

CROSS-CULTURAL ALIGNMENT TOOLS

Expectations and **N**on-formal **S**kills
to **E**mpower **M**igrants and to Boost **L**ocal **E**conomy



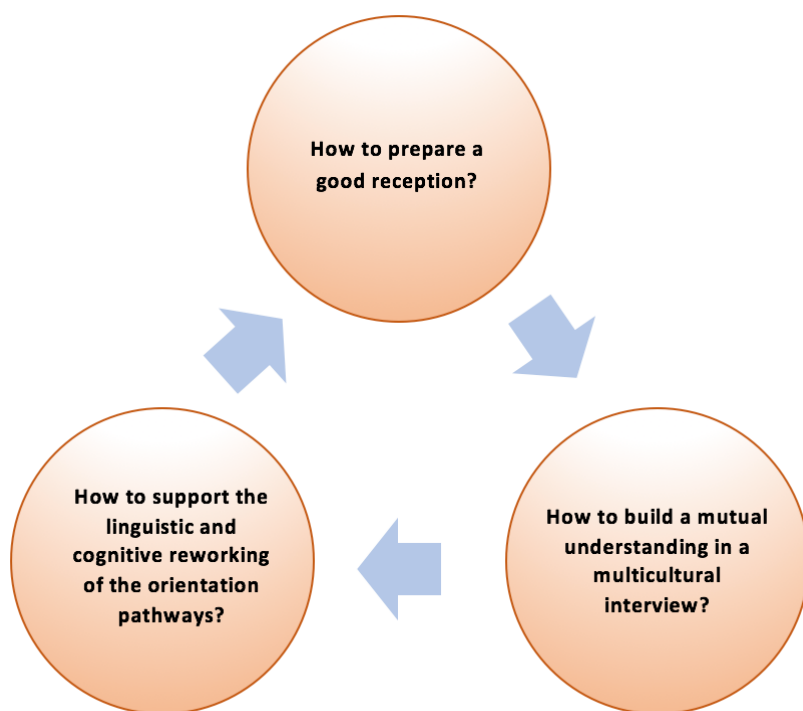
ensemble

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INTRODUCTION

Managing an orientation interview with immigrants, who are in a situation of vulnerability due to their migration pathway, poor linguistic skills and insufficient knowledge of the cultural and professional context of the country of arrival, raises many questions. We tried to formulate three of these questions, starting from the reflection on how we can break down an orientation interview and which skills are to be integrated by adopting a "cross-cultural" approach. This term refers to the assumption and sharing of the following points: the acquisition of an attitude towards decentralization; collaboration with other professionals and fields of knowledge; the implementation of organizational changes and solutions facilitating the communication. The result is a kind of "guide to the interview", due to the direct and practical nature of the suggestions. But at the same time, it presents itself as a self-training tool for the theoretical windows that it invites to open and deepen. The 3 question marks are the following and represent a short summary of the path:



In summary, the tool consists of:

1. Table - "Cross-cultural competences". Each competence is declined in: learning objectives - knowledges - capacities - resources available.
 2. Checklist - operator. A quick and immediate tool to self-assess your professional practice in managing the complexity of the new beneficiary.
 3. Deepening sheets. Each sheet deals with a phase of the interview.
- The information given is practical, but with references to fertile theoretical research structures in this historical moment. We have selected the themes that seem to us to be extensible to all the host Countries, but aware that even within the European context, organizational and communicative practices are distinguished by cultural peculiarities.

For each question, are available: a practical suggestion (an idea ... to be developed) and a minimal bibliography on the topics of reference; all resources that need to be implemented and adapted according to the European area and linguistic reception.

This resource is available for guidance and vocational training professionals; the invitation is that good personal practices, reflections on proposed themes and resources that everyone can create, could find sharing contexts to enrich and support complex situations in the best possible way.

TOOL ENSEMBLE

Skills check list

	Never	Sometimes Occasionally	With regularity	Always
Sequence I				
I collect information about the beneficiary that I will meet (name, surname, country of origin, reference structures, etc.)				
I search for references and information about the beneficiary's context of origin before the interview				
I review the useful/necessary goals for the meeting				
I review the useful/necessary resources (networks, services, etc.) for the meeting				
Sequence II				
I show interest, attention, empathy				
I use the practice of active listening				
I reformulate the question in case I'm not sure of understanding				
I respect the phases of silence				
I pay attention to the implicit cultural representations both of the beneficiary and mine, as an operator				
I welcome the different points of view				
Use of tools for collecting information (map, summary, bulleted list ...)				
Sequence III				
I browse to the information collected				
I think back to the answers given				
I offer a list of useful resources (networks, services, etc.) to which the beneficiary can refer				
I look for more resources and links				

CROSS-CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Competence 1

Identify the cultural, personal and professional characteristics and conditions of the newly arrived immigrant, taking into account the characteristics of the context of origin, as well as the personal and cultural specificities.

Learning objectives

- Acquire basic information on regulatory, geopolitical, economic contexts, etc. within which the reception activities take place;
- Acquire personal information from the beneficiary and place it in the correct cultural and professional dimension of origin;
- Communicate effectively and appropriately with people from different cultures.

Capacities (behaviors to be adopted)

- Cultivate interest in different cultures and worlds;
- Being able to open up to different points of view;
- Adopt flexibility and awareness in communication;
- Apply empathic relational modalities;
- Apply the suspension of judgment.

Tools to support the acquisition of competence

1. ENSEMBLE tool - COUNTRY FICHES
2. ENSEMBLE tool - Checklist
3. ENSEMBLE tool - PREPARE YOURSELF FOR THE INTERVIEW

Required knowledges

- Specific cultural concepts (religious, political, social, economic, cultural, environmental, etc.);
- Elements of human geography and populations;
- Historical phenomena and dynamics of migratory processes;
- Basic communication techniques and management of interviews;
- Verbal and non-verbal communication techniques;
- Basic techniques and tools for managing cultural relations.

To know more

TOOLKIT

<https://www.coe.int/it/web/language-support-for-adult-refugees/list-of-all-tools>

1. TOOLKIT, Tool 1 - The geopolitical context of migration;
2. TOOLKIT, Tool 3 - Ethical and intercultural issues to be known when working with refugees;
3. TOOLKIT, Tool 4 - To deal appropriately with cultural differences and to manage intercultural communication;
4. TOOLKIT - Tool 34 - Management of the first meetings;
5. TOOLKIT - Tool 40 - Start to socialize;
6. TOOLKIT - Tool 19 - Break the ice and create confidence within the group;

KILT project

<https://assr.regione.emilia-romagna.it/it/servizi/pubblicazioni/rapporti-documenti/libro-kilt>

7. KILT: sequence 5.3 - Cartography of life trajectories;
8. KILT: sequence 6.1 - The reception, the meeting with a resident, a beneficiary, a patient.

PREPARE YOURSELF FOR THE INTERVIEW!

Identify the cultural, personal and professional characteristics and conditions of the newly-arrived immigrant, taking into account the characteristics of the context of origin, as well as personal and cultural specificities.

How do you prepare a good reception?

Before each interview, it is useful to take a few minutes to collect the information available on the person we are going to orient. To facilitate this, a Checklist is available in Section I, which suggests what it might be useful to investigate or have close at hand during the meeting (e.g. maps, photos, documents ...). Above all, choose among the resources provided in the section Supporting Tools for the acquisition of competence those that you find useful for managing the interview or simply to bring your attention to the experimentation of a new instrument or approach. The use of resources, such as the Country Fiches, not only serve to have a general idea of the context of origin, but allow to memorize the names of cities, regions, languages, typical dishes ... which in the absence of sufficient linguistic knowledge may turn out to be effective elements. For example: if you want to know the city of origin and the question which city of Pakistan do you come from? is not understood, reformulating the request with Do you come from... (Islamabad)? Do you come from...(Gujarat?), often the interlocutor could understand better. When you don't know the language, recognizing a known element is one of the turning points to make hypotheses about the type of request. Keep in mind that, with certain exceptions, the linguistic competence of a person who has been in the host country for about a year could be at most an A2 level of the QCRE, which means a small autonomy in managing the interview in L2. Draw also your attention to the space. In most cases, interviews take place in places not prepared for this function (e.g. a large schoolroom, or canteen), or in an office room, in a "face-to-face", separated by a table. Flexibility and adaptability is a quality of the operators in this sector, but it is good to keep in mind the positive effect of an orderly and welcoming environment.

Even just a carafe of water and a glass available to "refresh" the situation are enough, especially if the time of the interview is long. Although it is always an asymmetric relationship between operator-beneficiary in the respective roles of "power" (professional, communicative, social status), few measures can contribute to create a mood of trust and reliability. It is good to know that not for all cultures the one-to-one relationship represents the ideal situation to open up to confidences and sharing.

So do not be surprised that the beneficiary can be accompanied by one or more people and it is up to you to evaluate from time to time the inclusion or exclusion of these chaperons in the orientation interview.

At the European level, there are active devices that provide for a group and multicultural settings, especially in the psychiatric care sector (see T. Nathan and M.R. Moro).

These devices can be used in a prevention of suffering, naturally adapted, even in other contexts. It is about spreading a shared culture around a cross-cultural approach. This is to open up to the awareness that for some migrants only the word that circulates in a specially assembled group, and therefore shared by several people, is the word that has value. The gestures of the first meeting like handing, smiling, looking into the eyes, accompanying with a gesture of the hand ... are culturally connoted, as well as the verbal formulas introductory to the meetings. It is not a matter of transforming our modes of interaction and start an interview, but of becoming aware of the potential problems of intercultural communication.

For this reason, we provide a very useful and developing resource: the Map of Intercultural Communication. You will find cultural values, verbal and non-verbal languages and communication events in many geographical and cultural areas of the world. The choice of using the formal or informal speech register is subjective, depending on whether you want to recreate a more or less familiar atmosphere. First of all, it is useful to ask ourselves how we would react in the same situation and what motivates us to a specific choice. This is to say that it is not the register itself that represents an obstacle, or facilitates comprehension, since at the initial levels the attention is more on words that carry meaning: for example, in the sentence what language do you speak? the attention is on the words language and speak. Finally, the voice. Let us not forget that through the voice we express a communicative energy. Pay attention to the tone of the voice so that it is loud and clear enough to become a facilitating element of understanding.



An idea...to be developed!

The opening of an orientation interview can use icebreaker tools, where a small use of the language is required, but a lot of non-verbal interaction. For example, build cards with photos or icons representing jobs and professions. Ask to your interlocutor to choose the cards that belong to his experience. Do the same thing, at the same time, and represent your professional path. You can also put images in order of importance, or divide them between activities that you like or dislike.

Additional resources

Map of Intercultural Communication: available in
<http://www.mappaintercentrale.it>

Common European Framework of Languages (QCER): available in
<https://www.coe.int/it/web/lang-migrants/cefr-and-profiles>

CROSS-CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Competence 2

Interpret / identify criticalities, necessities and needs of the newly arrived immigrant in relation to the specific migration path and project, even when linguistic mastery is insufficient for the narration.

Capacities (behaviours to be adopted)

- Being able to open up to different points of view;
- Adopt flexibility and awareness in communication;
- Apply empathic relational modalities;
- Apply the suspension of judgment;
- Exercise responsibility;
- Being able to communicate with assertiveness.

Tools to support the acquisition of competence

- ENSEMBLE tool – Checklist;
- ENSEMBLE instrument – GUIDE THE INTERVIEW.

To know more

TOOLKIT

<https://www.coe.int/it/web/language-support-for-adult-refugees/list-of-all-tools>

- TOOLKIT - Instrument 24 - Identify the most urgent needs of refugees;
- TOOLKIT - Instrument 25 - Discover what refugees already know to do and what they will have to do in the language of the host country;
- TOOLKIT - Instrument 29 - The most important things to learn according to refugees.

KILT project

<https://assr.regione.emilia-romagna.it/it/servizi/pubblicazioni/rapporti-documenti/libro-kilt>

- KILT: sequence 6.2 - Non-violent communication: some keys for opening up to the other.

Learning objectives

- Identify and distinguish possible inconveniences, even if not explicitly stated, due to the lived migrant dimension, the lack of support networks, the poor linguistic proficiency, etc.;
- Interpret the beneficiary's demand and the nature of the needs;
- Recognize the personal, cultural and professional resources of the immigrant as resources to be exploited in different contexts;
- Adopt behaviours adapted to the needs and specificities of the beneficiary and relativize the differences and the distances between cultures;
- Interpret cultural codes, eliminate stereotypes and prejudices;
- Develop an empowerment approach.

Required knowledges

- Characteristics, needs and resources of the territory;
- Basic elements of sociology and cultural anthropology;
- Basic communication techniques and management of interviews;
- Verbal and non-verbal communication techniques;
- Basic techniques and tools for managing cultural relations.

GUIDE THE INTERVIEW!

Interpret / identify inconveniences, necessities and needs of the beneficiary in a situation of vulnerability related to the specific path and migration project, even when linguistic mastery is insufficient for the narration.

How to build a mutual understanding in a multicultural interview?

In Section II of the Checklist you can compare yourself with 7 points of attention, which concern both the communication and the attitudes to be held. You can either browse it before the interview or review it at the end to review the sequences. Here we add a further point of attention concerning the words and the use we make of them. When we are immersed in a daily space (professional, scholastic ...), both as professionals and as citizens, we use acronyms and local terms with the naturalness of those who think them universally understandable. Take the habit of not taking anything for granted and, slowly, create a list of those essential technical words to share and ensure mutual understanding. Try to explain them and define them otherwise, with images, if you have the possibility to get translations, or definitions in multiple languages: this could be a group task among operators during self-training or programming phases. Speaking in a clear and simple way and using pluri-lingualism effectively are the pillars of a good interview, especially if a good reception is on the basis. You will find some tips by browsing the TOOLKIT (tool 24, 25; 29) or the KILT material (sequence 6.2) of the To know more section. Just as for words we have to identify the hidden meanings behind the technical language, the same for the implicit cultural representations, in speeches and in behaviours. Beginning not to consider our representations as neutral, especially when talking about services, organizational rules and experiences, we can open and develop our attention to those of our interlocutors. The diversity of cultural universes can make it difficult to establish a relationship of trust, but it is with respect and understanding of the other's truth that we can develop competence and alliance with the interlocutor. Go in a real listening.

An effective communicative technique is the active listening, based on acceptance and empathy, and useful to promote the expression of one's emotions and to know how to listen and perceive the feelings of others. For this reason, train yourself to grasp every aspect: posture, tone of voice, hesitations, silences, etc. and, on this delicate and full of misunderstandings aspect, the advice is to try to always maintain a presence contact with the beneficiary, avoiding to write notes or compile continuously documents during the interview; even if you have the possibility to use a mediator or a translator, ask your questions or give information always talking directly to the migrant, as he/she could easily understand.

Expect rather moments of pause or self-reflection, of both (operator and interlocutor), dedicated to pin down the interesting observations, or review the points for conducting the interview.

These attentions help to develop the attitude towards decentralization and, even when the logic of a dialogue or a behaviour escapes to our understanding as inserted into a different code from ours, we do not judge. Every operator that operates in migratory contexts, and this means with people who carry one or more migratory traumas (normally everyone, because it is common to have a moment of disruption of the equilibrium between the individual and the environment that surrounds him/her), must be aware of the ambivalence that emerges in the interaction and must learn to manage his own emotional reactions. It happens that there are narratives that resonate with the operator's experiences, arousing strong feelings, visceral emotions (technically this process is called counter-transference): it is essential to have the awareness and know how to grasp the difference between simply different cultural modes and the presence of problematic nodes that require specific therapeutic aids.



An idea...to be developed!

How to bring out the needs and resources of a person who can not express his inner world with words? An idea could be to go through the perception of the body. Construct "targets" with paper, in concentric circles, large enough to be placed above the body. At the center, place an image / icon / word that belongs to what you think are the important spheres for an individual harmonious development. For example: the family, nature, love, study, etc.

Ask to the beneficiary to position himself toward the target, on each of the chosen themes: how close? How far? The observation will give you a representation of the value that the interlocutor has toward the different areas. For each one, you can investigate the subjective meaning: ex. what is the family for you?

You can do the same thing, establishing, even if without words, a dialogue on the great themes of the life.

Additional resources

Map of Intercultural Communication: available in
<http://www.mappainterculturale.it>

Common European Framework of Languages (QCER): available in
<https://www.coe.int/it/web/lang-migrants/cefr-and-profiles>

Portal of the Babel Center and the International Association of Ethno-Psycho-Analysis
<https://www.transculturel.eu/>

CROSS-CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Competence 3

Support the beneficiary in the enhancement of own resources and in the construction of own professional project, through an effective help relationship.

Capacities

(behaviors to be adopted)

- Being able to open up to different points of view;
- Adopt flexibility and awareness in communication;
- Apply empathic relational modalities;
- Be able to communicate with assertiveness;
- Take a critical approach;
- Be able to work in a team and with a network approach.

Tools to support the acquisition of competence

- ENSEMBLE tool – Checklist;
- ENSEMBLE instrument – GIVE VALUE TO THE INTERVIEW.

To know more

TOOLKIT

<https://www.coe.int/it/web/language-support-for-adult-refugees/list-of-all-tools>

- TOOLKIT – Tool 55 – The paths of refugees and knowledge of the territory: how to get oriented;
- TOOLKIT – Tool 4 – Address cultural differences appropriately and manage intercultural communication.

KILT project

<https://ass.regione.emilia-romagna.it/servizi/pubblicazioni/rapporti-documenti/libro-kilt>

- KILT: sequence 6.3 – Prejudices, self-esteem and feeling of superiority;
- KILT: sequence 6.4 – The meeting with the Other.

Learning objectives

- Collect, identify and define information;
- Identify possible solutions;
- Consider the available resources;
- Translate needs and resources of the beneficiary in a situation of vulnerability in intervention programs;
- Transfer to the immigrant knowledge elements of the historical-cultural and social reality of the reference context;
- Make immigrants aware of their rights and duties in the context of reference.

Required knowledges

- Characteristics, needs and resources of the reference territory;
- Techniques to design an intervention;
- Basic communication techniques and management of interviews;
- Verbal and non-verbal communication techniques;
- Basic techniques and tools for managing cultural relations;
- Organization and operation of public utility services.

GIVE VALUE TO THE INTERVIEW!

Support the beneficiary in the exploitation of his/her own resources and in the construction of his/her professional project, through an effective help relationship.

How to support the linguistic and cognitive reworking of the orientation path?

As listed in the Sequence III of the Checklist, the interview goes in the final phase. Find a way to make the beneficiary understand that we are in this important step. It can be a word, for example Now let's have look together..., Let's do the last thin..., or, if you've organized the space with three different workstations, simply move physically to the last workstation. This is a delicate phase, in which, more than in the previous ones, you must ensure that your role acts as a mediator, as a passeur, and connects the boundaries between the worlds, creating communicative "steps" and "burrows". If we use the metaphor of the house, after the bedrocks and the supporting columns, we now make sure that we can move from one room to another and from one floor to another, through stairs, doors and windows... from outside to inside and vice versa. The concept of "outside" and "inside" are one of those categories strongly culturally connoted. For example, Western thought makes the "inside" coincide with the unconscious (look inside, what you feel inside...), while, speaking in general terms, for other cultures, for example the traditional African ones, the unknown, the negativity, are "Outside" (witchcraft, possession, clairvoyance...). Consequently, the stories of experiences can more easily be structured on this side of the "outside", and then acted or determined by forces or events external to the person. Most of the working and training realities are built around a complexity that does not always allow an autonomous action by the beneficiary. We can get lost between documents, offices, reservations to be made online or places dedicated to specific services.

If you want your interlocutor to become autonomous, you must find a way to accompany him/her in understanding the urgent things to do, the less urgent but fundamental, the optional ones that can be advantageous. Take care to make available to the beneficiary maps, paper resources, web resources, etc., locating them in the territory, identifying the mode of contact, the features, the times and (if any) the names and contacts of people to meet: it is one of the many ways that give the opportunity to verify understandings and misunderstandings related to our orientation devices.

If you can organize everything in a clear scheme, even better on an interactive whiteboard, or a map of the territory, you can leave some time to identify the information he/she needs: this observation allows you to evaluate his/her autonomy in reading skills, in the recognition of roads or structures of the territory, the initiative and curiosity that he/she has towards the context in which he/she is located.

In this phase, the operator is a bit of a weaver, who tries to reconnect the threads between the information that emerged in the previous phases and what will be the next steps. All in a co-construction relationship, together with the beneficiary of the orientation path. It is time to activate the links between experiences, aspirations and real possibilities. If you have made visual activities (tables, posters, fiches, etc.) in the previous phases, this is the moment to look at the material and make sense of everything. Let your interlocutor try to re-narrate the images he/she has chosen, or reported during the interview, and listen and reinforce the words he/she uses without trying to forcibly insert new ones; make corrections, when necessary, aloud to the words you hear, using exactly the same, only correct, if necessary, so as to fix them. Try to repeat the whole path to verify it with the beneficiary. Then, together, go to create the new project of life and the steps to be taken now: what do you need to study ...? Where to look for this job ...? How to do ..? For the most competent you can summarize the objectives in a personal list (e.g. a minimum of 5 goals to a maximum of 10), perhaps written in a large post-it that the beneficiary brings with him/her until the next appointment. Going out with something concrete in hand is like signing a pact, made a commitment, and this applies to both the operator and the beneficiary. After a long and precious time spent together, a handshake here is a must.



An idea...to be developed!

Poor language skills may require thinking of alternative forms representative of the co-construction of the orientation path. A suggestion can come from the reorganization of content in concept maps, or created ad hoc and paper based, or using tools such as Cmaps Tools. Just putt images and keywords - this depends on the migrant's literacy - and share a representative form of the path you are activating.

Additional resources

There are several tools for creating concept maps, by way of example we list some:

<https://cmaptools.it.uptodown.com/windows>

<http://www.spicynodes.org/index.html>

<https://www.goconqr.com/en/mind-maps/>

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