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Pathways to active citizenship of residents with a migrant background in the city of Prague

*Findings of pilot study and reflection of the
experience of InBáze z.s. and the MigAct initiative*

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Introduction and research aims

Introduction, research aims and key topics

01

The question of the civic and political participation¹ of the inhabitants of Prague with a migrant background has increasingly gained traction in recent times. **About a third of Prague's population** consists of foreigners². While statistics track the number of foreigners whose residence is registered, the actual numbers are even higher. Statistics do not include, for example, those residents of Prague who have acquired Czech citizenship, or EU citizens who have not formally registered as residents. As part of this investigation, we focused on the target group of **residents of Prague with a migrant background**, in particular: *citizens of third countries regardless of residence status (with the exception of short-term visitors to the city); EU citizens; and citizens of the Czech Republic with a migrant background who have been granted Czech citizenship.*

Despite the fact that the numbers of this group are already quite significant, relatively little

attention is paid in the public space to the civic and political participation of inhabitants of Prague with a migrant background. It is also a demographic group that is not politically represented in any way (with the exception of citizens of the Czech Republic and, in some specific instances, EU citizens). All foreigners, regardless of nationality, have the opportunity to exercise their civil rights, e.g. the right to freedom of expression, the right to information, the right to petition, the right to assemble, the right to associate in associations, companies and other associations, and the right to protest (Consortium of NGOs working with migrants in the Czech Republic, 2018, 23). However, some **important political rights** (voting rights, participation in political parties), especially for citizens of third countries (i.e., non-EU countries) are still **considerably limited**, both at the local and national level.

¹ For the purposes of this investigation, we use definitions of civic and political participation taken from the Initial analysis of existing forms of civic and political participation of the inhabitants of the city of Prague from among migrants, published by InBáze z.s. in 2021, pp. 3-5: <https://inbaze.cz/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Vstupni-analyza-existujicich-forem-obcanske-a-politicke-participace-obyvatel-HMP-z-rad-migrantu.pdf>

² Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic - Status as of July 31, 2023 - 335,865 (foreigners with a residence permit) - <https://www.mvcr.cz/clanek/cizinci-s-povolenym-pobytem.aspx>
Status as of 11/09/2023 - residents with temporary protection - approx. 91,000
<https://www.mvcr.cz/clanek/informativni-pocty-obyvatel-v-obcich.aspx>

Thus, **civil society**³ remains one of the few ways in which one can get involved in community events or defend one's rights. Most forms and types of civic and political participation are available to foreigners, at least from a formal point of view, and EU citizens also have political rights (e.g. the right to vote at the local level and to elect members to the European Parliament). In practice, however, residents with a migrant background display relatively low levels of participation in Czech civil society, and the issue has not been thoroughly explored in research. There are significant gaps in basic data, partial research and investigation. This pilot research focused on **identifying the basic experiences and needs of the target group in terms of civic and political participation in Prague**. It is an introductory investigation into the issue and a reflection of the experience of the non-profit organization InBáze z.s., which should be followed up by further partial research. As part of this investigation, we focused mainly on the following areas:

- the target group's perceptions of civic and political participation
- areas of interest of the target group
- how the target group uses various means of participation
- barriers to participation (e.g. language barriers, lack of contacts, lack of knowledge about how civil society works in the Czech Republic, fear or absence of a sense of belonging to Czech society [I do not have citizenship], low awareness of participation opportunities)
- sources of information intended to support participation.

The research was carried out as part of the project InBáze – a platform for the civic participation of migrants, which focuses on supporting the civic and political participation of

Prague residents with a migrant background. The research took place in the period September 2022 - September 2023.

Target groups and data collection techniques

The **target group** of the research was residents of Prague with a migrant background who met the following conditions:

- are actively interested in the topic of civic participation (active involvement in civil society was also a desirable element)
- live, work or study in the capital city of Prague
- speak Czech or English
- are over 18 years old
- have a migrant background
- have lived in the Czech Republic for at least 6 months.

Inclusion in the target group was ascertained via the registration form. Respondents were selected according to purposive sampling: the researchers determined the sample with specific regard to the research plan (Reichel, 2009:83). Respondents for the research were primarily recruited from among participants in programs and events of InBáze z.s. aimed at supporting civic participation. A snowball method was also used, which is suitable for expanding the purposive sample. **It is not a representative sample**. Since this research focused only on people who are already in some way civically engaged, **residents with a migrant background who do not yet participate in civil society activities fall outside of the research sample**.

³ *the space of free civil action and association between the family, the market and the state (Skovajsa, Moree, et al., 2010, 62). This is the so-called minimalist concept of civil society, e.g. the*

maximalist concept also includes the market in civil society. The generalist view sees civil society as a whole society or political system (Skovajsa, Moree, et al., 2010; Müller, 2016).

In total, approximately 216 people took part in the survey, including 22 participants in focus groups, approximately 40 participants during public events held by InBáze z.s.⁴, 151⁵ respondents to the online survey (see Appendix 4) and 3 employees of InBáze z.s. Basic data on the respondents of the focus groups and the online survey are given in Appendix 1. All data in the research report are used in anonymized form.

During the investigation, we used a combination of different data collection techniques:

The main technique was **focus groups**. This technique makes it possible to obtain a large amount of qualitative data related to a topic in a relatively short session. It is a technique based on a group interacting about a predetermined topic, where participants have the opportunity to ask questions and discuss issues with each other. In this way, it is possible to examine both the levels of consensus and, conversely, disagreement between respondents. As part of the research, we used the semi-structured focus group technique based on a predetermined scenario (see Appendix 2), which allowed us to find out more about the participants' own perspectives. At the same time, the semi-structured model focuses on specific research questions set by the researcher (Morgan, 1996; 2001). A total of 6 focus groups were held in Czech and English as part of the research. In all cases, in addition to the respondents, two researchers participated: one moderated the focus group and the other acted as an observer, producing a record of the interaction. At the same time, the observer was also free to engage in moderation.

A further means of collecting data was open non-participant **observation** during events and workshops organized by InBáze z.s., which were related to the topic of civic participation (in particular, events organized by the MigAct initiative). The observer recorded notes in a pre-prepared record sheet, in which only indicative topics and categories were listed; however, the

observer was also permitted to record other discussion points (i.e., those not covered by the listed topics and categories) where they were deemed relevant by the observer (see Appendix 3).

During the investigation, we also focused on **analyzing the experience of staff of InBáze z.s.** in terms of their work with Prague residents of a migrant background. For the purposes of the analysis, three interviews were conducted with InBáze employees who deal with the topic of civic and political participation (see Appendix 5). In this section, we focused on an expert view of the research issue. All InBáze employees who took part in the research have been involved in work on the topic of supporting civic participation for a significant length of time. For the purposes of this stage of the research, an external employee of InBáze was involved in the analysis and processing of the data in order to ensure greater objectivity.

An **online questionnaire** was a further complementary technique for collecting quantitative data, which added to the data obtained qualitatively, and aimed to supplement and broaden the picture (see Appendix 4). The questionnaire survey took place during the period June-September 2023.

Data analysis in qualitative research is a continuous process: data is sorted and analyzed at the same time as research is in progress. Continuous data analysis allows for a more flexible process, where the researcher has the opportunity to adjust the methods of data collection with regard to the course of the research and the research objectives. It is not a linear analysis, but rather a circular one (Hennink, 2007).

In the framework of this study, we used open coding (transcribed audio recordings, notes from observations), which enabled us to sort and divide the data into thematic sections and

⁴ The number of respondents is an estimate, as it cannot be guaranteed that the opinions of all participants in the events were heard and recorded during the observation. This is the number of visitors who did not participate in other project activities. Actual attendance at events was higher.

⁵ 93 respondents stated that they did not participate in other project events, 58 respondents stated that they either participated or did not know if they had participated in other activities in the project.

segments. Subsequently, the data underwent categorization and analysis, which served as a basis for the conclusions from the topic map (Danner et al., 2018; Reichel, 2009). Observation notes (record sheets), observer notes from focus groups, and data obtained in the online questionnaire, were also used as sources for data analysis. All respondents (including events participants) were informed in advance about the ongoing research and gave their consent.

Main findings

02

Perceptions of civic and political participation

We addressed the topic of the perception of civic and political participation primarily during focus groups, which offered the opportunity to explore the topic in greater depth. The majority of respondents differentiate between civic and political participation. Political participation was often associated with **the right to vote**, with direct political participation (e.g. involvement in political parties), with **contacting politicians** or with **advocacy work**.

FG 5 *"Well, I see politics as being more like elections and the opportunity to influence how this state is governed"*

FG 3 *"I think it's the only, only way to build democracy. When there is, there is someone who will tell politicians that you can't do this, that it's against the human rights, that it will be bad for climate change or environment."*

In discussions about political participation, the topic of **access to the right to vote**, which most respondents did not have, resonated significantly. Some focus group participants perceived the opportunity to vote as a condition for their own engagement or at least interest in the Czech political scene. The vast majority of respondents expressed an interest in obtaining the right to vote. **Civic participation** was also sometimes perceived as **more accessible** due to the lack of opportunity to vote (and consequently to participate in political events).

FG 1 *"Since I'm from outside the EU, I can't even participate in the municipal elections. And maybe that's also why I, personally, am not all that interested in Czech politics. I have a broad overview, but not so much, because it doesn't concern me that much. I think that as soon as I had the opportunity, I would definitely want to know more about election programs and I would go to vote. So I myself would be more active, an actively interested person."*

FG 4 *"...being politically active, it needs some rights, and for some immigrants like us, like we need to live here for 10 years and then like, be able to vote, for example, but be civically engaged, we can be from the start..."*

On the other hand, there were also opinions voiced that viewed **politics** from a different perspective, defining it as **"everything around us"**; for these respondents, even without the right to vote, one had the opportunity to get involved. For some respondents, civic and political participation overlap greatly or they consider political participation to be a more generic category encompassing civic participation.

FG 4 *"I mean I think you can be politically involved without having the right to vote. For example, you can... You can sign petitions, or you can... do the... re-election campaigns, you can... support some candidates, you can do something for them."*

On a general level, some respondents perceive participation, whether civic or political, as a very broad topic that has many faces; at the same time it is also a **personal** topic, with each individual deciding what participation is and what it is not. Respondents emphasized above all the **diversity** of society, and the need to take into account the opinions of different people and groups.

FG 2 *"For me, it's just... the first thing that came to my mind that it means so many different things for so many persons, like it's so individual"*

FG 4 *"...civic and political engagement for me means like diversity, because there are a lot of different opinions, different people with different backgrounds, etcetera."*

In terms of civic participation, the term **community** was heard a lot; the respondents emphasized **collaborative activities** (of different people and groups) that strive for **change, improvement** or a certain **shift** in various social topics. For some respondents, it was very important to **feel part of something**, to **create** and strive for changes **together**, to have the opportunity to express one's opinion, and not to expect that a problem would be solved by itself, but to actively participate in the solution.

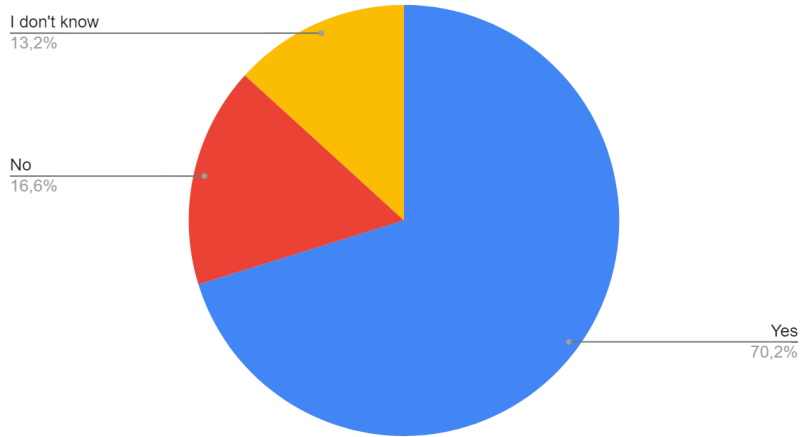
FG 4 *"But also to be part of the community, like this is exactly what is like civic engagement, what is fulfilling, and what makes you happy that you feel part of the wider group that has the same values and like trying to do the same thing. For me this community work is the most important for civic participation."*

FG 6 *"...participating in the creation of something, in growth, in creation... as a way forward, to a better... to a better life, to a better society, to fulfillment."*

Some respondents to the online questionnaires stated at the beginning that they were not involved in local civil society or **did not know if they were involved**. At the same time, they also stated in the questionnaire how they were involved, in which topics they were active or what barriers they encountered⁶. Since the questionnaire does not allow for a deeper investigation of the reasons why the respondents answered rather negatively at the beginning, this is an interesting observation for the individual perception of civic participation. Some respondents from this group stated that they are active to a lesser extent or are still searching for their own path towards engagement, while others, on the contrary, showed significant activity (they indicated more ways of involvement). In some cases, the uncertainty could be related to a lesser degree of belonging to **local** civil society (Prague) or there could be **different interpretations of the term civil society**. The highest number of negative or uncertain answers occurred in the English-language questionnaire.

⁶ Questionnaires with negative answers, where respondents did not show any activity or explicitly stated that they were not active, were excluded from the survey.

Are you taking an active part in the local civil society (in Prague)?



Responses from employees of InBáze z.s. identified the basic characteristics of civic and political participation in similar ways. It was commonly identified as an **activity** that is carried out **voluntarily**, goes beyond purely individual needs and goals, and **benefits the community or society**. In addition to volunteering, the word “activity” is also important. According to the respondents, participation is the **opposite of going with the flow**; it is an active effort and determination to **change or build something**.

Motivations

The question of motivation and the reasons why the respondents are involved was mostly garnered through focus groups and joint discussions; the data also comes from observations at events and the statements of employees of InBáze z.s.

The respondents naturally had a **very wide range of different motivations** that led them to civic or political participation; in most cases it was a combination of different motivations. Some of the respondents emphasized that their desire to get involved was very much connected with their own life story and **personal experiences**. The content, theme and sometimes the form of participation then depended on these experiences, often rather negative or even traumatic, for example the suppression of the rights of a certain group, a feeling of powerlessness, or racism. The determination to **take action, to change and improve conditions**, perhaps even for future generations, appears to be a response to experienced injustices, and also seems to be a key trigger for the engagement of our respondents.

FG 2 *“So, I... I come from a place... that is quite... xenophobic and... quite racist as well and... It sort of started me... down this... path where I am now and... I started back in my home city with organizing political protests and... and various actions and events and... Back then it was very disconnected for me and...(laughing). But having moved abroad and being a foreigner, of course becomes much more... personal and political.”*

Respondents often mentioned **personal experiences with migration**, which for many of them is salient in their perception of the issue under investigation. Migration in general is a very complex process that affects the lives of individuals in different ways. During the process of migration, a person may encounter a variety of challenges affecting his/her psyche, identity (both personal and social), and comfort (both psychological and material), among other things. It is a major life change. For some of the respondents, the experience of participation, i.e. the opportunity to participate civically in a new country, was and is a **tool for integration**, as well as an opportunity to prevent feelings of **loneliness** and **uprooting**; in addition, it can be a path to

new information, social contacts, friendship, to **sharing** one's experiences and to mutual support. At the same time, participation can be a tool to **get to know the new society more, contribute** to its development, and **feel useful and a part of it**.

FG 1 *"I didn't feel accepted in my class, I started to devote myself more to leisure activities, volunteering, and over time I felt more integrated...I never chose topics that were detached from me, – first I was interested in integration – because I wanted to feel better about myself, to be more a part of Czech society..."*

FG 6 *"... when I arrived... I think I was very active, or that I was striving for something, and I felt very alone, as a result of the language barrier... without friends,... and that I didn't belong anywhere..." "... nonprofits helped me integrate well and grow professionally. And to develop a network of contacts... actually my whole public life is based on this experience..."*

FG 2 *"I have to make my idea of home here, so I feel like that's why I want to be more engaged here because this is where I am. And I don't feel so easy to say "this is just where I live, but home is somewhere else". This is my home, so that's why I try to look for it [information, opportunities to get engaged]."*

Respondents' desires to **belong** somewhere, to be part of a **community**, or to participate in meaningful activities emerge both in the context of the migrant experience and on a more general level. The support of people, communities, the desire to **help**, or to connect with other individuals who have similar opinions and experiences, can frequently be identified in the respondents' statements.

FG 2 *"these things, and made me get more involved in... actually helping in the community rather than just protesting against things but doing... more to support rather than... rather than argue (laughing)"*

FG 1 *"Perhaps it's a selfish motivation, but I enjoy working with organizations and people, and when you have a common purpose, when it's a successful event, it's fantastic, I really feel it in my heart, life is better, the world is better when we strive to achieve something ..."*

A significant motivation for some of the respondents is also the **positive feeling** that derives from being able to influence the way things are, and to move things forward: engagement fulfills them, and they find it **meaningful**.

FG 1 *"I have a proactive approach in other areas of life as well, I don't want to wait for something to change in 10 years or not at all... then I have a good feeling that I'm helping to improve the world..."*

FG 2 *"I feel good, I feel meaningful. I feel good when I'm working with communities..."*

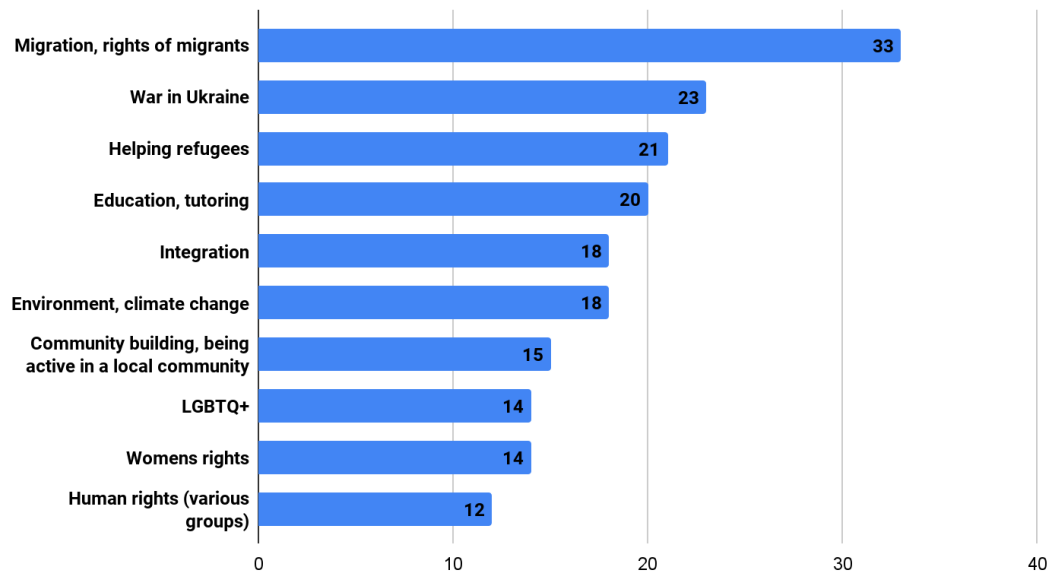
FG 3 *"...everything that comes to my mind is more like personal reasons, I would say. It's just more about guilt, I might say, or the need to ... do something with my existence, like it gives me more meaning... for me the motivation is more ... really how I feel. And ... Just makes me feel better..."*

Statements from the employees of InBáze z.s. reveal different motivations for participation compared to the target group, but most often it is a natural tendency to help others, identifying with the plight of those they help, applying one's expertise for the benefit of others, or a desire to be part of a mission and participate in their adopted society.

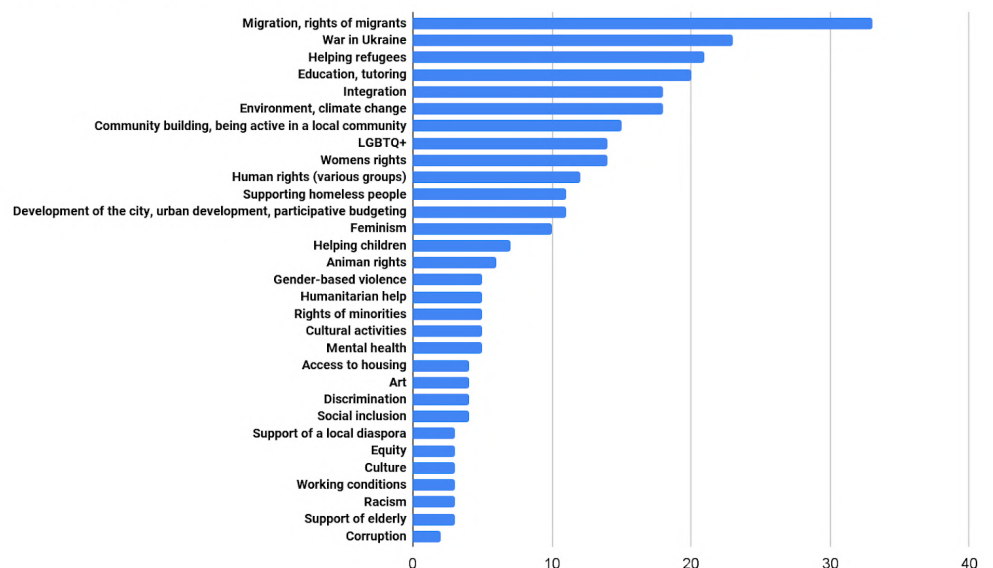
Topics and themes

The respondents focused on a **very wide range of topics** in their engagement. Most of them are actively involved in several thematic areas. Below is a list of the topics most frequently mentioned by respondents, both during focus groups and observations, as well as in online questionnaires. These data are **cumulative** in nature and are created by coding and categorizing data from focus groups and questionnaires.

What social issues/topics do respondents address the most? (top 10)



What social issues/topics do respondents address the most?



Topics that are more connected to **political events** appeared far more often in the **online questionnaires**; sometimes respondents directly stated that they are involved in politics or actively follow political events.

Various forms of participation

We addressed the issue of various forms of civic and political participation during focus groups, during online surveys and through observations at events.

Among the respondents who took part in the focus groups, the main form of participation was **volunteering and working with non-profit organizations**. Respondents engage in volunteering both in a more organized form (e.g., cooperating with NGOs) and informally, for example in civic initiatives.

Below are examples of the most frequently mentioned activities:

- helping people in need (including refugees)
- translating and proofreading
- expert volunteering
- tutoring and educational activities on various topics (migration, refugees, status of various marginalized groups, ecology, women's rights)
- organization of events and leisure activities
- manual work
- signing petitions, participating in/organizing protests
- humanitarian aid
- working in a community garden
- involvement in parents' associations in kindergartens/primary schools.

Some of the respondents also stated that they are engaged in **activism and advocacy work**, especially in the fields of ecology, human rights (women's rights, LGBTQ+), or within anti-war movements, for example through **spreading awareness**, participating in/organizing protests and demonstrations, or working towards improving the position of disadvantaged groups in other ways. Some of the respondents state that they regularly **sign petitions** or support political parties and movements. Only a few respondents stated that they participate in elections (most respondents did not have the right to vote in the Czech Republic at the time of the focus groups).

FG 4 *"As a part of D., I'm also... kind of presenting, doing like an advocacy, advocacy work for the Czech society and showing what actually are the problems that... migrants are facing, and trying to explain."*

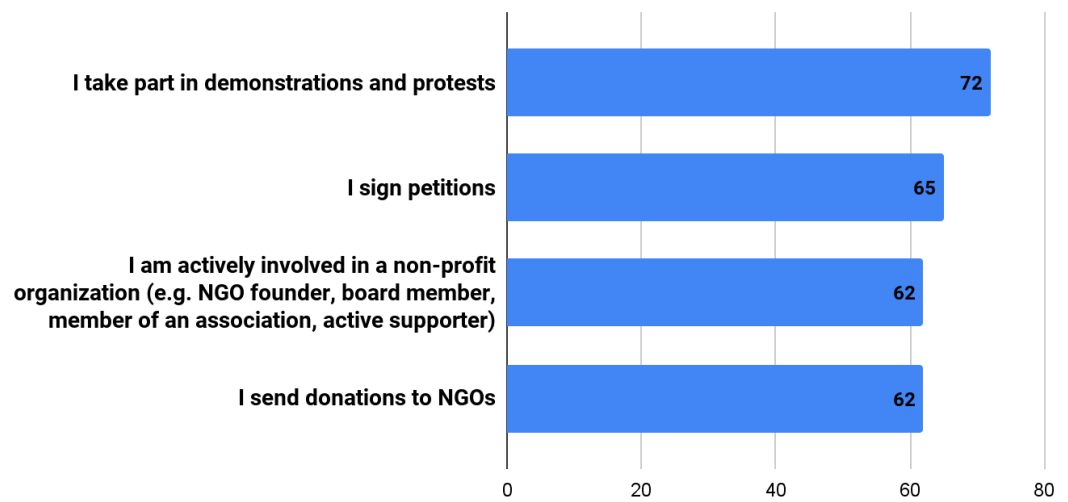
FG 3 *"...so we're trying to help the people from A. and people from B., mostly... trying to change different laws that... that discriminate people..." "we are writing emails, mostly contacting, yeah, contacting with different non-governmental organization... with ... poslanets ... an MP from the Czech government..."*

The following activities were also mentioned, though less frequently:

- community building, community and neighborhood events
- organizing or participating in political discussions
- making donations and contributions to NGOs or political movements
- online activism and podcasting
- fundraising events
- organizing exhibitions and film screenings
- theater of the oppressed, social theater
- open-mic and stand up events
- involvement in trade union activities
- founding community associations, working on the community association's committee.

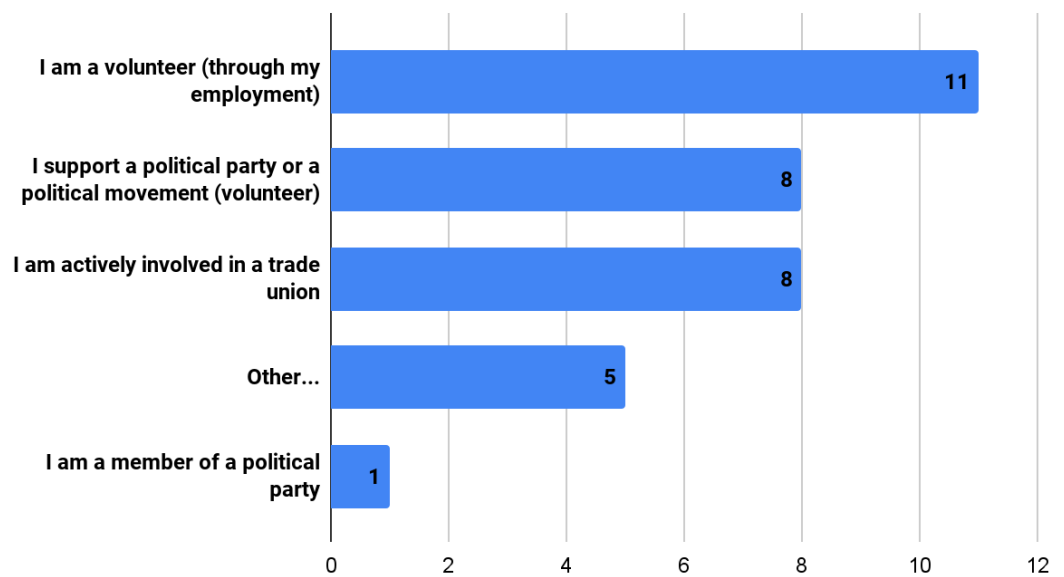
Based on data from **online questionnaires**, **participation in demonstrations and protests** and signing petitions were the most common forms of participation . These were followed by **involvement in the activities of non-profit organizations**.

How are you taking part in the local civil society? (online questionnaire)



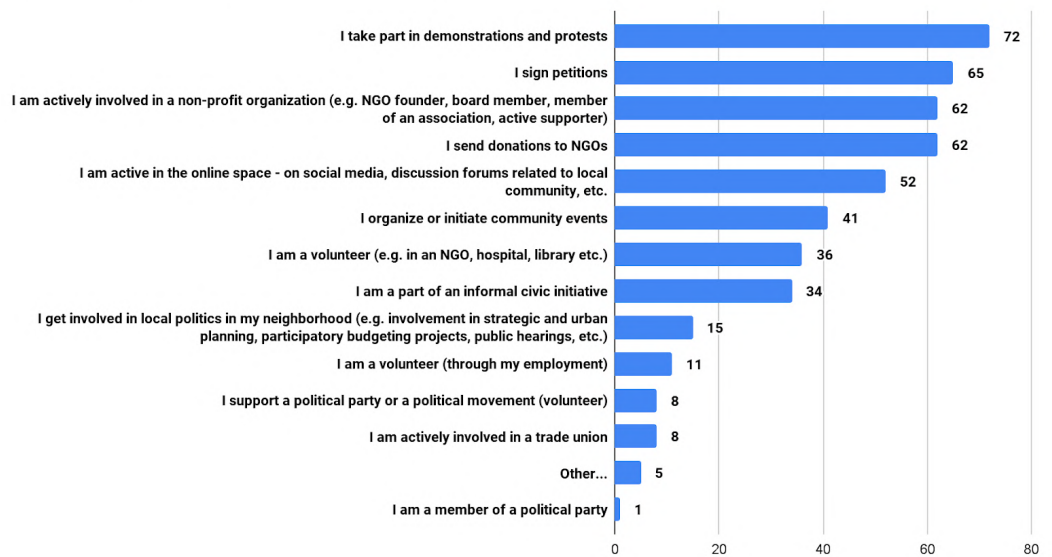
Joining political parties or supporting them as volunteers was the **least common** form of participation. Respondents also only rarely participate in trade union activities or participate in volunteer programs organized by their employer.

How are you taking part in the local civil society? (online questionnaire)



Aggregate findings are displayed here:

How are you taking part in the local civil society? (online questionnaire)

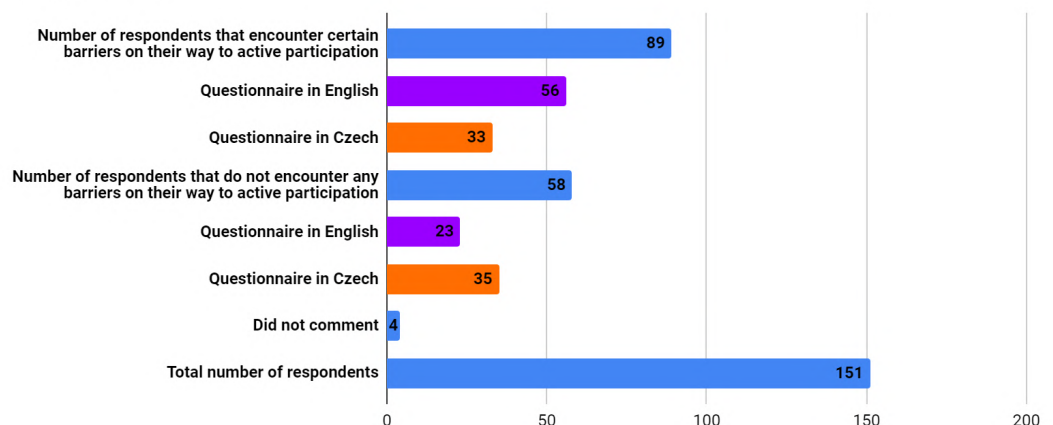


Barriers and obstacles

One of the **central aims** of this initial survey was to find out what prevents respondents from participating, and whether they encounter any difficulties. We addressed these topics at all levels of data collection.

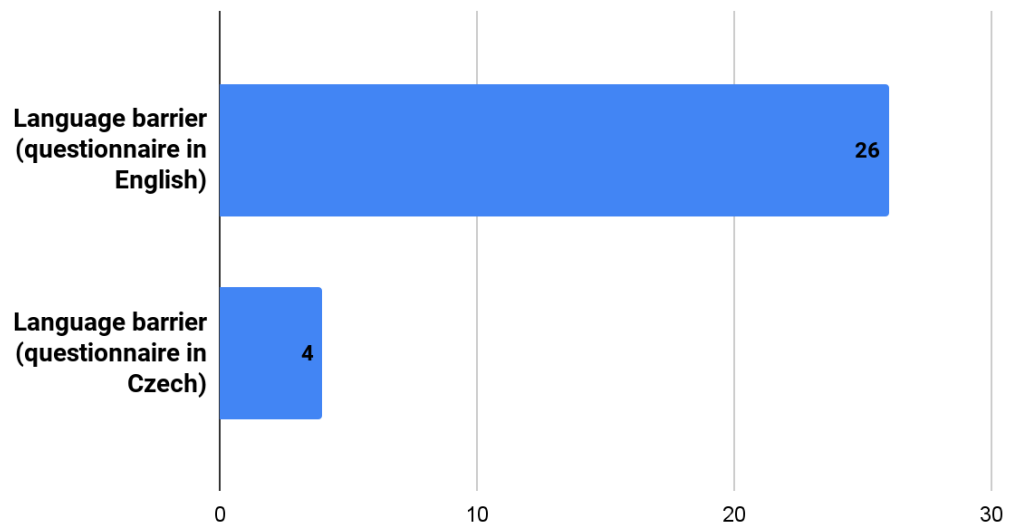
Recordings of the discussions during the **focus groups** reveal that the vast majority of respondents stated that they encountered certain **barriers** on their way to active participation in civil society. However, a different picture was painted by data from the questionnaires, with **some** respondents not reporting any difficulties (see the table below).

Online questionnaire



Language barriers (limited knowledge of Czech, accent and inability to communicate in, for example, English) were identified by respondents across all data creation techniques. This particular obstacle was **most commonly cited** of all. In the English-language questionnaire, the language barrier was mentioned a total of 26 times; this corresponds to roughly half of all respondents saying they had encountered some barriers. Respondents in the Czech-language questionnaire mentioned the language barrier only 4 times.

Do you come across any obstacles or difficulties while getting engaged in the local civil society? If yes, which obstacles?



According to the responses of InBáze employees, the language barrier also **hampers potential cooperation** with other organizations or initiatives. Migrant volunteers are often rejected in non-profit organizations because there is a perceived difficulty in inducting and integrating those without knowledge of the Czech language into the workforce. Because of the language, they are also more or less excluded from participating in various conferences and events focused on topics that interest them, when these are held only in Czech.

After the language barrier, the second most mentioned topic was the **lack of information and an unfamiliarity with the context, including a limited awareness of one's rights** or the opportunities for involvement, as well as **lack of education**, skills and knowledge. Respondents from focus groups and online questionnaires did not always know where to look for information and what they can and cannot do in the Czech Republic. They felt that this information was not accessible to them or that they lacked basic knowledge about the topic.

FG 4 *"Access to information about your rights, "...I've been living here for six years. And just this year, OK, last year, but technically my 7th year, I know that if I have a permanent residence, I can actually sign a petition for some candidates to be elected, and I... like, how would I know that? I have no source of information."*

FG 5 *"And as far as political participation is concerned, I would need a map of dealings with the apparatus of state and local government, etc. When we want to push something somewhere at the local or state level, that means knowing what we can do and who we can turn to, what we can do with different types of residence permits."*

The theme of **rejection** manifested repeatedly, in particular the feeling that **society did not accept the respondents, that they did not belong in the country**, and thus they could not fully participate. At the same time, many respondents encountered **prejudice, xenophobia** or racism on their journey, which could be very discouraging.

FG 2 *"I'm more right now in this level that I can communicate, and I can understand when people, they say like really horrible things, which I feel very discouraging..."*

FG 4 *"And I feel like the Czech Republic is the country where you may get a passport (laughing). And you may get those rights, but you will not be recognised like always, or will get those... You know comments like - oh, you look differently, oh, you look so (name of the nationality).you know that you will not maybe feel exactly 100% part of the society"*

These themes emerged from the responses to the questionnaire survey quite frequently:

**Do you come across any obstacles or difficulties while getting engaged in the local civil society?
If yes, which obstacles?**

I often hear "go home"

Discriminatory questions: e.g., "where are you from? You have an accent", I think it would be useful to somehow "desanctify" perceptions of the Czech language so that distinctions based only on perfect Czech pronunciation cease to arise; in the environment of today's Prague, such a focus on "perfect" Czech makes no sense and supports nationalism from the 19th century (definition based on language)

My origin/background

No practical obstacles, but rather the general perception of migrants as "clients", possibly stereotyping and dividing people into "us and them" even within migrant non-profits

A lack of acceptance, stereotypes, closed-mindedness

Not knowing enough about the existence of such [civil] societies, fear that I do not belong there

Sometimes people don't like that I'm a foreigner

Sometimes I see that people believe stereotypes about Ukrainians

Prejudices of the majority society, loopholes in laws allow state authorities to shirk their responsibilities

Discrimination based on passport

Feelings of belonging - whenever there are 2 or more locals they only speak to each other and ignore any foreigners present

Now I have more time but I prefer to interact with other foreigners who do not judge me

Prejudices of Czech people because of my nationality

Sometimes people judge me because of my Eastern accent

Stereotypes, misconceptions, discrimination, xenophobia

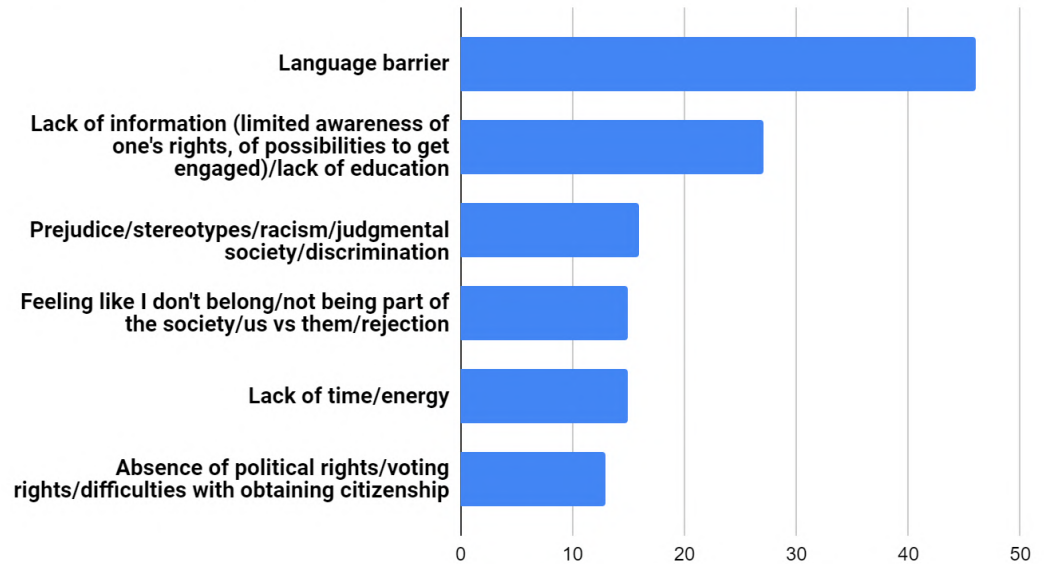
Public discourse about migrants, prejudices from different sides, people's closed-mindedness in discussion

Another topic that the respondents mentioned as an obstacle, especially to political participation, is the **absence of the right to vote** or other political rights. Some respondents emphasized the **difficulties with obtaining citizenship** (long waiting periods, uncertainty during the process, the requirement to live in the Czech Republic for at least 10 years before applying). Since the acquisition of citizenship is currently the only way to obtain some particular political rights, it is a topic that resonates very strongly with some respondents and leads to a feeling of frustration and powerlessness.

FG 4 *"...we need some rights to vote, and we don't have it. And I think that's unfair, because when I've been living here for five years, I think I should be able to at least pick who's running my neighbourhood. So, because I'm living there..."*

Questionnaire (CZ) *"The impossibility of becoming a member of a political party and getting directly involved in politics; poorly written legislation in local politics"*

The most cited barriers and obstacles (themes and categories)



The points mentioned above are largely connected with (a) the way that opportunity is structured in this society, (b) the perception of people with a migrant background or (c) restrictions from the point of view of the law (voting rights). In addition, respondents mentioned obstacles that were more **personal** in nature, such as a **lack of time and energy**, burnout, self-doubt or **low self-confidence**, and a **fear** that engagement may be **dangerous** for them.

FG 2 *"...because it takes like the initial motivation sometimes, and then when you start running into obstacles, either you have to be really committed and say "OK, maybe not this way, but I'll try another way", or you will end up just giving up..."*

FG 3 *"...the country where I came from... It's not, uh, really motivated to, to do... the especially like political activities or, or basically, express yourself. ...as he [another speaker] said that we come here and now we learn how democracy works, and the obstacle is that I don't know how it works, and I don't know what is my role. I don't know what I can or cannot do. And I came here with the fear that maybe it's not safe for me to participate in all this area..."*

Respondents also identified issues with limited opportunities for social interaction and the **impenetrability of Czech society**. Many of them expressed a desire to build greater connections with other people, especially those of Czech origin. Given how **few contacts** and how little social capital they have, respondents also feel that they have to **earn trust**, and are often met with suspicion and mistrust.

FG 2 *“And as I was saying, that the thing of the trust maybe as well, because even if you try, there's a bit of still of... we don't know you yet, so let's see what you're about to say, or what you're about, or... and I feel also bad when I say I have been here for this time, and I don't speak Czech and (laughing)...”*

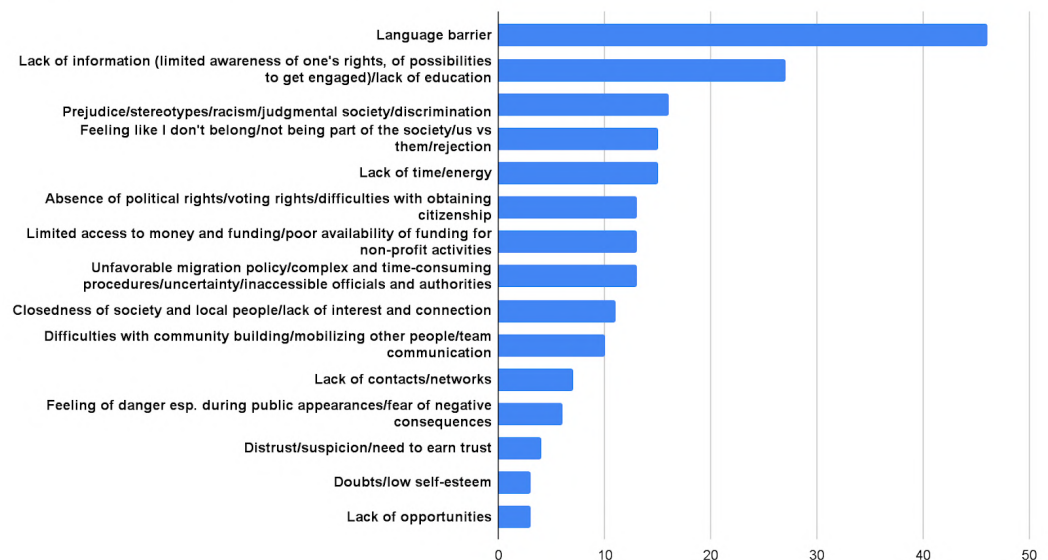
FG 5 *“I found that it was harder for me to get involved with initiatives that related to my interests. They seemed so cut off from me, I didn't know how to get in touch with the organizers. It seemed so closed, or not explicitly open: they would invite specific people to get involved and it was clear that many times it was more through acquaintances and such. So it might have been harder to get involved if you didn't have that network of acquaintances...”*

A number of respondents who help run or cooperate with **non-profit organizations** highlighted the challenges associated with **financing** these activities, the occasional lack of transparency and that **non-profit organizations** sometimes shy away from potential supporters and volunteers. They also point to the general culture of undervaluing the non-profit sector, including a lack of interest from the public and the government, and the **lack of a partnership approach** with these organizations.

FG 4 *“...the attitude towards NGOs in the Czech Republic, generally, not just to NGOs who's working with migrants, but to any NGOs. Because it's horrible here...Because we don't have, I'm not even talking about payment. OK, that's another thing. But just to know that you are taken seriously. Because all the NGOs, no matter where your topic is, they're fighting with a lot of, like, social issues that the government is not capable of solving. But they are not taken seriously, they're not respected. And that is the thing that personally like I feel very upset about that.”*

Below is a summary of the most frequently mentioned barriers and obstacles (focus groups, online questionnaire and observation):

The most cited barriers and obstacles (themes and categories)



Information and support sources

As part of the survey, we also focused on where the respondents look for information and support, what specifically they search for or how they learn about activities relating to civil society. Communication and sources of information were an important focus during the focus groups and within the analysis of InBáze experiences, as well as the questionnaire survey.

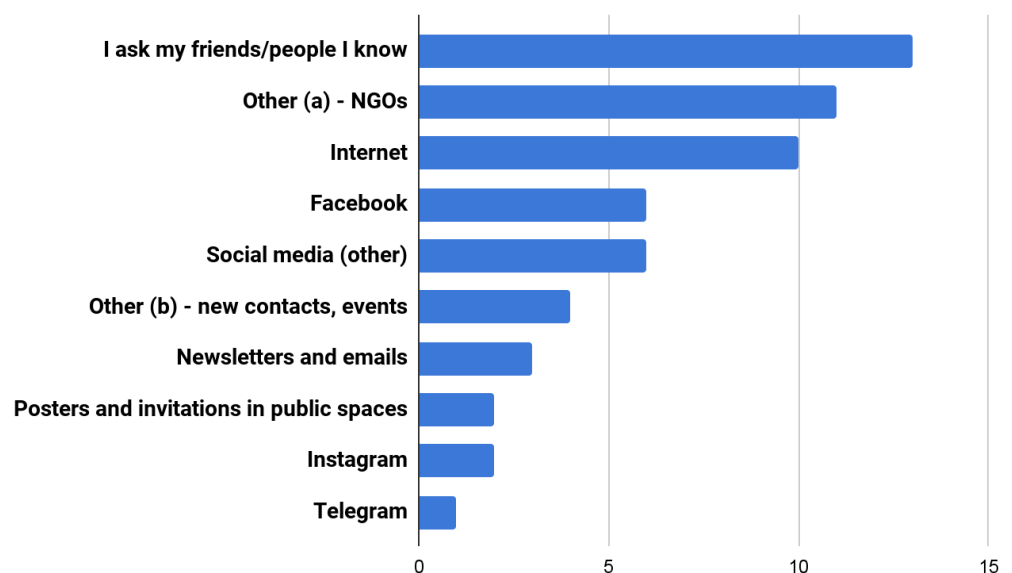
InBáze respondents stated that they had not yet found out from event participants where they got information about the event or the existence of projects, mainly due to limited resources. However, they all acknowledged that such information could be used to optimize communication strategies if they knew which platforms had the greatest reach. Members of the target group of the research stated that they learned about the activities of InBáze **from acquaintances or through online searches** in connection with a problem that they themselves were solving or in which they were interested. Respondents from InBáze also stated that the **MigAct** initiative is trying to create a network of acquaintances and connect active individuals, organizations and other civil society actors **in response to a lack of information about the existence and activities of various organizations**. Enabling such connections would make it easier for potential participants to collaborate on various events and projects, and remove the need for personal detective work in searching for one another. The network should also mitigate the fact that there are time limitations for various sub-projects, since the network of contacts should ideally update itself as various new initiatives and collaborations arise.

Participants in the focus groups also spoke about the possibility of creating a platform as a solution to the lack of information:

FG 5 *"...I would find a common platform for people active in various fields to be useful, such as a database where people could find out what is happening where, so that people could find ways of collaborating on something new. Or, on the contrary, take action against something, etc..."*

Focus group respondents rely most heavily **on their network of contacts** to find information. Below is an overview of the most frequently mentioned sources of information that were identified during the focus groups:

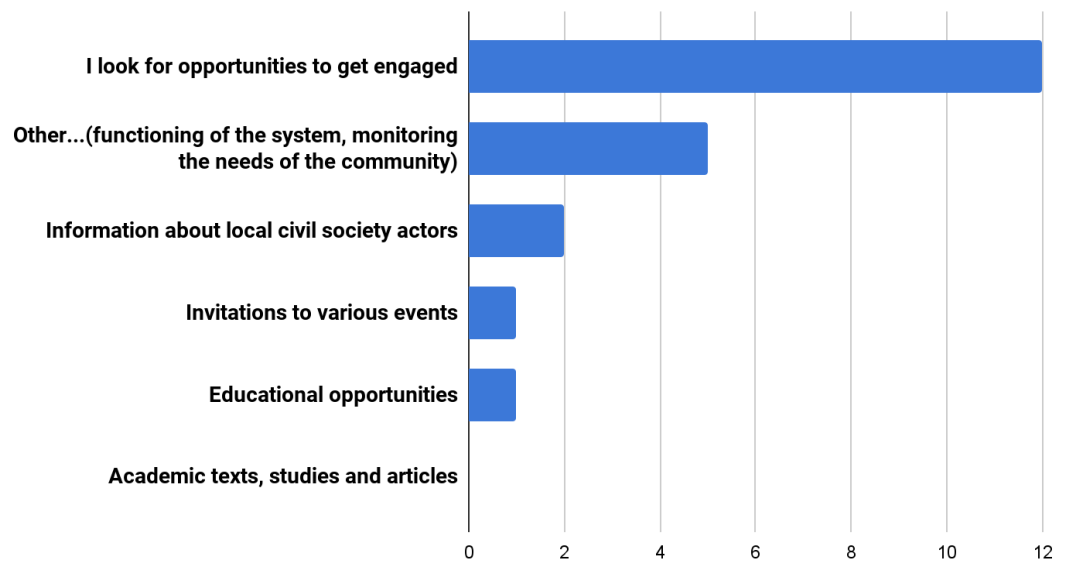
Sources of information that respondents use



From the "other" category, the sources of information included: **participation in various events organized by non-profit organizations, educational and familiarization courses**; other involvement in NGO activities dealing with topics of interest to the respondents; and even non-participant observation of such activities.

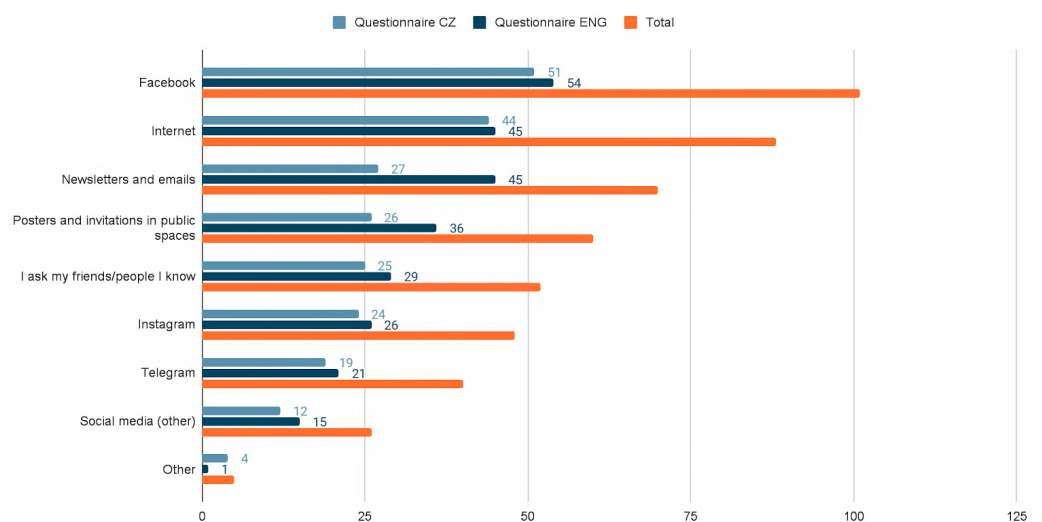
Most commonly, focus group respondents are interested in **different ways of getting involved** or are looking for **specific information related to a certain topic** or community.

What kind of information related to the topic of civic and political participation do you usually look for?



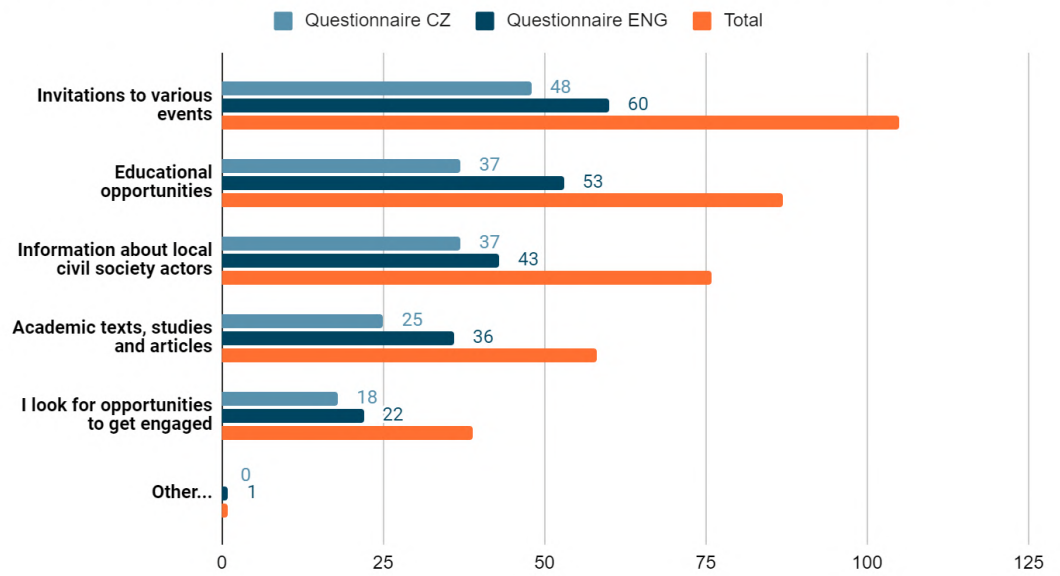
In online questionnaires, respondents most often mentioned **Facebook and the Internet in general** as a source of information, as well as **newsletters and e-mail**, which were mainly mentioned in the English version of the questionnaire.

Where do you look for information related to the topic of civic and political participation in Prague?



Regarding the type of information sought, respondents are most interested in **invitations to events and educational opportunities**. A larger number of respondents also search for **information about various civil society actors**.

What kind of information related to the topic of civic and political participation do you usually look for?



Conclusions and recommendations

03

The aim of this initial research was to find out about the **basic experiences and needs of the inhabitants of the city of Prague in the field of civic and political participation**. This is a smaller investigation into this topic, which still needs to be followed up with further partial research. The main findings can be summarized in the following key points:

Diversity of perceptions of participation:

Respondents often distinguish between civic and political participation, and rather associate political participation with the right to vote, direct political participation and getting in contact with politicians. They also perceive it as a continuation and extension of civic participation, which they practice more often, as it is more accessible to them. They understand civic participation as collaborative activities that strive for changes and improvements in society. The perception of this topic is very individual and diverse, just like the target group itself.

Motivations for participation: Respondents indicate a wide range of motivations for their involvement, including personal experiences, migration experiences, efforts to integrate, a desire to be part of a community or a desire to help others. They feel that participation allows them to influence their surroundings and they find meaning in the participation itself.

Topics and themes: Respondents engage in a variety of topics such as migration, human rights, ecology, women's rights, and many others. Most respondents do not limit themselves to only one topic, but are actively involved in several different areas.

Various forms of participation: Respondents use forms of participation according to their interests and means. Many get involved through volunteering and working with non-profit organizations where they can directly help people in need, organize events or participate in educational activities. Some engage in activism, participating in demonstrations, signing petitions, and offering support to political parties or movements.

Obstacles and opportunities: Among the respondents' main obstacles to participation are language barriers, a lack of information, feelings of rejection and non-acceptance, the lack of political rights (especially the right to vote) and personal barriers.

Sources of information: The main sources of information for respondents include attending events, using their network of contacts, taking educational courses, or using online media such as Facebook and the Internet. Primarily, respondents search for invitations to events, educational offers and information regarding various actors in the field of civil society.

Overall, people with a migrant background perceive civic and political participation as an important way to influence society and contribute to positive change. However, it is important to identify the obstacles that prevent their full participation. The removal of such obstacles would help create the conditions for an **inclusive and diverse civil society**.

It is also important to bear in mind that the respondents involved in this research **primarily**

reflected on their experience with participation in the city of Prague and their statements are connected with a certain context and stage of life. Both the perception of participation and the means and areas of respondents' engagement can be greatly influenced by this context (for example, interest in the topics of migration and integration might differ before and after one's own experience of migration).

Recommendations for the development of systematic support for civic and political participation of residents of city of Prague with a migrant background (for civil society organizations, state administration bodies and the general public):

The language barrier is a key topic, as it is within the process of integration in general. There are various tools and methods to support education and increase the availability of Czech language courses for those who need it (for example, courses held by non-profit organizations, language schools and commercial entities, as well as support for teaching Czech in the work environment and other places).

In addition to education, it is also important to create various opportunities for people to meet, where language can be learned in a natural way (including events and meetings in the context of civil society).

For many people with different mother tongues, the path to advanced Czech can be long or even unattainable for various reasons. In the context of civil society, particularly in the city of Prague, it would therefore be important to respond to the diversity and multilingualism of its population. In practice, it has been shown that the use of English together with Czech (for example, within the MigAct initiative) can partially facilitate access to various activities, events and information for people with a migrant background, regardless of their mother tongue. The language barrier is also closely related to respondents feeling that there is a lack of information or that it can be impossible to find it. The creation of materials and information in bilingual and multilingual formats could significantly improve this situation.

Insufficient knowledge of context or the demand for further education can be treated by offering workshops, seminars and information meetings on various topics that are relevant in the context of

civic and political participation (for example, focused on the workings of the political system and the possibility of involvement in the Czech Republic, the operations of NGOs or the strengthening of civic skills). In practice, various support programs for start-up non-profit organizations and civic initiatives (acceleration programs) are already proving their worth. The involvement of intercultural workers and the development of so-called "participatory intercultural work" are also proving to be a suitable tool for supporting participation. These workers can play a key role as guides to civil society, providing information and support in the networking process.

Preventive measures against xenophobia, racism and discrimination based on ethnicity or nationality are an important topic for the whole society and require a comprehensive approach. Civil society in this area carries out various projects and activities that need to be supported and developed. In addition to broad-based campaigns and awareness-raising activities to prevent xenophobia, it is crucial to create opportunities for people to connect and meet face-to-face, and to foster partnerships and cooperation between different civil society actors. It is also important to provide direct support to those who encounter expressions of racism or xenophobia, including psychological help and mentoring.

The increasing demand for political rights in the city of Prague is gaining more and more traction. A situation where approximately a third of the population does not have a means of political representation is untenable and entirely discriminatory. It is necessary to revive the debate on the political rights of migrants and to press for changes in the relevant laws. At the same time, it would be useful to publicise information and spread awareness about the existing ways in which people with migrant backgrounds can participate politically, even if they are not citizens of the Czech Republic.

It is also especially important to involve people with a migrant background in the creation and implementation of these recommendations so that they are as effective as possible and based on their needs and experiences.

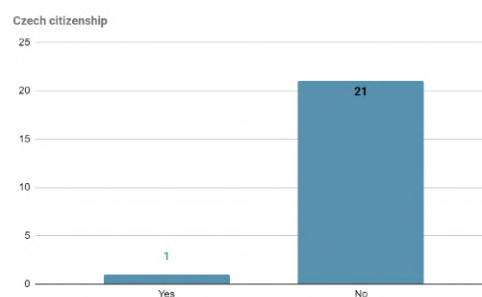
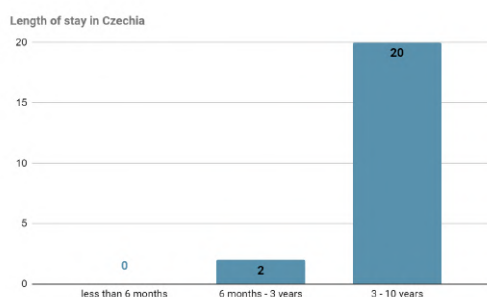
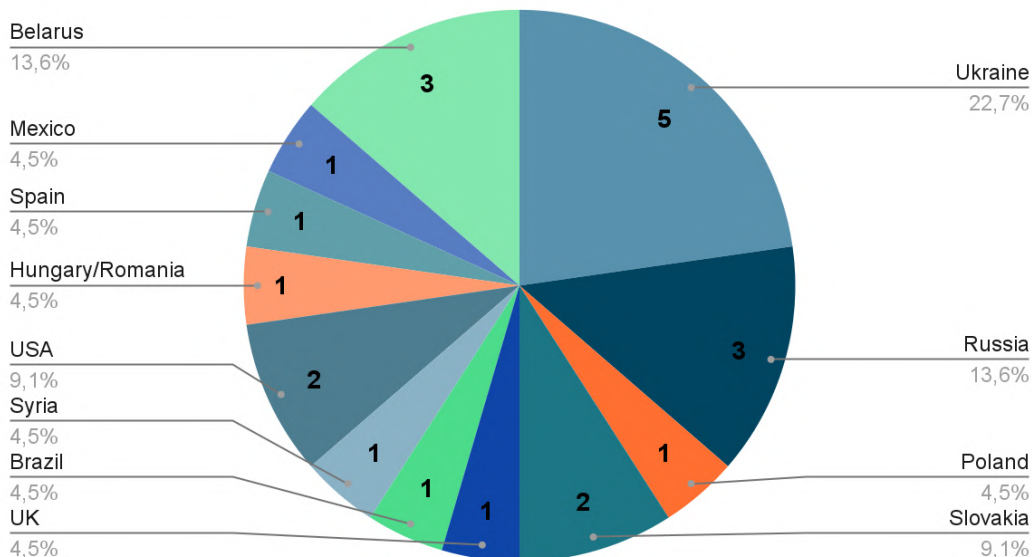
Appendices

Appendix 1. Basic data on respondents

a. focus groups

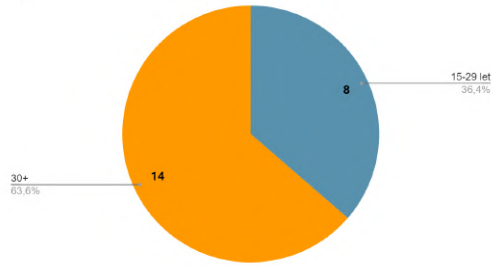
6 focus groups (3 in English, 3 in Czech), 22⁷ respondents

Country of origin

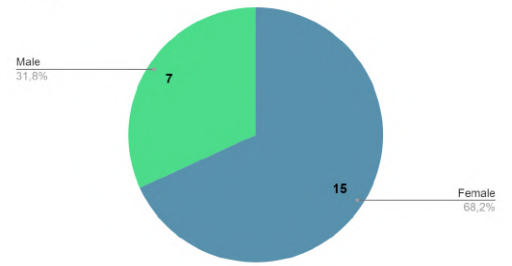


⁷ The responses of 2 other respondents were not used in the analysis due to failure to meet one of the sample selection criteria.

Age



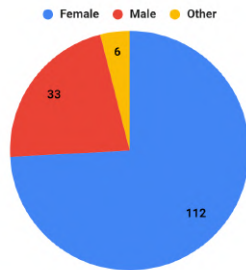
Genger



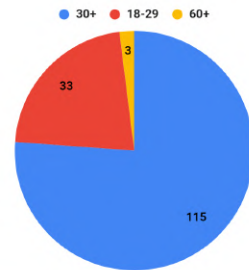
b. online questionnaire

Number of respondents (CZ)	70
Number of respondents (EN)	81
Total	151

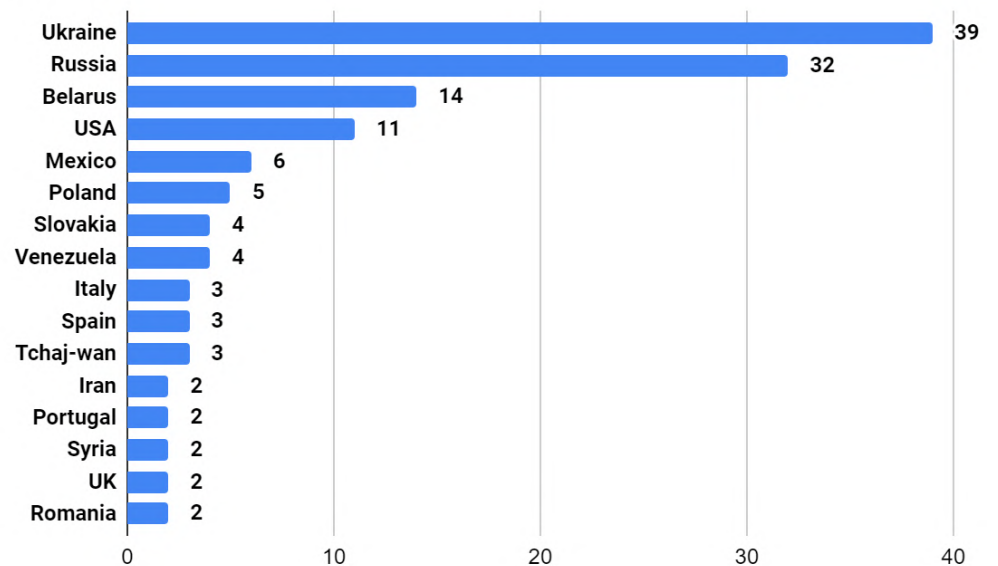
Gender



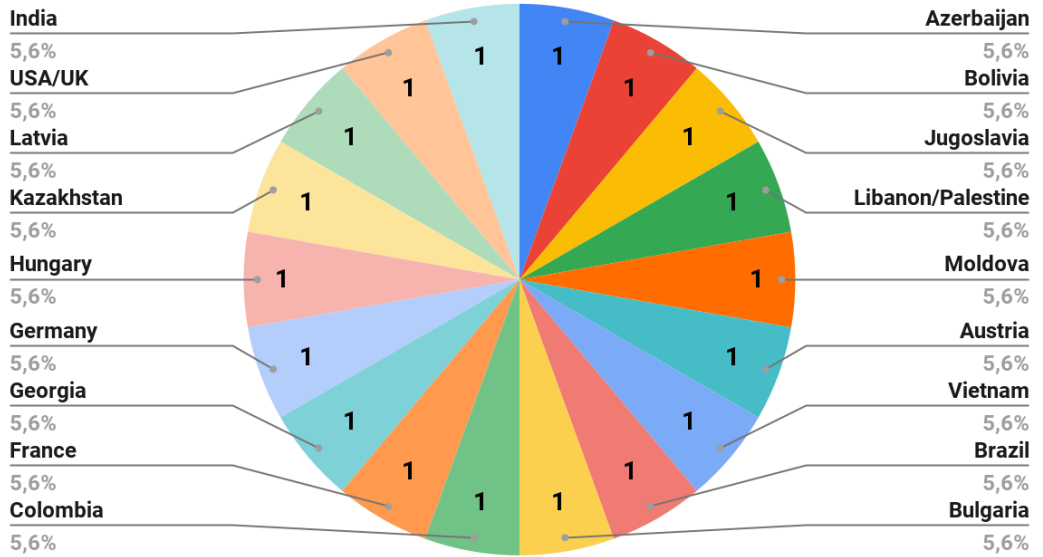
Age



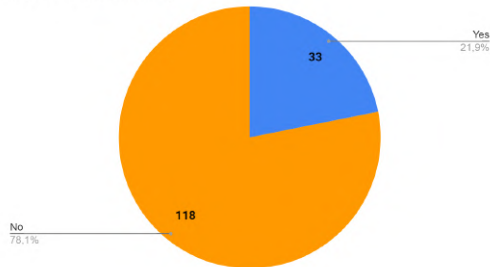
Country of origin <1



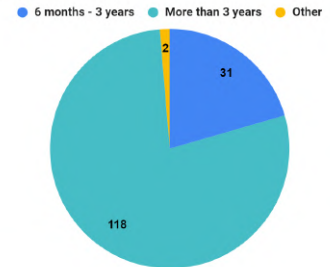
Country of origin - 1



Do you have Czech citizenship?



How long have you lived in Czechia?



Appendix 2. Focus group scenarios

Moderator's guide

Research questions:

1. What do respondents consider civic participation to be? How does their civic participation manifest? Why is it important to respondents?
2. What topics are the respondents involved in? How?
3. What prevents the respondents from engaging in civic participation in the Czech Republic?
4. Where do respondents search for information and support? What kinds of information are they interested in?

Timed plan for the focus group. Introduction - 15 min

Welcoming and thanking participants for their time. Introduction of the moderator and observer; a short introduction about the project and its research objectives.

The focus group is recorded for subsequent data analysis. The recording will not be published or distributed; it will only be available to the research team. Personal data will not be used in the research results, the results are generalized. However, there will be quotations from individuals (anonymized).

Do you agree to the recording?

Focus group rules:

1. One moderator asks questions, the other observes and takes notes. The research is anonymous: the observer does not write down names and personal data.
2. Each respondent should have their say: we respect the opinions of others, we do not judge.
3. Everyone's opinions are welcome, as is discussion; there is no need to reach consensus, there is no wrong or right answer. During the meeting, the group can discuss issues beyond the questions, not just directly answer the questions.
4. Participants speak one at a time.
5. Everything that is heard during the discussion is protected by the principle of confidentiality. Please do not share details beyond the room.
6. The focus group will last 1.5 hours.

Introduction of participants

The moderator will ask each participant how they would like to be addressed.

Opening question - 15 min

The moderator spreads picture cards on the table and asks the participants to choose two cards according to what they associate with the concept of civic participation. Each respondent then tells why they chose the given cards. The moderator will follow up with a question related to their experience of civic participation, e.g. What is your experience with civic participation? Is it important to you?

Main questions - 45 min

The moderator will build on the discussion by asking questions that connect the discussion to the areas of the research questions. Questions can be asked in a different order or follow-up questions can be used as needed.

- What social topics interest you the most?
- Describe your experience of engaging with that particular topic. What do you do and where?
- Do you have any issues when engaging with these topics/solving problems? Describe them?
- Are there any other related options you'd like to get involved in?
- Who do you work with within your involvement? In which language do you communicate?
- If you're looking for new information on a topic, where do you turn? What sources of information do you use most often?

Focus group closing question - 15 min

Write one last sentence/word that comes to mind.

or

Write down the 3 sources of information that you use most often when looking for information on topics related to civic participation (be as specific as possible).

Summarize briefly and thank participants for their contributions.

Appendix 3. Observation record sheet

Name of event:

Date of the event:

Observer:

Total number of participants from the target group:

What is civic participation? Perceptions, contributions	
Why is civic participation important?	
Where do participants get involved (NGOs, online, informal groups, individually)	
Topics which participants are involved in	
How participants are involved (volunteer, founder, NGO member, initiator/coordinator/participant...)	
Barriers and obstacles to getting involved	
...	

Appendix 4. Online questionnaire in Czech and English

a. questionnaire in Czech

Průzkum - mapování potřeb obyvatel Prahy s migračním původem v oblasti občanské participace

1. Účastnili jste se v období od června 2022 některé z aktivit spojených s tématem občanské participace pořádaných InBází z.s.? Například fokusní skupiny, akce iniciativy MigAct, akceleračního programu InBáze, poradenství nebo jiné aktivity spojené s tématem občanské participace probíhající v InBázi?*

Vyberte jednu odpověď

- a. ano
- b. ne
- c. nevím

2. Je Vám více než 18 let a bydlíte v ČR více než půl roku?*

Vyberte jednu odpověď

- a. ano
- b. ne

3. Uveďte svůj věk.*

Vyberte jednu odpověď

- a. 18-29
- b. 30+
- c. 60+

4. Uved'te své pohlaví.*

Vyberte jednu odpověď

- a. žena
- b. muž
- c. jiné/ nepřeji si uvést

5. Uved'te Vaši zemi původu.*

Napište jedno nebo více slov...

6. Máte občanství České republiky?*

Vyberte jednu odpověď

- a. ano
- b. ne

7. Jak dlouho bydlíte v ČR?*

Vyberte jednu odpověď

- a. méně než 6 měsíců
- b. 6 měsíců - 3 roky
- c. více než 3 roky
- d. narodil/a jsem se v ČR
- e. jiné

8. Bydlíte nebo pracujete/studujete v Praze?*

Vyberte jednu odpověď

- a. ano
- b. ne

9. Účastníte se dění místní občanské společnosti (hl. město Praha)?*

Vyberte jednu odpověď

- a. ano
- b. ne
- c. nevím

10. Jakým způsobem se do místní občanské společnosti zapojujete?*

Vyberte všechny relevantní odpovědi

- a. Zapojuji se do činností neziskových organizací. (například založení NNO, účast ve správních nebo dozorčích radách, členství ve spolcích, jsem aktivní příznivce)
- b. Zapojuji se do činností neformální občanské iniciativy.
- c. Jsem dobrovolník/ce. (v neziskové organizaci, v nemocnici, v knihovně apod.)
- d. Jsem dobrovolník/ce. (firemní dobrovolnictví, zajišťuje zaměstnavatel)
- e. Podporuji politickou stranu nebo hnutí. (dobrovolník/ce)

- f. Zapojuji se do politického dění v místě svého bydliště. (např. zapojení se do strategického a územního plánování, do projektů participativních rozpočtů, veřejných slyšení apod.)
- g. Jsem členem/členkou politické strany.
- h. Podepisuji petice.
- i. Účastním se demonstrací a protestů.
- j. Podílím se na činnosti odborů.
- k. Podílím se na přípravě a iniciaci komunitních a sousedských akcí.
- l. Posílám peněžní prostředky (dary) neziskovým organizacím.
- m. Angažuji se online - jsem aktivní na sociálních sítích, v diskusních fórech zaměřených na místní komunitu apod.
- n. Jiné...

11. V jakých tématech se nejvíce angažujete?*

Napište jedno nebo více slov...

12. Narážíte během Vašeho působení v místní občanské společnosti na nějaké překážky? Pokud ano, na jaké?*

Napište jedno nebo více slov...

13. Kde hledáte informace spojené s tématem občanské a politické participace v Praze?*
Vyberte jednu nebo více odpovědí

- a. Facebook
- b. Instagram
- c. Telegram
- d. Na sociálních sítích (jiné)
- e. Internet
- f. Newslettery a rozesílky (např. od neziskové organizace)
- g. Ptám se známých
- h. Plakáty a pozvánky ve veřejném prostoru
- i. Jiné...

14. Jaké informace, spojené s tématem občanské a politické participace vyhledáváte nejčastěji?*
Vyberte jednu nebo více odpovědí

- a. Pozvánky na akce
- b. Možností vzdělávání (např. semináře a workshopy)
- c. Informace o aktérech místní občanské společnosti (např. o občanských iniciativách nebo neziskových organizacích)
- d. Hledám možnosti zapojení
- e. Odborné texty, studie a články
- f. Jiná...

15. Chtěli byste ještě něco dodat?

Napište jedno nebo více slov...

Survey on the topic of civic engagement of Prague residents with a migration background

1. Since June 2022, have you participated in any of the activities related to the topic of civic participation organized by InBáze z.s.? E.g. focus groups, events by the MigAct initiative, InBáze acceleration program, consultations or other activities related to the topic of civic participation taking place at InBáze?*

Choose one answer

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I don't know

2. Are you at least 18 years old and have been living in Czechia for more than 6 months?*

Choose one answer

- a. Yes
- b. No

3. Please indicate your age*

Choose one answer

- a. 18-29
- b. 30+
- c. 60+

4. Please indicate your gender*

Choose one answer

- a. Female
- b. Male
- c. Other

5. Country of origin*

Write your answer here

Type one or a few words...

6. Are you a citizen of Czech Republic?*

Choose one answer

- a. Yes
- b. No

7. How long have you lived in Czechia?*

Choose one answer

- a. Less than 6 months
- b. 6 months - 3 years
- c. More than 3 years
- d. I was born in Czechia
- e. Other

8. Do you live/work or study in Prague?*

Choose one answer

- a. Yes
- b. No

9. Are you taking an active part in the local civil society (in Prague)?*

Choose one answer

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I don't know

10. How are you taking part in the local civil society?*

Choose all the relevant options

- a. I am actively involved in a non-profit organization (e.g. NGO founder, board member, member of an association, active supporter)
- b. I am a part of an informal civic initiative
- c. I am a volunteer (e.g. in an NGO, hospital, library etc.)
- d. I am a volunteer (through my employment)
- e. I support a political party or a political movement (volunteer)
- f. I get involved in local politics in my neighborhood (e.g. involvement in strategic and urban planning, participatory budgeting projects, public hearings, etc.)
- g. I am a member of a political party
- h. I sign petitions
- i. I take part in demonstrations and protests
- j. I am actively involved in a trade union
- k. I organize or initiate community events
- l. I send donations to NGOs
- m. I am active in the online space - on social media, discussion forums related to local community, etc.
- n. Other...

11. What social issues/topics you address when taking part in the local civil society?*

Write your answer here

Type one or a few words...

12. Do you come across any obstacles or difficulties while getting engaged in the local civil society? If yes, which obstacles?*

Write your answer here

Type one or a few words...

13. Where do you look for information related to the topic of civic and political participation in Prague?*

Choose all relevant options

- a. Facebook
- b. Instagram
- c. Telegram
- d. Social media (other)

- e. Internet
- f. Newsletters and emails (e.g. from an NGO)
- g. I ask my friends/people I know
- h. Posters and invitations in public spaces
- i. Other...

14. What kind of information related to the topic of civic and political participation do you usually look for?*

Choose all the relevant options

- a. Invitations to various events
- b. Educational opportunities (e.g. trainings, workshops)
- c. Information about local civil society actors (e.g. about civic initiatives or non-profit organizations)
- d. I look for opportunities to get engaged
- e. Academic texts, studies and articles
- f. Other...

15. Would you like to add anything else?

Write your answer here

Type one or a few words...

Appendix 5. Interview/questionnaire - staff at InBáze z.s.

Basic data:

- How do you understand the term “civic participation? What does it mean?
- How long have you worked with this particular topic at InBáze?
- What did your work involve?
- What was/is the goal of the project/program you coordinated?

Topics and forms of participation:

- Give some examples of activities you have helped set up.
- Were members of the target group of the research involved in these activities?
- Which topics resonated most deeply with the target group?
- What forms of involvement were most common? (e.g. volunteering, community activities, political participation, etc.)
- If you were later contacted by members of the target group, what topics did they ask about?

Civic participation: significance and motivations:

- What led the participants of the event/consultation to civic participation, why were they interested in it?
- Did the participants understand the topic in different ways? If so, where did the difference in understanding lie?

Barriers to participation:

- What opportunities do members of the target group have for involvement (in general), how would you evaluate these opportunities? Are they sufficient, accessible, etc.?
- According to your experience, are there any barriers to involvement? Have you ever discussed this with the program participants?
- What did the participants most need support for?
- What would you recommend for improving the conditions for civic and political participation of the target group?

Sources of information:

- What communication channels did you use to promote the program?
- Were they adequate?
- What kinds of information did you share? e.g. invitations to events, articles, etc.
- What communication channels does the target group you worked with use?
- Did you get feedback from the participants regarding the communication channels/the languages used/the complexity of the texts, etc.?

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