



Brief information

The Integration Chat Room project is a space for integration, aimed to address the socio-cultural differences and similarities that people have in a community. ICR provides the possibility to discuss different aspects of life such as food, work, school, family, health, relationships, politics, and many other daily activities. As long as it is part of life, we will discuss it. It was created in 2017 as a space for people to learn through experience-sharing and learning together.

In this space we share our individual experiences, explore particular ways of managing them, and turn these differences into the right tools for unique diversity!

What is it about

ICR is not just a physical space where people sit in a circle around the room one next to another, mostly next to someone they have not met before, and discuss about numerous topics. This space is meant to be a comfort zone for everyone within a friendly environment which is encouraged by tasty dishes from different countries.

ICR also creates an experience for exchange which would not exist in other contexts because of the few opportunities where the Dutch society and newcomers (including refugees and expats) interact and both voices are heard. The discussion is very informal and vibrant. We rarely use technology such as power points, the focus is on human interaction, and asking just about any question, even the most controversial ones, to confront one's stereotypes about others, ones' fear of fitting into the society, and one's challenge in the areas of discussion.

Target group

ICR is dedicated to a varied group of people, mainly those who can understand and make conversations. We have had young kids involved in ICR, women, men, of all ages, at different life stages, coming from different countries of the world, and of course, Dutch nationals. Our target group does not distinguish gender, religions, nationalities or status in the country. However for ease of conversations, we have sometimes had specialized ICR for different languages and cultural groups, while having simultaneous English translation to encourage diversity in the group. We have also organized ICR's around specific topics, and brought a number of people to share based on such topic, such as Socio-cultural differences in the workplace ICR, Socio-cultural difference in the school environment ICR and even culture, migration and health ICR. By organizing it around special themes or cultural groups, we attract people concerned about such themes and extract more information from our sharers, for the benefit of all participants.

Frequency: Every 4-6 weeks.

Actual content: how to select topics - dependent on location, and target group, or prevalent need of the community. For example



1. The sessions start with a brief presentation about the work of UID in socio-cultural integration and other UID projects. Sometimes the presentation comes in form of asking former participants to simply share their experience about being a part of UID. The latter is more useful in explaining UID and her work to people, in a relatable way.
2. The session's topic is introduced with some open questions for the audience and/or through a personal experience narrated by the moderator.
3. The floor is open for the public to comment about the topic. Every time the discussion is enriched with contrasting experience of the participants.
4. The moderator ensures everyone's participation, guiding the discussion accordingly to a previously planned agenda.
5. In some editions of ICR, special sharers are invited to share their expertise in specific topics. The moderator manages the conversation between the panel and the participants.
6. After the conversation, the moderator brings final thoughts and a brief summary of the subtopics comprised during the conversation.
7. The session includes a time for sharing around international dishes. First, each dish is introduced and discussed, finding similarities and different ways to prepare them. Second, the participants usually find someone with who to talk about the food. Third, a new network is created and in most of the cases, the ICR is extended for more time than planned.

AIM:

The aim of ICR is to encourage a natural discussion of different kinds of issues that can aid an all round integration of refugees, in a nice and warm environment.

Participation average/ Impact: 25-40 refugees/other types of participants.

Day and time

Date	Topics	Description
September 27th, 2017	Socio-cultural differences and challenges	In this chat evening, we will focus on socio-cultural differences, ensuing challenges, and how they managed these experiences.
October 24rd, 2017	Work and study experiences	In this chat evening, we will seat and hear people tell us about their experiences in their place of work or study. Some of them have refugee backgrounds, while others are either Dutch or Expats. This topic relates to all, and we invite you to come, chat with us, help someone overcome similar challenges, and enjoy a multicultural dinner!
March 13th,	Let's talk	During this episode of Integration chat room, we want

2018	stereotypes!	<p>to give attendees a chance to voice some of their stereotypical ways of thinking as well as their perceptions of people, lifestyles, cultures and any other topics.</p> <p>By doing this, we hope to help international, refugee, and local students to be aware of the stereotypes they hold and its impacts in their community. Besides this, the aim is to understand that enjoying diversity helps to minimise negative effects of stereotypes.</p>
May 16th, 2018	Special Edition: Culture, Health and Migration. With the participation of Leiden University students.	A person's health can be affected by many things, including their culture and location! During this episode of Integration chat room, we want to give attendees a chance to understand how culture and migration can play a role in different aspects of their health.
November 20th, 2018	Healthy Living Habits	This chat evening will include matters such as housing-related health, healthy eating, mental and emotional health.

We hosted many more ICRs in 2019 and will continue to do so in 2020 by God's grace.