

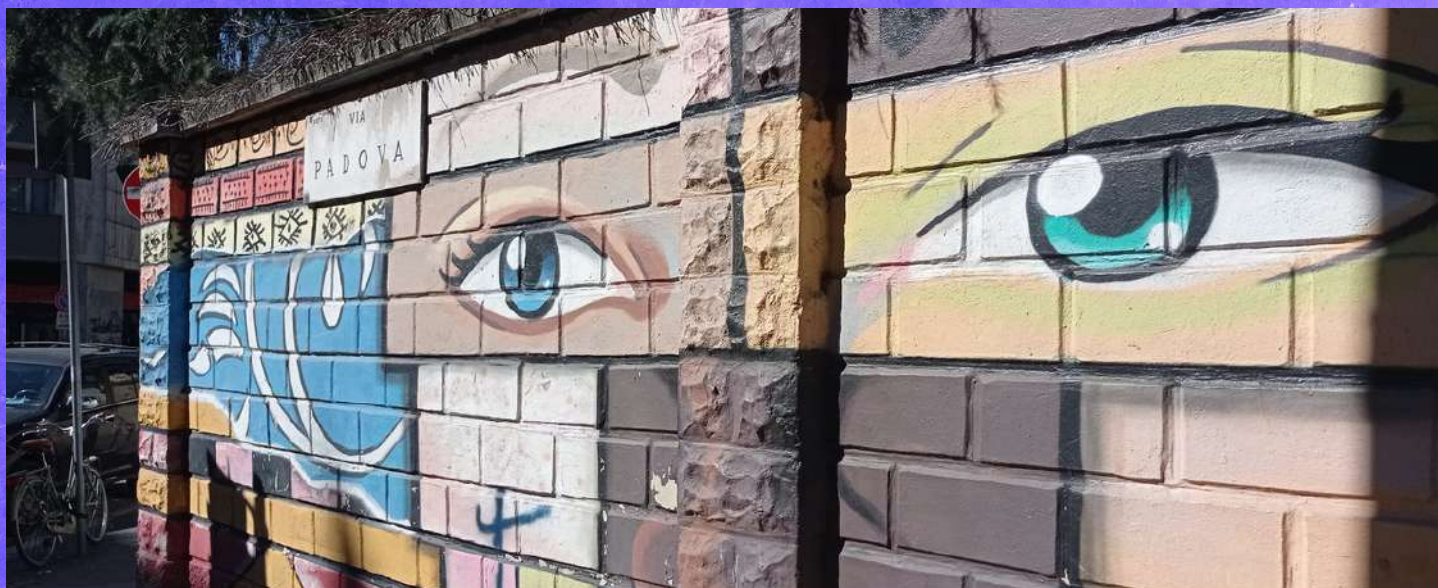


CHAPTER 3.

RECRUITING AND SUPPORTING INTERCULTURAL COMPANIONS

Learning objectives - by the end of this module you will be able to:

- Identify key traits of successful intercultural companions
- Describe the best practices for recruiting intercultural companions
- Create a strategy for recruiting intercultural companions for your organization



1. WHAT AN INTERCULTURAL COMPANION DOES AND HOW MANY ARE NEEDED

An intercultural companion is not an official tour guide. Rather than informing people about the city's main tourist attractions, intercultural companions focus on bringing their personal stories in dialogue with the cultural heritage present in the area covered by the tour route. The intercultural companions have a migration background at a personal or family level and are paid to lead Migrantours.

Most Migrantour organizations have between 5-10 trained intercultural companions that they can contact to lead tours. Organizations generally offer 4-6 tours per month. Nevertheless, these numbers may vary for a number of different reasons and no strict rules apply - it all depends on each organization's unique situation. In order to obtain the necessary number of trained intercultural companions, you will have to recruit a slightly larger group, as not everyone will successfully complete the intensive training that is required. Be sure you clearly communicate to potential intercultural companions the time, motivation, and commitment that will be needed from them, and what your organization will offer them in terms of training, compensation, skills development, etc.

In selecting a group of possible candidates, the organization should consider the complementarity of the individuals' profiles to ensure a good balance of gender, age groups, countries of origin, language skills, previous training and work experiences, etc. A diverse group of intercultural companions will allow the tours to highlight their different backgrounds and their individual talents and strengths.

Tip:

- Contact ethnic/community associations in the area where the tour will be located and use their networks to recruit intercultural companions.

2. WHAT YOUR ORGANIZATION CAN/SHOULD BE ABLE TO OFFER TO INTERCULTURAL COMPANIONS

Intercultural companions are the heart of Migrantour. Your organization should clearly communicate what you can (and cannot) offer the intercultural companions. When you begin recruiting intercultural companions, you should already have a plan for how you will train, compensate, and employ the companions. This information should be shared with people interested in becoming Migrantour intercultural companions during the recruitment process so that they understand what they will be doing.

Migrantour guides are usually paid between 50 to 100 euros per tour depending on wages in the country. Organizations can compare payments to the rates official tour guides get in your city or official hourly wage rates. Intercultural companions usually receive the same pay regardless of the number of participants on the tour.

WORKBOOK EXERCISE 3.1 WHAT YOU CAN OFFER INTERCULTURAL COMPANIONS

Complete the checklist of questions so that you are prepared to tell people interested in becoming Migrantour intercultural companions about what your organization can offer them.

CHECKLIST

- What formal relationship will your intercultural companions have in relation to your organization? As contract workers for your organization? As staff? Other?
 - How much will you pay your intercultural companions? A flat fee? A percentage of the income from the tour? Other?
 - How many tours does your organization hope to offer in a typical month? How much can an intercultural companion expect to earn in a typical month?
- What will the training process comprise?
 - What is the time and energy commitment for the training process? How long will the training process take? How many training sessions will there be?
 - What type of skills will you help the intercultural companions develop? How will these skills be assessed in order to ensure intercultural companions reach the desired skill level?
 - Will your organization offer a Youth Pass (<https://www.youthpass.eu/en/about-youthpass/certificates-and-languages/>) or something similar to document the guides' skills development?
- What type of on-going professional development will you offer your intercultural companions?

3. HOW TO LAUNCH A SUCCESSFUL CALL TO RECRUIT INTERCULTURAL COMPANIONS

3.1. Identifying relevant groups with migration backgrounds in the area

The following exercises will help you establish a clear sense of which groups to recruit as intercultural companions. Government sources of population and census data can be useful in identifying migrant groups in the area (e.g., for Barcelona: <https://www.elperiodico.com/es/barcelona/20190714/barcelona-padron-municipal-2018-7552458>)

WORKBOOK EXERCISE 3.2 MIGRANT GROUPS IN THE AREA

List the migrant groups in the area where the tour will be located. Give brief descriptions of the significant characteristics of each one. Consider all kinds of migration and whether descendents of migrants are also considered.

WORKBOOK EXERCISE 3.3 OPPORTUNITIES AND STRATEGIES TO ENGAGE MIGRANT GROUPS IN THE AREA

Review and respond to the following questions about who you will recruit and how:

- From which migrant and minority groups does your organization plan to draw for inclusion as intercultural companions? Who are the individuals and organisations migrant and minority associations and representatives that you're planning to involve? What do you need to do to make it happen?
- What are your plans for how to compensate the intercultural companions in the training phase and afterwards when they start working as intercultural companions?
- What is your organization's strategy to find the people to train as Migrantour intercultural companions?
- What are the criteria your organization will be using to select the intercultural companions?
- How is your organization explicitly taking into consideration how timing/distance /accessibility of the training location and of the tour area may help or hinder participation by the migrants and minorities you seek to involve in the tour as intercultural companions? (will it conflict with family responsibilities, etc.)
- What are some possible obstacles that your organization might encounter to ensure that the group of intercultural companions recruited is gender-balanced and reflects the ethnic and religious diversity of the local environment? What strategy will you use to overcome such obstacles?

3.2 Intercultural companion recruitment materials

Below are several examples of materials that senior Migrantour network members have used to recruit prospective intercultural companions. While each organization has a different approach, all try to clearly communicate what is required of an intercultural companion and what the intercultural companions can receive from their participation in Migrantour. Using your partnerships (such as those with local authorities, migrant organizations, integration projects, etc.) to help with recruitment, along with social media platforms (instagram, linkedin, facebook, etc.)

WORKBOOK EXERCISE 3.4 INTERCULTURAL COMPANION RECRUITMENT MATERIALS

Look at some sample materials [here](#). Then develop your own ideas about what would be successful for your own organization's intercultural companion recruitment process.

4. SELECTION CRITERIA FOR PROSPECTIVE INTERCULTURAL COMPANIONS

Successful intercultural companions need a range of skills and/or strong motivation to develop the necessary skills to lead a Migrantour walking tour. Each organization may also need to prioritize different skills for the intercultural companions based on their context and the needs of the tour participants, for example language skills. Review the short videos of successful intercultural companions with very different backgrounds.

Depending on your country's laws, you may or may not be able to have asylum seekers work as intercultural companions. As leading a Migrantour is a paid position, you will need to comply with local regulations about payment. In most cases, it is best for intercultural companions to be legal residents with work permits or citizens. It may also be problematic to have individuals receiving social welfare payments involved as paid intercultural companions, since their benefits may be reduced if they take any paid work. Be sure to follow all your local laws regarding payments to intercultural companions.

Resources

- View short video of Rossi, an intercultural companion in Lisbon, explaining why she joined Migrantour. (Video in Portuguese with Spanish subtitles [here](#). Read English translation [here](#).)

WORKBOOK EXERCISE 3.5 EVALUATION OF POTENTIAL INTERCULTURAL COMPANIONS

Use the checklist below for evaluating potential candidates and add other skills that your organization prioritizes.

CHECKLIST

Important criteria for successful intercultural companions include:

- Good storytelling skills, or the interest to develop these skills through training.
- Good public speaking skills, or the interest to develop these skills through training.
- Skills in sharing their culture of origin and their personal stories with others, or the interest to develop these skills through training.
- Values of non-discrimination and open-mindedness. Prospective intercultural companions' values should be in line with those of Migrantour and your organization (see Module 1).
- Collaboration. Teamwork skills, or the interest to develop these skills through training.
- Good language skills. Depending on the target audience (school children, international tourists, newcomers, etc.), intercultural companions may need to be fluent in the local language, English, or newcomers' languages. Having intercultural companions with a diverse set of language skills allows you to adapt to different target audiences.
- Good skills for working with young people and school children. Schools may regularly send students on Migrantour walking tours or invite intercultural companions into schools.
- Some kind of connection, such as living or working in the area that will be covered by the Migrantour tour route, or an interest in the area. The tours are enriched by the deep knowledge that the intercultural companion has of the area.
- Background traits. Diverse gender, faith, migration experience, etc. will enrich the depth and range of perspectives among your group of intercultural companions.
- Legal residence permit or citizenship status. Recruiting people without documentation may bring legal issues depending on your country's laws as guides must be paid.
- Ability and motivation to attend the entire intercultural companion training course (see Module 5 for information on what's included in the training course and how to structure it).
- Ability and motivation to commit time to leading tours during the next 12-18 months.
- Flexible schedules. Intercultural companions should have the ability to accept different tour assignments (weekdays, weekends, etc.), meaning that they are preferably students or part-time employees.
- OTHER skills/items specific to your organization and the area to be covered by the tour route.

5. SUPPORTING INTERCULTURAL COMPANIONS

5.1 Team building and team work

One of the factors of Migrantour that senior Migrantour network members often say they are most proud of is the closeness of the Migrantour team. Connections among intercultural companions and the local coordinator are usually very strong.

5.1.1 Turnover and sustaining intercultural companions' commitment

The success of the walks depends on prepared and reliable intercultural companions. Unfortunately, retaining trained intercultural companions is an issue that requires constant attention. Many senior Migrantour network members have experienced a considerable drop-out rate even during the training period, since the training period asks for a significant time commitment on the part of the companions. Some prospective intercultural companions may simply not have the time for the extensive training sessions - especially since the training period is generally not compensated. Moreover, after the training period has been completed, there is still a risk of drop-out. Intercultural companions, despite being interested and involved, sometimes are obliged to leave Migrantour because of a relocation or a new job. Besides these external reasons for intercultural companions turn-over, there are also a number of avoidable reasons for companion turn-over that can be addressed by supporting ongoing intercultural companion development.

5.1.2 Valorizing intercultural companions' commitments and investments in Migrantour

The biggest avoidable reason for turnover of intercultural companions is lack of communication and adaptation to the intercultural companions' needs. Valorisation of the commitment and investments of intercultural companions in Migrantour is crucial for increasing belonging and ownership, which in turn increases the likelihood of people staying with your organization for a longer time. In order to offer adequate support to the intercultural companions, it is crucial to have regular formal and informal conversations with the team members. Through these conversations issues may arise that require attention. Important issues that intercultural companions have mentioned, include the lack of felt ownership over the Migrantour project, and the overwhelming amount of investment required for them.

Regarding the lack of a sense of ownership over the Migrantour project, the problem has been felt in the absence of possibilities for growth within the organization. Senior intercultural companions that have been a part of Migrantour for a while may feel like they want to have more responsibilities. A way of addressing this need is to include intercultural companions in executive meetings around the Migrantour project. This does not have to be a necessity for all intercultural companions, but for the purpose of fostering ownership and belonging, opening up (some) meetings around the management of the Migrantour project to senior intercultural companions is helpful.

If intercultural companions express a desire for more responsibilities, this should be addressed. Besides decreasing the risk of drop-out, this also contributes to intercultural companions' empowerment and personal development, which is a key objective for Migrantour. Another way senior Migrantour network members have increased the sense of belonging and ownership among companions is to involve them in different activities led by the organization. Instead of seeing intercultural companions as solely related to Migrantour, involve those who are interested in other projects within your organization to increase social sustainability.

Besides involving intercultural companions in decision-making processes and other projects within your organization, another way of offering opportunities for continued growth is to keep offering training sessions for intercultural companions, also after the initial training period ends. Especially during times in which tours are scarce, keeping intercultural companions involved through team-building activities or workshops is a way to increase the sustainability of the tours.

After Covid-19 inhibited organizations from offering Migrantours, Migrantour network partners realized that this gap in practicing the tours negatively influenced the intercultural companion's sense of involvement and enthusiasm. As a result, there could be a large drop out of intercultural companions. A way of avoiding drop-out is to offer additional training for senior guides on different professional development aspects, to offer refresher training or to offer participation in walks with professional tour guides. If your organization does workshops on topics that could be interesting for guides, involve them in those as well.

All of these activities will benefit your organization in the long run. The following checklist will help you to identify attention points regarding sustaining the commitment of intercultural companions over time.

WORKBOOK EXERCISE 3.6 SUPPORT FOR INTERCULTURAL COMPANIONS

Go through the following checklist to verify your commitment to supporting the intercultural companions in the following ways.

CHECKLIST

- During the recruitment period, communicate the commitment asked from the intercultural companions as well as the compensation that will be received clearly to set expectations.
- Offer additional trainings for professional development as appropriate (maybe through Migrantour network)
- Pay attention to the individual
- Offer adequate support and create a safe space for people to address issues
- Be aware of intercultural companions' other obligations - don't ask too much (e.g. pressure in some cities to quickly learn the language led to people not finishing the training course)
- Invest in team building and fostering connections
- Avoid losing touch with intercultural companions. In case of lack of available tours, integrate intercultural companions in other activities within your organization - foster ownership and belonging
- Create a space for group interactions (i.e. Whatsapp group, Facebook group etc.)