

Summary of Ad Hoc Query on neighbourhood initiatives implemented by reception centres

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Responses: 24 EMN Member Countries provided a public answer to this query: EMN NCP Austria, EMN NCP Belgium, EMN NCP Bulgaria, EMN NCP Croatia, EMN NCP Cyprus, EMN NCP Czech Republic, EMN NCP Estonia, EMN NCP France, EMN NCP Germany, EMN NCP Greece, EMN NCP Hungary, EMN NCP Ireland, EMN NCP Italy, EMN NCP Latvia, EMN NCP Lithuania, EMN NCP Luxembourg, EMN NCP Netherlands, EMN NCP Poland, EMN NCP Serbia, EMN NCP Slovakia, EMN NCP Slovenia, EMN NCP Spain, EMN NCP Sweden, EMN NCP Ukraine

Background information

In Belgium, reception centres managed by Fedasil, the Belgian reception agency, organise “neighbourhood initiatives” to connect applicants for international protection with the local community. These initiatives aim to foster positive relationships between reception centres and local residents by providing a clear and nuanced understanding of the reception system, promoting positive perceptions of life in reception centres, and supporting the centres' integration into the wider community. A dedicated community integration worker (approximately 1 full-time equivalent per centre) implements and coordinates these initiatives and external contacts.

Belgium is interested in learning about good practices from other EMN Member and Observer Countries regarding initiatives that strengthen ties between reception centres and local communities. It also seeks information on how these initiatives are organised and resourced, including staffing arrangements in the context of budgetary constraints, as well as how their impact is monitored and evaluated.

Main findings

This ad hoc query examines whether the national framework of EMN Member and Observer Countries requires or encourages reception centres to organise initiatives to foster interaction with the local community once they are operational, and if so, what the main activities are. It explores whether countries have dedicated staff assigned to organise these neighbourhood initiatives. The query also covers how these initiatives are monitored and evaluated, and the main results and outcomes achieved.

An analysis of the ad hoc query results shows that:

- Five countries (**BE**, **FR**, **DE**, **IT**, **ES**, **SE**) report having a **national policy framework or legislation that requires or encourages reception centres to organise initiatives** to foster interaction with the local community. In other responding countries, reception centres organise activities to foster the inclusion of the centres and their residents in the local community on a voluntary basis.
- **Responding countries organise a large variety of activities**, such as guided tours and open days (e.g. **LT**, **PL**, **HR**), socio-cultural events and exchanges (e.g. **BG**, **RS**, **FR**), meetings with local actors such as schools (e.g. **CZ**, **BE**, **IT**) and sport activities (e.g. **FR**, **IT**). In **BE**, newsletters from each reception centre are distributed three times per year, of which two editions are still circulated in print format. In **FR**, reception centres are managed by operators with a high degree of operational autonomy. As a result, operators organise activities that vary significantly from one housing facility to another, including, for instance, art, cooking, and social gatherings. In **NL**, 'municipality council members' days are organised, where municipality council members are invited to visit reception centres. This previously took place at some centres only, but since 2026, it has been organised nationally.
- **Most responding countries organising neighbourhood initiatives do not assign these tasks to specific staff**. However, three responding countries (**BE**, **CZ**, **SE**) employ dedicated staff to coordinate these activities. In **BE**, a community integration collaborator is an officially recognised function within the reception system, with, in principle, one such worker in every reception centre. In **CZ**, reception centres employ 'Leisure Time Educators' whose main responsibilities are coordinating leisure-time and community engagement activities. In **SE**, coordinators have been assigned to every reception centre to coordinate neighbourhood initiatives and other activities since April 2026.
- **A few countries** (e.g. **BE**, **ES**, **SE**) **have a specific monitoring mechanism in place for neighbourhood initiatives**. **BE** and **ES** use a combination of quantitative and qualitative indicators to monitor these activities. Spanish indicators aim to assess participation levels in the activities, relationships with

the local community, and results in terms of integration and coexistence. **SE** is currently developing a national methodology with shared indicators and assessment methods to monitor neighbourhood activities and collaboration at the local level. In other countries (e.g. **IT**, **RS**), monitoring and evaluation of these activities form part of activity reports or broader monitoring of reception structures. In **DE** (Berlin), neighbourhood initiatives are not monitored separately but are covered in the annual monitoring of the Strategic Integration and Participation Framework, using qualitative and quantitative methods. When no monitoring mechanisms are in place, responding countries assess local communities' perceptions of reception centres through ad hoc consultation (e.g. **BG**, **LT**) or through regular communication and feedback after the activities (e.g. **CZ**, **GR**).

- Monitoring (or informal evaluation) of neighbourhood initiatives has shown that, generally, **the longer a reception centre has been established in a municipality, the stronger its community relations and integration outcomes tend to be** (e.g. **BE**, **HR**). Countries also reported a friendlier atmosphere between reception centres and local communities when neighbourhood initiatives are organised (CZ), as well as increased integration and inclusion of applicants for international protection (**ES**). In **IT**, neighbourhood initiatives produced positive outcomes, such as stronger local networks and reduced prejudices and stereotypes, although these effects were observed qualitatively rather than through specific indicators.

Disclaimer: The responses regarding this ad-hoc query have been provided primarily for the purpose of information exchange among the EMN National Contact Points (NCPs) in the framework of the EMN. The contributing NCPs have provided information that is (to the best of their knowledge) up-to-date, objective and reliable. Note, however, that the information provided does not necessarily represent the official policy of an EMN Member or Observer Country. This summary has been produced by EMN Belgium.