



## Improving coexistence

To improve living conditions between natives and newcomers the emphasis should be put on the multi cultural aspect of “living together”.

The underlying questions remain the same : **how to conciliate newcomers and a region’s culture ; how to encourage the local community to take action, and be forthcoming enough to improve integration.**

It is often the case that different cultures and mentalities provoke feelings of uncertainty and fear.

In addition to this there are the problems of conflicting customs, contrasting ideas between real life in the country and the ideal, no services nearby, and housing difficulties. Living together can quickly become difficult.

Thanks to the participants and the views given during the workshop, the ability to be **forthcoming and the development of social links were established as the key elements in a multi cultural society.**

To encourage open minded attitudes, the most effective method is to talk with people. Discussion helps to anticipate any friction and uncover potentially incompatible situations.

The creation of associations, such as Kreiz Breih, is an effective method of forming long lasting social links.

In a multi cultural community, **it is important that inhabitants are involved.** This can be developed by encouraging everybody to participate. Public reunions and working groups are significant ways of improving social links.

In this context, the support of local authorities is obviously an advantage.

The participants believed that in **order to integrate new cultures**, it is necessary to support these mixed cultures which should go hand in hand with the conservation of local history, thus creating a sense of belonging and pride.

Obviously it is essential to evaluate community actions in order to assess their effectiveness, and to find out if they reach the set objectives.

Evidence shows that integration is a long term measure with in depth work between newcomers and natives. The multi cultural “togetherness” will only be gained in this way.

Sometimes a go-between who comes from the same country as some of the newcomers, and who speaks the same language, can help improve their involvement in the existing community.



**There are numerous pleasant methods which can improve integration, such as :**

- The “randofermes” (Saffre) which are farm open days, an opportunity for newcomers to get to know the local population.
- A welcome area, a meeting place to exchange and share experiences.
- Joining associations or volunteer work are ways of creating social links.
- Language lessons, swapping cookery recipes and videos are opportunities for people to meet people and get to know each other. (Association WIMA and the Centre Social de Jaligny)

Social integration begins at local township level : the new arrival is someone’s neighbour, not just someone with a project in mind.

**In short it is the people living in an area that make the region what it is, they must accept each other. Integration community actions should aim for this objective.**

### **The discussions and the debates at the workshop were based on the following commentaries :**

- The film “chronique d’une mutation” set in the Pays de Gascogne aroused questions and increased awareness.
- The example of the “cookery” workshops and the social food shop organised by the association WIMA for foreign immigrant women, led to thought about different cultures.
- The Charter of knowing how to live together which was created by farmers from the township of Saffré.
- Language workshops aimed at the Dutch population and proposed by the Centre Social de Jaligny.
- The Charter for Newcomers which the Agricultural Chamber in Gers created.
- The integration of English speaking inhabitants by the association Kreiz Breizh.