be completed.

C. Individual Support

Although the Website and the self-assessment tool are available to inform interested people around the clock, it is recommendable to offer a more personalised service to those people who have more particular questions, or more complicated legal cases (e.g. rejections/appeals or obscure grounds for naturalisation), which cannot be resolved through standardised campaign materials and services. This type of one-on-one support can be delivered through many of the campaign's channels:

- ⊕ Dedicated **hotline** manned by volunteers with the possibility to refer calls to lawyers.
- ⊕ **Referrals and Legal Advice** can be provided on through a drop-in centre or appointments. A Legal Advice Station within the One-Stop-Shop can provide specialised lawyers or volunteers who record all the relevant information for later referral to lawyers.
- ⊕ **Advice columns** in mainstream or immigrant-run media, that answer questions from immigrants who write in regarding their particular case.

Collecting information on the general questions asked and solutions for more complicated cases will allow the campaign to improve its materials and develop a detailed Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section and general Factsheet for future applicants.

Live Hotline

In order to serve the broadest number of people possible, the preferred option would be to set up a Hotline that is open at least two mornings a week. If the Hotline is open to the public two mornings a week, then the volunteers would also work two afternoons a week carrying out research and making call-backs where necessary.

- ⊕ Pros:
 - It provides a direct way to serve community needs in real time,

serving wide areas as well as hard to reach populations.

- It centralises information and resources while offering a very concrete service to the community and funders.
- As a live hotline, a stronger connection is created with callers than a simple voice messaging service or the website.

⊕ Cons:

- Requires dedicated staff or volunteers to answer, preferably with a legal background. Volunteers may leave after a short period, so even if are given training, this may not serve your organisation in the long term.
- Often cannot give official legal advice, only general information, as the person has not been met nor their documentation looked at.
- No time to research questions (unless you dedicate time to this specifically), but this can be followed up with call-backs in the afternoon once research has been carried out.
- Hotline may not be accessible to some due to costs, hours and language.

Referrals and Legal Advice Services

A **referral service** within the partner organisations acts as a basic information point that gives referrals to other services (Factsheets, Hotline, Citizenship Information Bureau, Legal advice etc.), or if the resources are available, may help immigrants fill out their citizenship applications forms, register to vote or find suitable volunteer positions.

⊕ Pros:

- Comprehension levels are much higher through face-to-face meetings, so it will be easier for someone to explain what they need and understand what they should do.
- Staff/volunteers can clearly outline the services that people should access in order to have their issues resolved, and necessary steps to take if they should go to a number of services. This personalized service may make it easier for people to understand what the next steps are.

⊕ Cons:

- Opening hours may coincide with most people's working hours, thus they cannot attend.
- If there is a high demand for this service, people may spend a long time queuing and thus feel frustrated or that they are wasting their time.

- This sort of information will all be available on the Website or at the One-stop-shop event, thus if they are internet savvy or available to attend the one-stop-shop, they would be better off attending there.

A **legal advice service** would give the chance for one-on-one meetings with specialised lawyers or volunteers by appointment. If the meeting is by appointment, this allows the lawyer to prepare the necessary material to deal with that person's case, and if necessary, to find an interpreter who can speak the person's language. However, helping a person in a complicated and rare case comes with high staff costs but usually little broader impact for other beneficiaries of the campaign. The one exception is strategic litigation, where this type of 'case spotting' allows a specialised lawyer to identify committed and sympathetic individuals whose case can be used to resolve a system-wide problem through a court decision. For this individualised support, the campaign may be able to provide a specialised lawyer within the coordination staff of the campaign. However, this staff may be quickly overwhelmed by the number of requests.

Another option for the campaign is a partnership with an existing network of specialised citizenship/immigration lawyers, for example with immigrant-support NGOs, citizens' advice bureaus or specialised law firms. The campaign coordination can then refer the most complicated cases to either these free NGO services or pro bono/legal

aid/low-cost law firms. This type of partnership will help to mainstream legal support on citizenship/voting into existing NGO and citizens' legal advice services. This option requires that the campaign coordinators expand their 'address book' of the existing services supporting specialised legal advice and strategic litigation.

⊕ Pros:

- Legal officers can give personalised legal advice to those attending the centre once they have had their documentation reviewed.
- This option may be cheaper for those attending than if they were to visit regular legal adviser.

⊕ Cons:

- Despite having an appointment, people may not turn up at their allotted time, thus meaning that the volunteer/staff is not attending anyone during that time.
- Individualised legal support is resource-intensive and less cost-effective for the campaign as a whole.

Advice Columns

Developed like an "agony aunt" question/answer section in mainstream or migrant-run media, this section will allow immigrants to write in with a question

regarding naturalisation, voting or political participation and get a direct reply to their questions. It will make other immigrants aware of the possibilities of naturalising, voting and participating, and for the native population, raise awareness of how complicated it can be for immigrants to do any of the above, but also will show that they are interested in these issues. Furthermore, it can bust or dispel myths about the requirements and address issues of practice which many applicants may not know.

⊕ Pros:

- It provides useful and personalised information in an entertaining manner.
- It can raise awareness of the issues affecting immigrants to a wider audience.

⊕ Cons:

- It may take some time for immigrants to be aware of this service, so in the meantime, the questions would have to come from the organization.

D. Follow-up

Follow-up with users of the campaign's services (both one-on-one and group processing) will improve the campaign's effectiveness for raising naturalisation, voter registration, and political participation rates. Users may not have taken the next step because they need additional information, encouragement, or

individualised support. They may also face personal or procedural obstacles that were not anticipated by the campaign. For example, immigrants with certain nationalities, legal statuses or local authorities may have difficulties obtaining the necessary documentation or face incorrect interpretations of the legal requirements that lead to informal refusals by authorities to accept applications or formal rejections. This follow-up will give some users the extra push that they need to take that next step. The information collected through this follow-up should be used as part of good internal management to make improvements to the campaign on an ongoing basis.

Follow-up requires for the campaign to collect basic contact information on users upon their consent and in conformity with the country's data protection requirements. For example, participants at event-based sessions can be asked to complete an individualised information form or self-assessment tool including their contact details and background information relating to their eligibility. Users of web or technology tools such as self-assessment tools can also be asked to provide their email address if they want this information to be used by the campaign to provide them with free follow-up assistance. Through the collection of this information, the campaign coordinator or volunteers can follow-up by email or telephone on a one-on-one basis and, if necessary, orient users to additional individualised support.

More informally, follow-up can be done by the partner organisations that have strong

ongoing contacts with users, namely immigrant-run NGOs and teachers/service-providers. Committed campaign volunteers from these organisations are best able to provide additional information and encouragement, understand their community's specific obstacles, and maintain referral links to the campaign coordinators.

In some countries, the cost of citizenship applications can be a stumbling block for a number of interested and motivated individuals. It would be a shame to lose out on the opportunity to help them with their application due to their inability to pay the fees at that moment in time. By partnering

with financial organisations or with an ethical bank, micro-credit systems could be put in place in order to support them financially in their bid for naturalisation.

Follow up with the volunteers is also important for retaining volunteers and showing your appreciating for their donated time. The contact list built up through the workshops are important for engaging applicants after they complete the naturalisation process for civic engagement and involvement in the organisation. Some of the best volunteers for the workshops and voter registration were once citizenship applicants.

5. One-Stop Shop for Naturalisation, Voting and Political Participation

This event-based model, or group processing workshop, will act as a one-stop shop for all of those interested in naturalisation, registering to vote, finding out more about the voting system, and how they can participate more politically and/or volunteer. Developing this event will allow national Coalitions to inform, advise and support a large number of individuals in a short space of time, and be one of the main channels to inform immigrants about all of the services that the Coalition and all its partners provide. The allocation of resources to each section will depend on the timing of the event (what are the topics of interest) and the target group chosen (based on their interests). The format of the event may be adapted so as to

introduce it into citizenship ceremonies or other large gatherings as well.

It may be strategically useful to organise a number of one-stop shop events throughout the year (we consider one every two months to be feasible), concentrating on a different immigrant community on each occasion². The aim is to work with an immigrant NGO from that community to organise the event, which will help you with outreach and identifying the best place and time to hold the event (at a well-recognised hub for that community, on a day and at a time you know they are can attend). Focusing on one given community at a time also gives them more ownership of the event and will allow the community to continue with the work themselves after the event, provided they are given some training on the legal aspects.

² The [EUDDO Observatory on Citizenship website](#) may be useful to identify the numbers of immigrants from different countries, as it offers access to statistics on the acquisition of citizenship country by country. For each country, insofar as these are available, you can find aggregate data from 1985 onwards on the following characteristics of acquisitions of

citizenship: total number of acquisitions, mode of acquisition (procedure), citizenship of origin, country of birth, region of residence, sex, age, decisions on applications for naturalisation.

ONE-STOP SHOP FOR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Main Entrance

Sign in Table(s) for:
*Volunteers
*Media
*Dignitaries

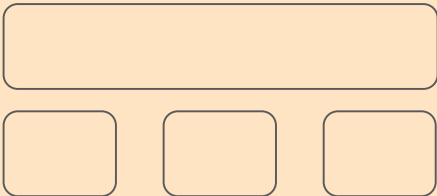
Sign in Tables:
*Assessment of Interest

Public space / Waiting area
Presentations by officials, videos, posters, testimonials

Participation Stations

Station #7: Information available on joining political parties, associations, volunteering possibilities (including database)

Parallel events include citizenship ceremonies, Meet & Greet and debates.



Naturalisation Stations

Station #1: Understand your eligibility!

Assessment of eligibility for naturalisation



Station #2: Inform yourself!

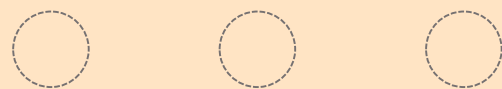
Information: Number of information points depends on main requirements of the law



Station #3a - Preparation / Station #3b - Processing

For options relating to the format for stations 3a and 3b, see the close up in Option A or Option B.

Processing services: photocopies, fingerprinting, photos for ID



Voting Stations

Station #4: Are you eligible to vote? / Voter registration

Station #5: Voting system

Station #6: Your vote!

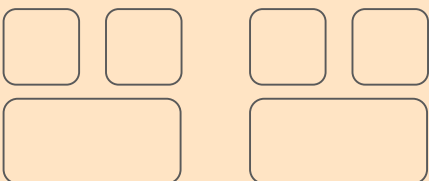


Chart 2: One-Stop-Shop

Sign-in table: Assessment of Interest

There should be two sign-in tables:

1. A sign in table for volunteers, media, public officials, organization / association representatives, service providers etc.
2. A sign in table to decide where to send the applicants next by assessing their interest.

⊕ If they wish to apply for naturalisation, provide them with a screening form (along the lines of the citizenship self-assessment test) and direct them to the waiting area to fill it out before visiting the Naturalisation Stations. If they have done a pre-screening before attending the event, they just need to show their printed-out summary, rather than filling out the screening form again. They should then be invited to visit the Naturalisation Section.

⊕ If they wish to find out if they are eligible to vote, wish to register or find out about the voting process, they should be directed to Station #4 where they will receive information on how to register and how the voting system works, and in the case of an upcoming

election/referendum, will have a chance to get to know the candidates and their policies or both sides of the referendum debate.

⊕ If they wish to volunteer or get politically active, they should be directed to Station #5 where they can find out more about how and why they should get out and vote, which political parties or associations they could join and what options there are for them to volunteers locally.

Public Space / Waiting Area

After signing in, applicants are directed to the public space or waiting area. This area will be decorated with posters and testimonials that are on screens/walls with success stories people who have already gone through the process. A number of videos could be playing on different aspects of the One-Stop Shop. For example, a video could be shown on how to prepare for citizenship or language exams, such as this one from [The Netherlands](#). Another video could show how the voting system works, or a mobilization-type video could be shown to encourage people to sign up to associations/political parties or as volunteers in NGOs etc.

This time should also be used to talk to the participants to establish what they would like to learn during the Workshop and for

those interested in naturalization, why they wish to naturalise. This will help to focus them as they visit the stations and give the organisers ideas of what people expect from them. Comparing this information to the feedback at the debrief session will be very useful for organisers to improve the services for the next session.

Naturalisation

The objective of the Naturalisation area is to assess, inform, prepare and assist people with the hope of becoming citizens. The number of actual stations necessary for these tasks will depend largely on how complicated the naturalisation requirements are – ideally, the fewer the number of stations, the better. The basic layout of the Naturalisation area will have the following stations:

1. **Assessment:** assess the person's eligibility for naturalization.
2. **Information:** the information points will deal with the main requirements according to the law, thus this will differ across countries.

3a. **Preparation:** if the person is not yet eligible, what do they need to prepare to be eligible?

3b. **Processing:** if the person is eligible, the application can be processed together.

Station #1 – Assessment of eligibility for naturalisation

The first station consists of lawyers who will review the pre-screening forms that the person has filled in during the waiting period, or the printed-out results of their Citizenship Self-Assessment Test. If they have not filled in either of these, there should be a computer station available where they can go through the test on their own or with a volunteer if they need help.

Once the assessor has gone through the form, they will confirm whether or not the person is eligible, and highlight those sections that make them ineligible if that is the case. If they are not yet eligible, they will encourage the person to visit the Information Stations and Station 3a on preparation, so that they can be given further information on how to overcome their ineligibility. If they are eligible, they will encourage them to visit the Information Stations so that they understand the whole procedure, and then go to Station 3b for processing.

Station #2 – Information

There will a number of information stations dealing with the main requirements according to each national law. Those that are easier to deal with such as Residence, Criminal Record, Good Character Requirements or Fees will be dealt with together, while more complicated requirements such as language/integration, economic resources, dual nationality and children will each have their own information station. A trained volunteer or expert will explain how to prepare for each

requirement and the necessary documents for processing, while participants can ask questions to get a better understanding of their situation. The number and themes of each station will be decided by the organisers according to the law and the requirements of the main nationality that is attending the event that day.

It will be up to the organisers whether or not everyone should take **Option A** - attend all of the Information Stations before moving on to general (3a) Preparation or (3b) Processing Stations, or **Option B**, where each Information Stand is supported by a (3a) Preparation and (3b) Processing option, so that people can choose support on the preparation/processing of each requirement individually.

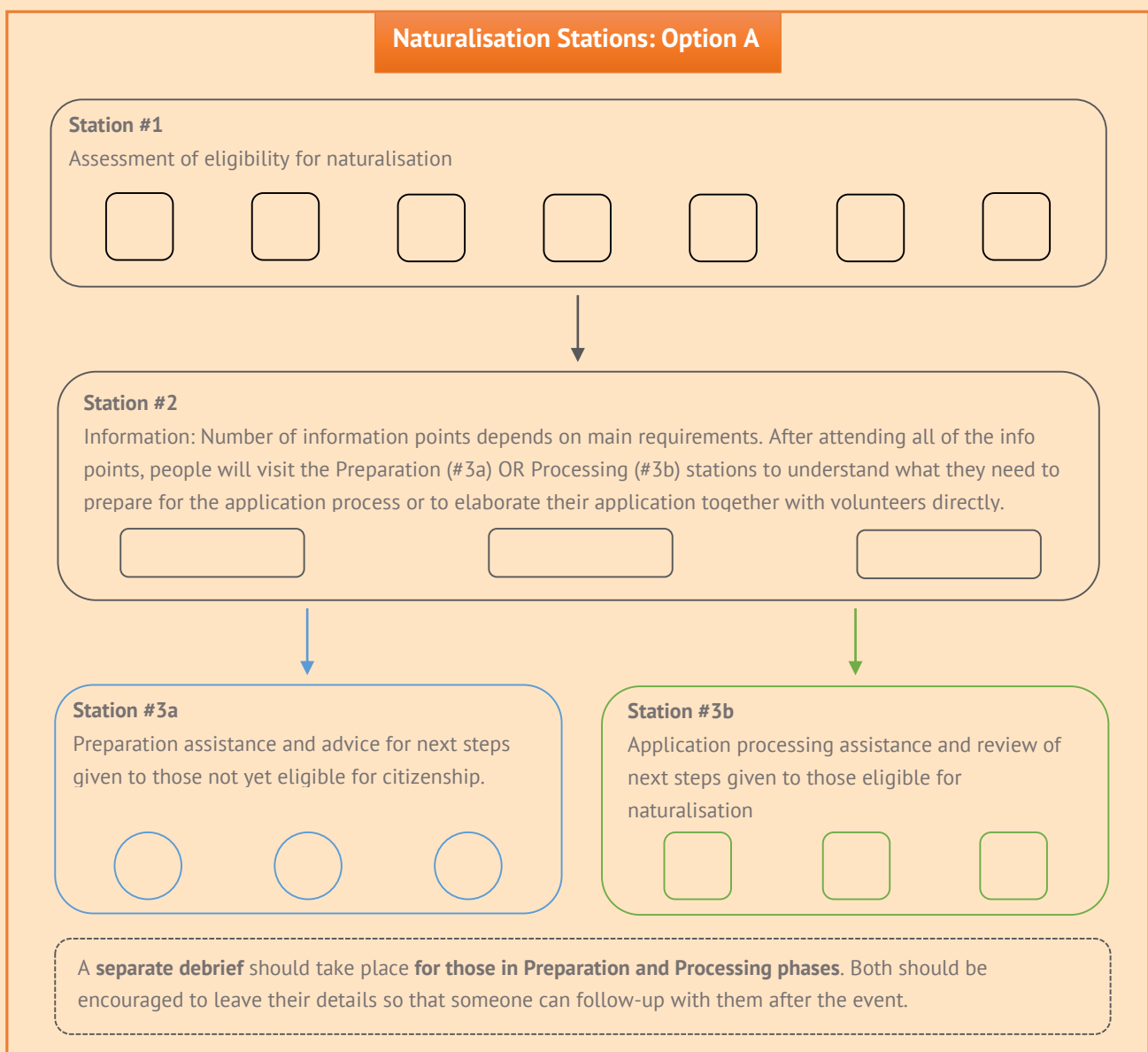


Chart 3: One-stop Shop – Naturalisation Stations – Option A – General Preparation and Processing tables

Naturalisation Stations: Option B

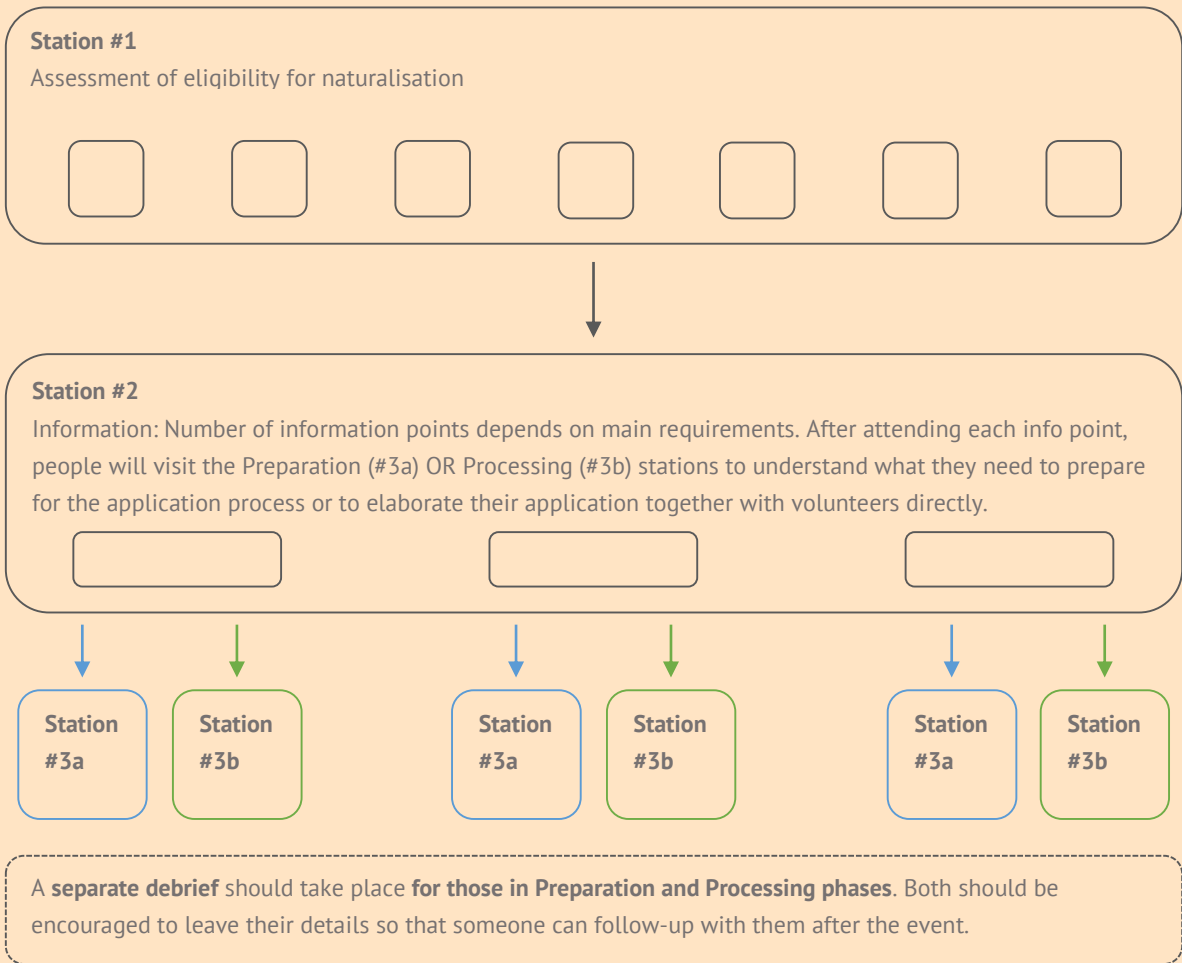


Chart 4: One-stop Shop – Naturalisation Stations – Option B –Preparation and Processing tables dedicated to given topics

Station #3a – Preparation (for those not yet eligible)

Those people interested in naturalising but who have not yet reached all of the criteria for naturalisation should attend the preparation stand(s).

Option A: The attendees who are not eligible have visited all of the information stands first and then attend a general Preparation Stand, where they are given a Naturalisation Factsheet (also available on the website) and helped to ascertain what they need to do in order to qualify (based on the assessment sheet they received above).

Option B: Each Information Stand is backed up by a Preparation and Processing stand, thus here the Preparation stand offers support on the topic covered at that information stand. For example, if the person has to prove their language and/or integration level, they should be introduced to the tests and to the various service providers offering these courses, ideally with someone from a partner association present so that the applicant can sign up for the course in situ.

The Naturalisation Factsheet should also be available at each stand so that the attendee has access to a copy no matter which stand they attend.

Station #3b – Processing (for the eligible)

Option A: The attendees who are eligible have visited all of the information stands first and then attend a general Processing Stand. At this station the legal reviewer will:

- ⊕ Review the residency permit and other information to ensure the applicant meets the minimum requirements to apply for citizenship.
- ⊕ Check applicant's language ability if this is necessary for citizenship. If there is a test and this has not yet been done, they should be sent to the 3a Preparation stand.
- ⊕ Check if applicant qualifies for any exemptions, such as fee waiver, if this is available in your country.
- ⊕ Fill in any forms together if possible so that the applicant (or the organisation directly) can send these to the necessary authorities.

Option B: Each Information Stand is backed up by a Preparation and a Processing stand, thus here the Processing stand offers processing support on the topic covered at that information stand. For example, if we again take the example of the language/integration tests, if they have not yet taken the tests but would have the level to do so, they should be given the opportunity to try the test(s) in a test situation to evaluate their level and make sure they are ready for them. They could also be encouraged to sign up directly to take the language or civic integration test at this stand, and reminded that they should include the results in their citizenship application.

If the organisers chose Option B for Processing, there must be a final review

table that reviews the overall application with the applicant to see if anything is missing (similar to Option A).

Whether they go for Option A or B, translators should be on hand to stay with the applicant throughout the process.

The application preparer will take the applicant through the application question by question and section by section, note which documents are missing if any, and then send them to have their documents copied and photos taken.

- ⊕ If the organisation can hand in the application for the applicant and the application is completed, they should collect the applicant's folder and collect any fee necessary.
- ⊕ If the applicant still has to gather documents, they should be given a list of these documents, given a list of next steps and who to call if further information is required.

Finally, applicants should be encouraged to visit Stations #4 and #5 on Voting and Political Participation.

Debrief

It would be useful to follow up with debriefs for those who have gone through the (3a) Preparation strand, and another for those who have gone through the (3b) Processing strand. This provides

questions and answers to the participants, in case they have been left with any doubts.

Voting

Station #4 - Assessment of eligibility to vote / Registration

An assessment station should be put in place in order to establish if a participant is **eligible to vote**. If it is necessary to register to vote, once the participant has spoken to a trained volunteer and established that they are eligible, they should be given information on how to fill out the voter registration form, and in the best case scenario, they would fill out the voter registration form in situ, which could then be sent off by the organisers.

If they are not eligible to vote yet, or do not have to register, they may still move on to the information session where they will be informed about how the voting system works and how to make the most of their vote in the future.

Station #5 – Voting System

This station could be developed as an information session on how the system works. Ideally taking the form of a democratic citizenship class, a video could also be shown on how the system works, with someone on hand to answers questions relating to this issue. Simulations could also be made available so that people can practice how to vote themselves.

Station #6 – Your Vote!

In the event that there are upcoming elections/referenda, the Coalition may decide to develop this aspect of the One-Stop-Shop as the main event. Drawing attention to the issue by inviting public figures to meet and greet participants may be a good draw for immigrants and attention raiser in the general public. Together with their local (preferably migrant youth based) media partner, Coalitions will develop videos which encourages young people to vote, making sure to include a wide variety of people from all cultural backgrounds, such as this one from the [UK](#). In this section, particularly close to elections or referenda, active participation in voting can be supported through games such as [The Basics](#) which will make people aware of the importance of voting.

Would you like to volunteer or get more politically active?

Station #7 – Information

Material from different providers will be made available on topics such as joining a political party, becoming a candidate, joining associations and available volunteer positions and the benefits of all of these. A database of parties and associations looking to extend their membership, and volunteer organisations should be made available.

This type of general information stand can be supported by any of the following

activities, to create more motivating and engaging sessions:

- ⊕ *Citizenship Ceremony*: This station is most likely to work well as a parallel side event. For example, citizenship ceremonies are an excellent occasion for a 'marketplace' for volunteering and political participation where naturalising immigrants can be directly registered to vote, meet their local representatives, and meet local civic and political organisations looking for volunteers. They are also useful to make the benefits of naturalisation more visible to eligible immigrants and make the importance of shared citizenship and the contributions of immigrants more visible to the general public. In the event that a One-Stop-Shop is organised in conjunction with such an event, small tables could be set up to give out information about naturalisation and voting, and people could be directed to the Coalition's services in order to get further help with their applications etc.
- ⊕ *Meet and Greet*: Service providers, NGO/Association/Political party representatives, High profile success stories could be on hand to explain the different options available to visitors. These people would directly answer the questions of immigrants, thus giving support to the initial information they receive

- ⊕ *Debates*: Linked to a thematic, concrete topic that affects the local population in general, these debates may convince people of the necessity to participate more in their community in order to change the way things are currently run.
- ⊕ *Voting advice applications* that identify a person's political preferences, such as those prepared during the run-up to the European elections, could be offered.
- ⊕ Who is eligible
- ⊕ What materials are needed
- ⊕ Where people can go/Who people can contact to get questions answered
- ⊕ If you are promoting an event, include the location, date, and time of event and registration information (website link or hours, days, location, etc).

Public Space / Waiting Area

Back in the public space/waiting area, it would be useful to follow up with a general debrief that provides a question and answer session to the participants on the next steps, in case they have been left with any doubts.

Promotion

In order to clearly promote your event, produce posters and brochures with the most important information available on them, and distribute them via the Website, through the Coalition network, and particularly amongst the immigrant community that you are working with on this occasion. Key points to include are:

In any case, all of your services will be used to promote each other. The website is the most all-encompassing output that can be used to promote the individual advice services (through the Contact section), while the one-stop shop events are highlighted through the events section. The individual advice services can highlight the website and any events due to take place, as well as the other individual advice services. The one-stop-shop should also have information available regarding the website and the regular advice services, through brochures and posters available throughout the workshop. These brochures and posters should also be available in each of the partner organisations, and should be disseminated to each of their networks, in particular the migrant communities.