

# NAVIGATING THE MOSAIC

## CREATIVE METHODS SUPPORTING MIGRANT INTEGRATION

As exchange students from Spain immersed in the cold embrace of Finland, we find ourselves partaking in a course on Intercultural and Multiprofessional Competencies. One aspect that has particularly captured our attention is the innovative methods employed to support migrant integration. In this blog, we will delve into the current situation in Spain, draw comparisons between Finland and Spain, explore the successes and failures in both countries, discuss best practices, and propose ways to create an inclusive, respectful and supportive environment for individuals who've migrated to a new country.



### CURRENT SITUATION IN SPAIN

#### SPANISH TAPESTRY: A MULTICULTURAL MOSAIC

Spain, with its rich history and diverse culture, has become a melting pot for migrants seeking a better life. The country has witnessed a significant influx of migrants in recent years, leading to a complex tapestry of cultures, languages, and identities. The bigger part of these migrants come from Morocco and Latin American countries, who tend to have a similar culture or traditions to those in Spain, however, the integration process is not without its challenges.



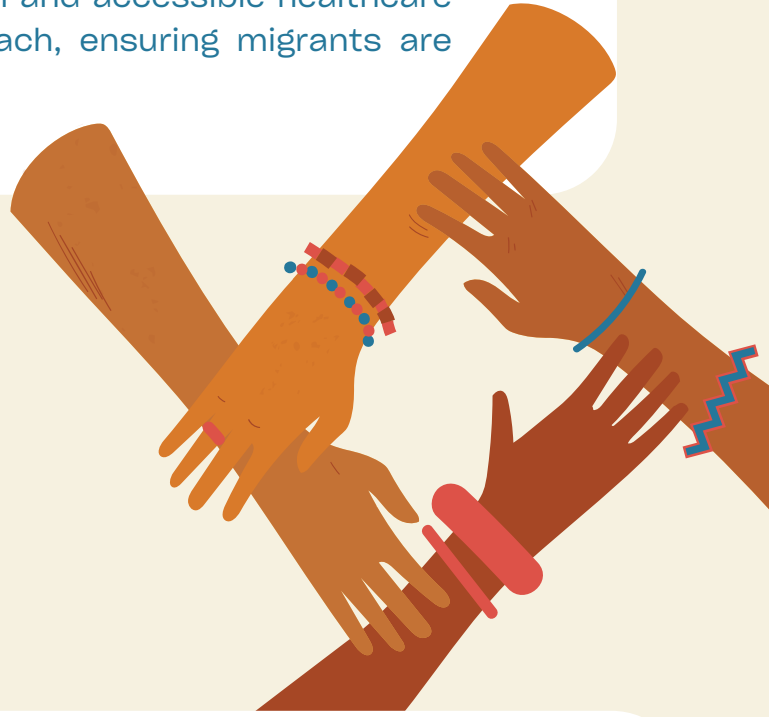
#### CHALLENGES IN SPAIN: A TALE OF STRUGGLE

Despite Spain's reputation for warmth and hospitality, the integration of migrants has faced hurdles. We live in a time where finding jobs is hard in your home country but sometimes even harder abroad, there's a lot of competitiveness and this sometimes may bring out the worst in societies. This creates a feeling of rejection towards migrants from the locals who might feel as if "their" jobs are being taken by others. This along with language barriers, limited access to education and employment, and cultural differences often creates a sense of alienation. The inadequacy of support structures and bureaucratic complexities further compounds these challenges, making successful integration a formidable task.



## THE FINNISH MODEL: A NORDIC APPROACH

In contrast, Finland, with its distinct societal structure, has adopted a more proactive stance towards migrant integration. To begin with, Finland has an advantage over Spain: English. Although it isn't an official language, most of the Finns speak English fluently, making it easier for migrants to communicate and therefore having an advantage over Spain, who faces a bigger language barrier when it comes to English. On the other hand, the Finnish model emphasizes early intervention, with a focus on language acquisition and skill development. The comprehensive social welfare system and accessible healthcare contribute to a more holistic approach, ensuring migrants are not left grappling with basic needs.



## SUCCESS STORIES AND FAILURES

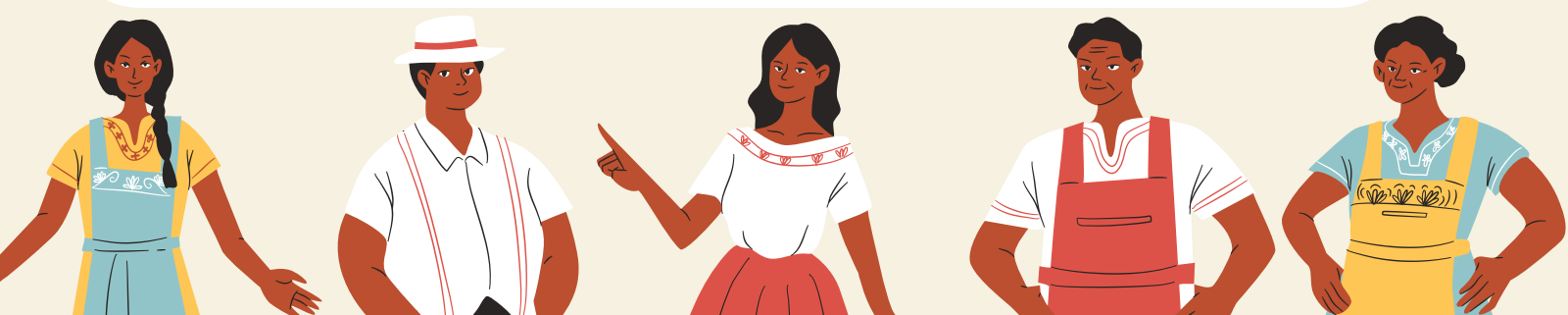
Both Spain and Finland have witnessed successes and failures in their respective approaches. Spain's failure lies in the inadequate provision of resources and the absence of a cohesive strategy. On the other hand, Finland's success is attributed to its systematic and early interventions, although challenges persist in breaking down cultural barriers. But this isn't without reason, in Spain, it's very common to depend on relatives and friends when help is needed especially when they need to get integrated, therefore the help system isn't as developed as in Finland, where society tends to be more independent and makes more use of public resources to get help.



## BEST PRACTICES: LESSONS LEARNED

### EARLY INTERVENTION: A FINNISH TRIUMPH

One of the standout practices is Finland's emphasis on early intervention. By providing language courses, cultural orientation, and support services from the outset, Finland lays a robust foundation for successful integration. When looking for ways to learn Finnish, we found something called "Language Café's", where you meet up once a week to practice speaking and listening to Finnish with other people learning the language. They also have organisations like MIITI, a community of sorts which organises events and workshops to facilitate the integration process. Spain could learn from these approaches, redirecting resources towards early support systems, which aim to integrate migrants in the society pulling from both locals and already integrated migrants.



# PERSONAL REFLECTION: NAVIGATING THE FINNISH SYSTEM

## OUR EXPERIENCE AS STUDENTS

As an exchange student in Finland, we've had firsthand experience navigating the Finnish education system. The integration efforts here are palpable, with language support and mentorship programs making the transition smoother. However, cultural nuances remain, reminding us of the importance of continuous dialogue and understanding. However, we do have to admit that integration is a two way street and it needs to be both sides that put an effort in the integration process, and if we don't try it's no use having the best resources.



# HUMAN RIGHTS AND MIGRANT INTEGRATION: A CALL TO ACTION

## ENSURING DIGNITY AND EQUALITY

Migrant integration is not solely an administrative challenge; it is a matter of human rights. Both Spain and Finland must prioritize the dignity and equality of migrants, acknowledging their right to education, employment, and cultural expression. Robust anti-discrimination measures and advocacy for migrant rights are imperative.



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FOR CHANGE

Empowering communities to actively engage in the integration process is crucial. Spain and Finland can foster a sense of belonging by encouraging collaboration between migrants and the local population. Community-driven initiatives, such as language exchange programs and joint cultural events, can be catalysts for change.



# TOWARDS A HARMONIOUS COEXISTENCE

In conclusion, the journey of migrant integration is a complex one, marked by both triumphs and tribulations. Finland's proactive approach offers valuable lessons for Spain, urging a reevaluation of strategies and resource allocation. As an exchange student immersed in these contrasting landscapes, I remain optimistic that with concerted efforts, both countries can weave a tapestry of harmonious coexistence, where diversity is celebrated, and human rights are upheld.



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