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Appointments, Interpreters and Access to Municipal Registration in Southern Europe

Devika Raman
Tata Institute of Social Sciences, India

Abstract

Municipal registration can be an important gateway to services, but administrative access depends on more than formal eligibility. This comparative study examines registration experiences among recently arrived migrants in two southern European cities. Researchers observed 91 advice sessions, interviewed 57 applicants and 24 municipal or civil-society staff, and analysed anonymised appointment records over six months. Process mapping identified delays between initial enquiries, document preparation, appointments, and completed registration. Applicants relying on shared phones or informal interpretation were more likely to miss rescheduled appointments and repeat visits. Civil-society organisations helped resolve contradictory document requests but absorbed substantial unpaid coordination work. Differences between offices within each city were sometimes greater than differences between the two municipal systems. The findings show how appointment design and language support shape the practical accessibility of registration. The study does not evaluate all legal categories or estimate citywide exclusion. Municipal service improvement should include clear notices, consistent document guidance, and supported interpretation while tracking unsuccessful attempts as well as completed registrations.

Keywords: municipal registration, administrative access, interpretation, migrant services, appointment systems

1. Introduction

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2. Methods

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