

17 - 19 Feb, 2022
Online Hackathon



Big Birmingham Hackathon Round Two

Providing a technology solution to encourage and support people from migrant communities wishing to enrol on English language speaking courses in Birmingham (UK)

WHY

When a migrant arrives to a country with a different language, the barriers they face multiply. Basic and fundamental tasks such as grocery shopping, attending a doctors appointment, talking to their childrens' teachers or registering for public services become great obstacles to navigate. **Directly or indirectly, all of these activities are related to basic human rights, threatened by the inability to communicate in the local language.**

Birmingham has an existing migrant and refugee population of circa 250,000; of which a great majority does not have English as their mother tongue.

Birmingham City Council through Birmingham Adult Social Care are aware of this situation and offers migrants the possibility of receiving free English training courses. Migrants can develop their language skills in order to facilitate the integration of migrants in the city.

However, for migrants who do not speak any English (beginners/pre-entry level), enrolment on a course is a burden in itself. Firstly, they cannot understand the information on the website or any flyer or poster, so **they do not know if they are entitled to free education**. It is only through relatives and other members of the community that they hear and eventually get supported to enrol on the course/s. Then, **the registration process** includes either a **call** – that they are afraid to have as they do not understand what is said and if they are missing important information – **or a visit to the centre**, where they have to go through an **assessment process**. At the centre, **they need to complete the registration by filling in a form with some personal details and do an assessment task in English**. Providing your name, your age or your address in a questionnaire may not sound burdensome to most of us, but when you cannot read and understand what you need respond to, the whole situation becomes an enigma impossible to approach individually. **As a result, a large number of migrants do not join the courses.**

WHAT - The Challenge

It is not uncommon to find migrants that, many years after their arrival, are still unable to speak English. Each time they do an errand, visit their GPs, or apply for a certificate, they lack the confidence and skills to do it by themselves, having to depend on someone from their community to steer them through the process. Therefore, creating a technological solution which will allow migrants (who speak little or no English) to equip them prior to attending the language centre for the registration and assessment to be able to know and recognise key words/sentences that will give them assurance to ask questions with confidence and independence.

HOW

During the 3 days of the Big Birmingham Hackathon Round Two, the different activities will facilitate the development of technological solutions that best serve the migrants' needs in relation to their initial access to the BAES language courses, with a special focus on the pre-entry level learners. During the event, you will create an accessible and migrant-centred service that can positively impact the integration of this community by improving their experience when enrolling in English training. In short, your task will be to provide a technology solution to encourage and support people from migrant communities wishing to enrol on English language speaking courses in Birmingham (UK).

The solution should address the different steps of the previously-described journey, from the initial understanding of the course offer and conditions for fee exemption, to the level assessment, including signing up for an information call, the registration (via call or visit), the completion of the personal details form, and the assessment at the centre. The solution, targeted to beginners/pre-entry level migrants, should therefore:

- Facilitate the access to information related to the BAES courses and fee exemption conditions
- Make the registration process accessible and understandable, eliminating the language barriers, so migrants can go through the whole process without the need of external support
- Prepare migrants for the level assessment and registration process

To do so, we will provide you with three already-existing technologies that focus on the language and bureaucratic barriers migrants generally encounter when interacting with a service. Your solution should integrate at least one of these technologies to address some of the above-described specific problems associated with the enrolment in the BAES language courses for non-English speakers:

- **Capeesh** - aimed at providing situation-specific language courses
- **CALST** - meant to train migrants in the pronunciation of challenging sounds and words in their new languages
- **Pathway Generator** - mainly accessed through a Telegram Chatbot, directed at breaking down complex bureaucratic procedures into actionable pieces of information

The integration of these technologies in your solution will help you in addressing the challenge and facilitate the migrants' comprehension of the whole journey.

WHO - The organisers

Birmingham City Council and BAES are the main organizers of the event. The two institutions, together with the H2020 easyRights project, have joined forces to support migrants in the access and exercise of their rights. The event is supported locally by Birmingham City University.

WHO - Teams

The hackathon is open to approximately 20-30 participants. We truly believe in diversity and collaboration to find meaningful and context-rooted solutions. Therefore, regardless of their background or nationality, the participants we seek respond to the broad (and specific) description of visionaries, developers, designers, marketers entrepreneurs, engineers, migrants and field experts.

WHO - Partners

Numerous experts will inspire the teams in their hackathon journey. Colleagues who have the experiential knowledge about the challenge we are addressing will be on hand: professionals from the BAES language courses and representatives of the migrant communities that take part on them will inspire with their stories the search of solutions and provide feedback based on their expertise to guarantee consistent and meaningful solutions for this target group.

Complementary, a skilled task force of decision-makers, lawyers, designers and tech experts will guide the work of the participants. Their multi-disciplinary covers a broad spectrum of areas, ensuring that you will get the appropriate support at each moment of the process, whether you struggle with the definition of the concept, the information architecture, the data management, or the integration of existing technologies in your solution. **They will be available for consultation and feedback throughout the three days of the event.**

WHERE

The intensive 3 day ONLINE event will provide the collaborative and engaging digital environment to find a digital solution that will provide ESOL migrants with the tools needed to register and complete the online assessments required to access free English training courses, transforming technical solutions from ideas to prototypes.

WHEN

You can already register for the hackathon event, either individually or as a team:

- **Registration opening** - 28th of December 2021
- **Registration closing** - 16th of February 2022

One week before the hackathon starts, we will have a pre-hackathon event. Pre-hackathon (online TEAMS) event – 12.30pm – 2pm on 11th of February 2022, to introduce you to the topic, give you access to the technical tools, facilitate the group formation and have a Q&A session. Please save the dates!

- **Pre-hackathon event** - 11th of February 2022
 - **Hackathon event** - 17th, 18th and 19th of February 2022
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And then what? - WINNERS

The winner will be chosen during the last day of the event by a jury formed of technical and service experts, who will evaluate the proposed solutions on different criteria:

- **Impact** - Does the solution influence easing the process for the immigrants?
- **General feasibility** - Is the proposed solution feasible from an economic, technical, legal point of view? Is the proposed solution meeting the time constraints that ascertain the likelihood of completing the project successfully? Does the group have the capabilities and the overview to develop the solution towards its full implementation?
- **Sustainability** - Is the proposed solution sustainable in time?
- **User-centred** - How user-friendly is the designed interaction for both migrants and service providers? (that is, a solution that is not difficult to learn or understand, simple-to-use, convenient, accessible, and straightforward).

- **Technical integration** - To what extent is the proposal integrating the existing easyRights IT solutions?

The winning team will be offered 5000€ contract to work on the further development and integration of the proposed solution within the service provision, in collaboration with the easyRights technical team and the municipality of Birmingham.

REGISTRATION

Register on Eventbrite [here](#).

More info on the [website](#).

ORGANISED BY



LOCALLY SUPPORTED BY



BIRMINGHAM CITY
University

SUPPORTED BY



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