

INTEGRATION OF
MIGRANT AND
REFUGEES



How are **UIA** migrants and refugees **integration** **projects** implementing **innovative ways** for better **managing inclusion?**

Experiences and first lessons
learnt from **Antwerp, Bologna,**
Utrecht and **Vienna**



About the Initiative

Urban Innovative Actions (UIA) is an Initiative of the European Union that provides urban areas throughout Europe with resources to test new and unproven solutions to address urban challenges. Based on article 8 of ERDF, the Initiative has a total ERDF budget of EUR 372 million for 2014-2020.

UIA projects will produce a wealth of knowledge stemming from the implementation of the innovative solutions for sustainable urban development that are of interest for city practitioners and stakeholders across the EU.

This report written by UIA Experts captures and disseminates the lessons learnt from the project implementation and the good practices identified. It is part of capitalisation and dissemination activities of the Urban Innovative Actions Initiative.

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Introduction

Two thirds of migrants settle in metropolitan areas, particularly in capital cities. More than 60% of refugees worldwide live in urban areas. Migration has always been a local reality: a key driver and a challenge for cities. An even bigger urban challenge since the EU experienced an unprecedented influx of refugees and migrants in 2015 and 2016. At that particular time, UIA demonstrated its responsiveness in supporting cities dealing with such a pressing issue: by including the **integration of migrants and refugees topic** in the two first calls for proposals; and providing direct funding to cities.

Seven (out of 91 proposals received) UIA approved projects address the immediate needs and are equipping themselves with the tools to address integration into the urban fabric. The present paper focuses on the lessons learned and common challenges when implementing innovative ways for better managing integration in Antwerp, Vienna, Utrecht and Bologna (UIA call 1).

Urban areas are often the first port of call for migrants due to the level and quality of services and infrastructure that they provide. Since more than 1 million people arrived in the European Union three years ago, cities have particularly shouldered the responsibility for integrating refugees and migrants. Delivering emergency responses; developing immediate solutions; and facing the difficult, complex and long-term process of fostering integration and mutual trust have been key challenges for EU cities. The UIA initiative decided to support them to react quickly, and to implement and test new and inventive ideas for migrants and refugees integration. With the integration of migrants and refugees as a topic of the first call, UIA sent a strong message: **the Initiative backs cities in responding to topical and sensitive issues.**

In a complex political and financial climate, the UIA Initiative also clearly shared with urban authorities the risk to experiment in this specific policy area. Furthermore, it addressed the **existing funding gap by investing almost 35 million Euro**. With calls 1 & 2, seven UIA cities - Antwerp, Athens, Bologna, Coventry, Fuenlabrada, Utrecht, and Vienna - have seized this opportunity to consider an effective migration policy, together with integrated and tailor made inclusion policies, as essential components of effective urban development. Benefiting from the direct access to funding for integration, these cities have the opportunity to test at a real urban scale new combinations of active inclusion policies for migrants and refugees.

The four projects finally supported in the first UIA Call for Proposals (out of 50 proposals received for this topic) synthesise well the indispensable role of urban authorities in migration governance. The cities of **Antwerp (CURANT)**, **Vienna (CoRE)**, **Utrecht (U-RLP)** and **Bologna (S.A.L.U.S 'W' SPACE)** are now in their last year of implementation. Initial results are being achieved and can be shared. Supported by their UIA experts, the projects have identified four key aspects that can bring added value to the role that cities can play in tackling the challenge of integration in our society. These are:

- **Personalised case management and support services for successful integration**

Management model design should take into account all the assets that will be faced along the project, from the economics and human resources commitment, to the flexibility of adjustments when the project is running already. Ana-

lysing, structuring, knowing the specific political context, and sharing management approaches between projects is more than necessary to help setting the best-personalized and feasible strategy.

- **The geography of integrated services for migrants**

How the integration services are organised in space can play an important role in supporting refugees and asylum seekers to integrate faster and better. For many refugees, the experience of the first years is of being in limbo while dealing with endless bureaucracy. This speaks to the need for a multilevel approach between cities and their Member States. Each configuration has different benefits.

- **Leveraging public opinion and political support: the role of citizens and stakeholders**

The success of policies for the reception of asylum seekers and refugees depends on many factors. The engagement of diverse stakeholders and citizens in general in the design and implementation of these policies is useful in countering negative narratives and reinforcing political support.

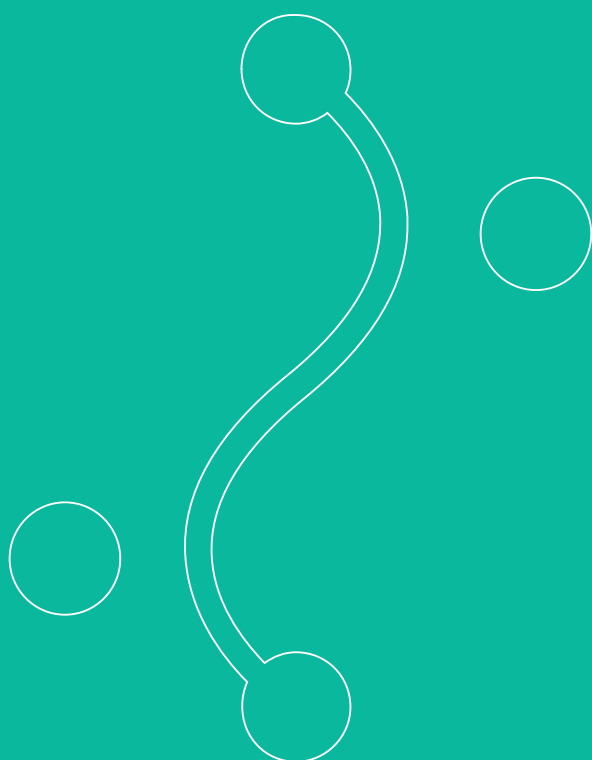
- **Effective integration and the need of a multilevel governance**

The integration of migrants and refugees is defined by an entanglement between different levels of authorities. Cities are suggested to develop, and to implement, concrete integration measures which ideally spoken should be in line with national or even supranational policies. How to find a balance between these different interests and perspectives?

To further deepen but also open the conversation around these common questions to other urban stakeholders in Europe, the four cities and the UIA Secretariat organised a public workshop in Antwerp on the 12-13 June 2018, followed by a site visit of the BREM 16 - CURANT co-housing project. This report presents important lessons for cities from these four UIA projects. Next step will be to bring the contribution of the three other projects working on the topic of integration of migrants and refugees to the knowledge already captured. To keep posted on the topic and for further reading, the UIA expert journals are the most relevant source to know more about the projects' latest achievements and the lessons learned. Additional up-to-date knowledge and information is also available on the project webpages on the **UIA website**.

Personalised case management and support services for successful integration

By **Fabio Sgaragli**,
UIA Expert for Antwerp, CURANT



The relevance of this topic

The relevance of this topic lies in the need to address the complex challenge of integration with a mix of tools that can simultaneously intervene upon the several dimensions (identity, psychology, culture, sociality, professionalism) of the integration process.

When designing an integration trajectory and its key actions such as reception, training, work, legal assistance, health care and social mediation, the kind of management to be brought forward is frequently given by the framework conditions and by the project's features. Support services, by means of collective assistance and peer groups, thrive best on the benefits of learning from each other and getting to know other people who are tackling the same challenges.

One emblematic example given by the CURANT project in **Antwerp** is a course held by a migrant expert on topics connected to the youngsters and who formerly went through the same challenges. The same "language" spoken, as a matter of communication, is one of the key factors in support services. This is well illustrated by the CoRE project in **Vienna**, with the chance to anonymously attend low-threshold integration offers, which is especially important for asylum seekers, whose legal status is yet to be determined. One other distinguishing factor is the timing of activation. According to the S.A.L.U.S. 'W' SPACE project in **Bologna**, there should clearly be a different approach when referring to a first level assistance, focusing by instance on reception operators, to a more advanced step along the integration path, where the support towards job autonomy can be more effective. All experiences however suggest that chances of integration increase when support starts from day-one. The U-RLP project in **Utrecht** underlines how services should make the people they are targeting feel that

they are being taken care of. It requires a process that is too tailor-made to be able to identify standard and "one size fits all" approaches. It must take into account the diversity of age, gender, education, character, personal history, and situation in the country of origin of the beneficiaries.

Even when personalized case management, considered as a 1:1 approach, seems to be a replaceable tool after a dedicated time where it mainly supports orienting and informing, it seems sometimes clear that it is the only effective tool in specific and justified cases. A critical point identified in **Bologna** is how to link the personalized case management dimension to a horizontal level made of "social and professional connections" in order to improve self-reliance and autonomy, also by means of community building activities. In **Antwerp** it has been possible to support each youngster with a social worker who had half the people to follow, compared to their normal job. This is an ideal situation, even if feasible only on extra funded projects. Considering

these as extremely dynamic processes, it is suggested by the U-RLP team that standard individual trajectories are not the best way to operate. Indeed, it takes continuous adaptation to help transition existing individual features into a "new" social identity.

The case managers should thus allow many degrees of freedom in the process and follow newcomers' trajectory once started. This point stands out from all the projects; duration and frequency cannot be planned beforehand. They should be proposed at the beginning and then modulated according to progress along the way. Also, beneficiaries cannot be overwhelmed by services and courses. The offer must be well balanced on newcomers' real needs, desires and abilities.



What do the experiences of the four UIA cities tell us about a **service model** both effective and economically viable?

Assuming that integration is based on interaction, exchange and communication among locals and newcomers, and acknowledging the high costs associated with a wide range of support services, a well-balanced ratio between personalised case management and support services can be found. As already mentioned, one big issue in balancing these two complementary approaches is represented by the need of privacy and anonymity.

This is also dependent on the actors managing the system.

S.A.L.U.S. 'W' SPACE gives a clear example regarding Italy. When the system is managed by the local administrations, it is noticed that personalized case management and support services are well integrated. It is different from the system of an emergency approach managed by the prefectures, where the support services are basic and the personalized case management is completely missing. The "gap" is always represented by the link with the social framework, where the best experiences are those actively involving the third sector within the integration trajectory. Going back to the need to personalise interventions, group sessions cannot always be adapted to each individual need but should focus instead on the positive aspect of "connecting horizontally" with others. At the same time, there is also a specific experience in working with the target groups that gives sensitivity on each individual's needs, both for those who communicate most and for those who are less outspoken, but might be missing something, as experienced in **Utrecht**.

In the CoRE project's experience, an economically viable solution could be to introduce an in-depth assessment with newcomers by which the extent of case management and other support services needed is determined. At the same time, involving former recipients as volunteer trainers and tutors for newcomers is not only an economically viable solution, but also an effective approach as it respects the principle already highlighted of the connection to "a peer". Assuming that national and local experiences for reception management are proving to be very expensive models as they require professional competences for each aspect of the autonomy path, S.A.L.U.S. 'W' SPACE aims at creating a more sustainable model by creating a connection between support services and professional or entrepreneurial activities. By simultaneously training for job placement and supporting the engagement with the community, the need for assistance, especially in a later stage of the integration trajectory, might be thus reduced.



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The experience of the CURANT project in **Antwerp** brings forth the reflection on how personalized case management can become particularly expensive when 1:1 support is delivered by social assistants with a small number of beneficiaries, in order to provide the best possible attention and dedication to them. Whilst of course ideal as intensity of support, questions arise about its sustainability beyond the life span of the project. This is why the city is re-thinking its approach, with a view to reduce the scale of intervention and rely more on existing support services already in place in the city.

The four cities also highlighted both the need to safeguard the tested approaches in terms of intensity and variety of support services offered to newcomers, in the recognition that this is an effective approach, and the necessity to test innovative funding schemes where beneficiaries play a role either through parallel economic activities generating revenues, or via pay-back mechanisms once integrated fully in the labour market.

Antwerp, CURANT

Guaranteeing one-on-one integration approach with individual case management

By combining co-housing and a personalised approach to support services, the city of Antwerp aims at reinforcing unaccompanied young adults intensely, in multiple areas of life at the same time. Two innovations are tested: co-housing with volunteer buddies, not only for reasons of shelter, but as a means to sustainable 1-on-1 integration; individual case management programme to guarantee one-on-one integration approach. The circular integrated individual trajectories concern 81 unaccompanied young adult refugees and guarantee an intensive follow-up. The programme has a strong language skills focus and consists of: intensive and varied trainings on activation, independent living, Dutch language, and other challenges customized to the needs of the individual; leisure time activities and social integration; orientation towards formal education and work; and detection and treatment of psychological traumas. Close follow up by the case manager is needed with all the refugees. Social assistants visit every refugee at least once every two weeks and besides practical help (e.g. applying for social housing, making bank transfers), he/she also gives emotional support. Almost all refugees followed the obligated trainings, some of the available tailor made trainings and individual/group trauma relief sessions in order to strengthen them in different life aspects. The CURANT project demonstrated that high intensity of support and case management, personalised individual trajectories and co-housing with a local are key success factors of interventions for young refugees' integration.

Lessons to share

- **Variety and intensity of personalised case management** and support services makes a difference in the chances of real integration, although expensive, the approaches tested in the four cities prove that this is the way to go.
- **Individual trajectories** are more successful when they are **flexible** and adjust along the way, when they take into account the diversity of the individuals involved, and when they involve the beneficiaries in making choices according to their perceived and felt needs.
- A corollary of the above point is that **motivation and personal traits** make a difference in the capacity to stay in the process and see it through, an in depth, rounded initial assessment could therefore help decide where to invest more efforts and resources.
- Activities devoted to **community building, networking** and the creation of social and professional horizontal connections have proven to be **key in the integration process**.
- In more general terms, the principle is not to create “parallel worlds” for the newcomers, but to try and let them **experience integration every step along the trajectory**.
- An economically sustainable approach derives from a set of measures: **targeting rather than standardising; coupling revenue generating activities; experimenting with pay back schemes**.

The four projects play a key role in understanding what additional services are effective in an integration process. The lessons will be taken back and incorporated in the existing offer in place in the cities. As a result, existing services will become more innovative and there is now a much closer cooperation not only between the departments involved in integration but also between governance levels.

The geography of integrated services for migrants and refugees

By **Peter Ramsden**,
UIA Expert for Bologna, S.A.L.U.S



The **relevance** of this topic

How services for refugees and migrants are organised in space has the potential to make a significant impact on the integration trajectories for both individuals and for groups of migrants and refugees. The four UIA projects launched in 2016 have each taken different approaches to organising this aspect. The Utrecht and Antwerp projects have combined residential and other services. The Bologna project will do so when their buildings are completed. In the case of Vienna project, they operate a multi-functional centre with no residential element.



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The amount of interaction that a refugee or migrant has with the host community is widely thought to have an impact on their ongoing integration trajectory. At one extreme, those refugees living in large camps may have no contact with local people. The Antwerp co-housing arrangements is at the other extreme where a deliberate effort is made to match young refugee arrivals with local buddies. However, it needs to be recognised that integration is in the eye of the beholder. For some, integration is akin to assimilation, in which the migrant becomes as much like the host community as possible. For others this is not the goal, instead the wish is that migrants should accede to equivalent life chances, whereby they have similar possibilities for employment, housing, education and health as well as access to other support services as anyone born and bred in that country. Without getting into debates about multi-culturalism, it is apparent that location makes a difference to the migrant's integration trajectory.

Academics¹ mostly at the Bartlett School in UCL have started to discuss the idea of 'Space Syntax' as a concept for influencing migrant trajectories and are developing analytical tools. They describe it as 'multi-scale analysis of the spatial, social and economic impacts of migration in the urban context, trying to merge transdisciplinary approaches including data-driven mapping and ethnographical research².

The aim of this article is more modest, exploring how the four UIA projects have developed the geography of integration at different scales – from the micro scale of the household – with the interesting example of co-housing in Antwerp, to mixing opportunities in

local centres, to the positioning of facilities within the city itself. What is clear is that regardless of ideology in the assimilation versus integration debate, geography makes a difference. It is also clear that where refugees are concerned, the lengthy waiting limbo imposed by Member State policies and processes makes integration through working very difficult. While social inclusion through work is normal policy for citizens, it is the reverse for refugees.

In the case of migrants and refugees, cities have limited powers compared to those of their Member State. In general, the competences available to cities are more in the direction of providing accommodation, training courses, and facilitating a social and leisure context in which some mixing with host communities either does or does not happen. As befits innovative actions, each of the projects is small in relation to the problems being addressed. For example, the CURANT project in Antwerp has managed 63 housing units and has provided housing for 81 refugees and 72 buddies from the host community. When it is completed the S.A.L.U.S. 'W' SPACE project in **Bologna** will have about 28 units of housing, half of which will be available to refugees. These are relatively small numbers when compared to the numbers of refugees arriving in mainland Europe mostly through the Greek and Italian routes at the start of the projects in 2016.

It should also be remembered that just as cities have limited competences in relation to refugees in particular, their efforts do not let the national authorities off the hook for improving the bureaucratic aspects of migrant support. There has been a lot of experience in the past two decades of co-location

of advice services for migrants especially through the concept of the migrant one-stop-shop. This concept was supported through a trans-national collaboration under the EU supported INTI programme³. The types of services delivered include advice on housing, health, nationality and work permits, obtaining work and so on. The concept is exemplified by the Portuguese system which has two one-stop-shops, one in Lisbon and one in Porto. There is a distinction between what has been developed by the national government through its High Commissioner for Immigration and inter cultural dialogue (ACIDI) and what has been developed by city level governments themselves. For example, the city of Amadora within Greater Lisbon has pioneered the concept of Arrival Cities⁴ as part of the URBACT programme. The one-stop-shop provides a necessary but not sufficient service for promoting integration. It is clear that providing clear support and guidance for migrants to become documented and to start work is essential to long term integration. But it is never enough. What happens over the first months and years after arrival is critical to long term success.

1 Lukas Utzig (2017) *Urban integration of refugees homes - Spatial potential for integrative social processes*, University College London.

<http://www.l1ssslisbon.pt/docs/proceedings/papers/156.pdf>

2 <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/architecture/research/space-syntax/refugee-cities>

3 INTI is a European Union programme set up in 2003 with a view to financing preparatory measures designed to promote the integration of third-country nationals.

4 <https://urbact.eu/arrival-cities>

The experience of the four UIA cities in organising the **geography of integration**



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The four cities each approach the task of integration in their own way and have developed facilities based on local contexts, local opportunities and local needs. The CURANT project in **Antwerp** has both rented and built co-housing units in a number of different locations across the city with the largest concentration in a modular housing complex built by the project and constructed using containers located at BREMI6. The unique aspect of Antwerp's approach is that they match their clients with people from Antwerp 'the buddies' and they live together in a housing unit. The refugees are unaccompanied minors. The city provides intensive care support to them and coaching is provided to both refugees and buddies.

Bologna's S.A.L.U.S. 'W' SPACE project is still at the design stage of its project implementation. When completed in spring 2020, the site of the former Villa Salus hospital will consist of 28 residential units, a horticultural training facility in the surrounding gardens and land, a theatre training scheme along with an outside theatre space, a catering training centre, a co-working lab type space and a think tank and meeting space. Essentially the S.A.L.U.S. 'W' SPACE will combine residential units for 12 to 24 months plus opportunities for training, employment and enterprise as well as leisure facilities. Both the residential units and the training activities will mix people with a migrant background and local residents as this is seen as essential to the integration process. Other social services are located in other parts of the city – mostly in the city centre.

The **Utrecht** Refugee Launchpad - U-RLP project fits in with the narrative of the city that migrants are part of the city's future. It includes housing units but these are not co-housing as such. At its initial location, a group of young people from the local area lived in one part of the building and the refugees lived in a different part – the refugee reception centre. The separation was marked by having different entrances which had to be done for security reasons. The mixing in U-RLP was organised through activities on the site, to which people from the local community were also invited to participate. The courses included training courses in high level English, and entrepreneurship.



Vienna, CORE

Pooling talents, knowledge and experience in a multi-usable space for integration

The CORE Centre in Vienna is a physical infrastructure, which is adapted to the needs of the project, offering community spaces as well as service spaces. Through new forms of cooperation of a broad range of stakeholders, CORE is the venue for a variety of integration activities to take place. Refugees have not only been actively involved in developing the graphic design; but also in adapting and equipping the CORE Centre; and in implementing various activities at the centre. By pooling various talents, knowledge and experiences together, the CORE Centre is a central place in Vienna for integration and encounters but also a role model for an inclusive society. With this hub for integration, the CORE project disposes of a tool aiming to bridge and to interlink the various perspectives, horizons, and life-worlds. It is open to refugees and civic initiatives. It serves as a place for learning, also in the sense of peer group based self-empowerment, for the training of peer mentors, for improving labour market related competences, for the circulation of information, but also for creative and artistic activities. The CORE project creates a multi-functional and multi-usable space for integration.

Vienna operates a large non-residential facility called CORE – the Centre for Refugee Empowerment. The city's own philosophy on integration is based on five pillars focusing on language, training, integration through living together, awareness and human rights. The CORE centre provides a wide range of economic services – such as training and job search as well as leisure and cultural services. The training courses include teacher training, business enterprise, peer mentoring as well as coding, carpentry, baking, gastronomy and DevelopMe, a course for the IT industry. The centre also offers labour market integration services, NGO cooperation and language training. The facility is large and acts as a dedicated space for migrants in the city while also bringing citizens into the building for many of the courses and activities.

Does it matter where in the city the refugee centre is located?



The four UIA projects are unanimous in arguing that geography matters in relation to how well integration centres work.

However, often cities have to work with what they have got and be opportunistic to find appropriate buildings in which to host refugees in particular.

These may not always be in ideal locations. The relocation of the **Utrecht** project and the difficulties faced by **Bologna** who planned to re-use a former hospital that was in the city's ownership and subsequently had to be demolished both illustrate how circumstances can change.

The **Antwerp** project has managed 63 housing units located all over the city – mostly in inner areas. The biggest location is the new build at BREM16 in the North Eastern quadrant. Having a critical mass of units in one place has brought its own management problems, associated with having a bunch of young people living together. These mostly concern everyday matters like putting out waste

on the right day and are not unique to co-housing with refugees but also happen in student accommodation and most other co-settings such as shared houses. On the positive side, having 18 units in one place opened up the potential for more group activities on-site, both leisure based such as the opening festival and training courses.

The **Utrecht** U-RLP project has been in the unique situation of having already experience of two different locations. The original building was a former commercial office property in the Overvecht district on the north Western side of the city. This space had a limited life and as a result the project relocated to another reception centre in Kanaleneiland, south of the centre. Although the courses and social activities offered in each place are similar, they have been met with different levels of interest. Two of the core training courses are on entrepreneurship and business English. These were popular in the first location which was a relatively low income and diverse neighbourhood with many migrants. The second location is higher income, more middle class, more Dutch and less diverse. Fewer people have expressed interest and sign-ups to the courses has been fewer.

The CORE project in **Vienna** is located in the South East side of the city in an

area that has a fairly mixed population. Because there is no residential element, it is important that the centre has good access to public transport across the whole city if it is to be successful in attracting and reaching out to communities far and wide. An important aspect of the centre is that migrants across the city should feel that this is their centre and that they are welcome.

The **Bologna** S.A.L.U.S. 'W' SPACE site is located in the South East periphery of the city on the edge of the district of Savena. The site has yet to open but faces some challenges for links with the rest of the city as there is no direct bus service and it is a long way to the city centre where most other migrant facilities are located. Savena is a mixed neighbourhood, but also plays host to many elderly people and the project has sought to work with these groups to keep them on board with the project. Both the citizen journalists and the citizen evaluators engage a wide range of people from the local community and this helps to keep people up to date with the project and also to challenge misconceptions that might arise.

Lessons to share

The four UIA projects prove there is no copy-paste of models. Each area and each context is specific and highly dependent on the geography and stakeholders. Overall, geography can make all the difference in creating positive integration pathways.

This applies at the most micro level, in the design of housing units and in bringing local communities in to share services, and up to the city level in terms of where the facilities are located.

- Think carefully about which services need to be co-located and which can be accessed elsewhere in the city – a service that is only accessed once a month does not need to be co-located.
- If services that are only needed intermittently do not need to be co-located, it is best to prioritise actions that bring contact such as relevant training and by supporting entrepreneurship.
- Look for synergies between the different activities e.g. between training and enterprise opportunities, leisure activities and if appropriate with residential provision.
- Formal governmental services for national and city levels for long term settlement (e.g. nationality, work, housing, benefits, health registration etc) benefit from being co-located in one-stop-shops in central locations but do not need to be co-located with housing.
- Inter cultural mediators are important in bridging migrants into services whether they are based on-site or elsewhere.

The design of shared spaces is very important – for example in shared living there needs to be enough space to eat together. Public spaces need to encourage mingling. Where possible open centres up to the local community so that local people see the centre as a resource for them, not just an imposition on them.

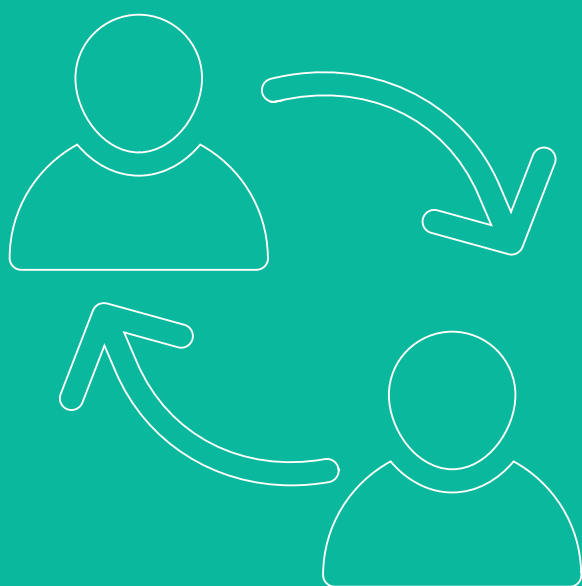
- Practice 'Integration from day one' in a practical way and ensure that refugees have informal and formal contact with the host community built into their lives.

- Integration is a two-way street: migrants need positive contact and relationships with members of the host community and the geography of service location can assist this process e.g. by creating meeting spaces for migrants and refugees, but also for the local community and by making the services available for both. The English courses in Utrecht had one third of participants from the local community.
- These projects have promoted integration by making the distance between the migrants and the local community as short as possible.

The following geographic lessons also emerge from the four projects:

- Not all vulnerable groups can be co-located in the same building, instead there may be advantages in not concentrating them all in one place.
- Geographical consistency is useful. Do not change too much the locations for offices for dealing with migrants and refugees. Sometimes it is appropriate to offer services where the migrants are living by going to the locations.
- The best type of locations are where neighbourhoods are dense and diverse.

Leveraging public opinion and political support: the role of **citizens** and **stakeholders**



By **Daniel de Torres**,
UIA Expert for Utrecht, U-RLP



The **relevance** of this topic

The engagement of stakeholders and citizens' participation in the design and implementation of public policies related to the reception of refugees and inclusion in general is very important for various reasons. Participation can mean an improvement in the effectiveness of policies, bearing in mind the needs but also the knowledge and experiences of different actors. Yet, in some cases it can also be an opportunity to improve representativeness by giving voice to people who have more difficulties, for example because they have no right to vote or are in situations of vulnerability. But

participation is also an opportunity to generate spaces for meaningful encounters and interaction, for empowerment, for dialogue and decision-making on shared objectives and for weaving a greater link between the administration, civil society and citizens. When these processes are also capable of incorporating the voices of very diverse people (in gender, age, origin, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, etc.), they represent an opportunity to improve trust, deepen co-responsibility and democratic values, and build some sense of belonging and more inclusive identities.



In the area of refugee reception policies, and inclusion in general, two aspects can greatly influence the success of these policies: public opinion and the level of political support. This chapter focuses on assessing how the involvement and participation of stakeholders and citizens can have an impact on improving public opinion on these aspects and on strengthening political support, based on the experiences of the four UIA projects in the cities of **Antwerp** – CURANT project, **Bologna** – S.A.L.U.S. ‘W’ SPACE project, **Utrecht** – U-RLP project and **Vienna** – CORE project.

In recent years there has been an increase in negative perceptions and narratives about the arrival of refugees in many European countries, as well as support for parties with racist and xenophobic discourses. Countering these narratives that are normally based on prejudice and distorted ideas of reality; and that seek to generate fear and reinforce the paradigm of “us” vs. “them,” is not a simple task. The role of the media and political discourse is indeed very important. But in cities, and especially at the neighbourhood and local level, face-to-face conversations, personal experiences, spaces of encounter and mutual knowledge, and the opinion of community referents or local media are all very relevant. Engaging citizens and key actors from different spheres of society in the design and implementation of policies is also a way to jointly build new narratives on the reception of refugees and on diversity in general. Perceptions and public opinion can have a negative impact on the level of political support, and innovative policies should integrate the construction of new narratives as a key objective of the policy itself.

Bologna, S.A.L.U.S. ‘W’ SPACE

Co-communicating and co-evaluating with citizens

S.A.L.U.S. ‘W’ SPACE is an innovative example of co-design with citizens. S.A.L.U.S.’s team implements the project on a daily basis using a strong participatory approach, and involving citizens, migrants and professionals in working groups for communication and evaluation. Regarding communication, the use of citizen journalists builds the capacity of the local community and the migrants to document what is happening. This opens deeper insights compared to the traditional press approaches which are about messaging and control. Also, the “participatory evaluation” innovative approach involves the stakeholders and the citizens (those living in the local urban areas covered by the project, and other living in the neighbourhood communities) in the evaluation process. Integrated Evaluation Groups have been created and are composed by representatives of project partners, local key stakeholders, migrants and citizens who actively participate in the definition of the evaluation questions and in some evaluation activities. This is proving to be a very successful tool to reassure and increase the trust of the neighbours regarding Salus Space implementation as they (or people they knew) were directly involved in all decisions and activities. With the different activities and events organized within the project, more than 250 people took part to the participatory process. The citizens working within the project have become the ‘antennas’ identifying issues, fears, problems and concerns within the local community.

How Antwerp, Bologna, Utrecht and Vienna engage with stakeholders and citizens?

There is often a tendency to involve actors who are already more sensitive and connected to these issues. However to reach wider audiences and to achieve better results, it is important to bring in stakeholders with very diverse profiles and from diverse areas; and to go beyond the more motivated and necessary “usual suspects”. In this respect, the four UIA projects have been able to involve very diverse actors, ranging from

the field of education (schools, universities, associations of parents), health (hospitals, professionals ..), employment and economy (local agencies, companies and entrepreneurs, chambers of commerce, arts associations, etc.), culture (theatre, music, audio-visual etc.); to sports, public transport or communication – amongst many others. On the other hand, the direct participation of citizens has also been promoted.

The role of volunteers is key, as well as the entities and professionals that act as a bridge to promote this participation, and also especially that of asylum seekers and refugees. For example, in the U-RLP project of **Utrecht** and CURANT project in **Antwerp**, the central element is that young people and asylum seekers live together, albeit at different levels. In the S.A.L.U.S. ‘W’ SPACE project in **Bologna**, the creation of two groups of citizens acting in the territory plays a key role, as well as in the CORE project in **Vienna**, where cooperation with associations of parents, amongst other actors, has a very positive impact.

However, the question arises whether the strategies have been most effective in promoting this engagement and participation. The CORE project highlights that providing spaces, organizational support and funding facilitates the participation of very diverse stakeholders and citizens. The importance of word of mouth and tailored communication strategy addressing the different profiles of the target groups have been demonstrated. In **Bologna**, the sincerity of the process is pointed out. Being transparent about its complexities and highlighting the potential to contribute to find shared and innovative solutions is crucial. In this project, it has been essential that the citizens themselves actively participate in the project communication and evaluation strategy. Training has been very relevant in providing these citizens with tools and rigorous methods of intervention in the two fields. **Utrecht’s** U-RLP project also places a lot of emphasis on the need for this approach and narrative of

the project to be truly inclusive. This implies that all stakeholders and citizens are equally taken into account. Both projects highlight the need to emphasize that related policies are not just positive for asylum seekers and refugees but also generate opportunities for all, including stakeholders, citizens and the neighbourhood. The CURANT project in **Antwerp** also underlines the need to offer a reward to stimulate participation and to be sustainable over time. In their case, the “buddies” who share a flat with the refugees obtain a cheaper rent, similar to what happens in the U-RLP project in **Utrecht** with the youngsters from SOCIUS who live in the building next to the asylum seekers. In order to maintain involvement over time, the role played by these volunteers must be recognised so they also feel respected and valued.

Regarding the impact of these processes on public opinion, interesting aspects can be identified in the four projects. Logically, the ability to identify changes in people’s perceptions resulting from the project’s impact is not easy. However, some project experiences help to get an idea of its potential impact. In the S.A.L.U.S. ‘W’ SPACE project, the two groups of citizens publicize the project to many people, and collect citizens’ perceptions in order to deal with them in a preventive manner, acting and avoiding more serious problems. The interviews that local authorities carried out with citizens also serve to improve the connection between citizens and institutions. It shows the constructive and active role that citizens can play by



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sharing their doubts and questions with local authorities. One issue standing out is the importance of listening to people. In the U-RLP project, a key strategy is to listen to the concerns of neighbours at the beginning and incorporate them into the design of the project. In addition, generating a dynamic space in the neighbourhood in which the encounter, contact and mutual knowledge among asylum seekers, youngsters and neighbours is favoured, also has a positive impact on people's perceptions. A valuable qualitative indicator is the shift of opinion and mentality. Indeed, when the centre closed in **Utrecht**, some neighbours who had been very critical of its opening showed their worries at the closure of the centre. The lack of tensions and the simple fact that negative and more critical perceptions do not increase over time is often already a remarkable success. The entire set of projects confirm that despite the obvious importance of the media, direct contact remains a fundamental channel for shaping perceptions at the local level. The CURANT project demonstrates that even though sometimes buddies' families can be critical of their child's decision to move in with a refugee thanks to the contacts and their experience, their perception changes totally and is much more positive. That is why spreading and sharing the positive experiences produced in these projects, without hiding the complexities, but counteracting the negative narratives with very concrete and daily examples is crucial. Some projects have professional documentaries and videos to convey to the public a more positive message, which is also coherent with reality.

One aspect impacting at many levels is the electoral context. When elections come, the issue of refugees and migration acquires a greater role and almost always for the worse. In some cases the exposure of negative news has an impact on projects and even a temporary decrease in political support is observed. For this reason the involvement and commitment of many social actors and citizens in related policies is also essential in order to reinforce political commitment and to prevent the government teams from jeopardizing the sustainability of projects when they change. In the four UIA cities, the projects have been promoted and are already strongly politically supported. However, in each case the support at the state level is very different, in general weaker if not totally inexistent. Local governments work with more pragmatic approaches, being often more innovative and committed to inclusion. The commitment of key stakeholders allows to strengthen the position of local governments; and for some projects to influence state policies, e.g. the **Utrecht** project, although with many complexities. How the political support for these projects will evolve is a key question. The current context is clearly not very favourable. Precisely for this reason, the role of stakeholders and citizens themselves can play, to reinforce this support, is crucial.

Lessons to share

City authorities need to create a favourable environment for a successful commitment by:

- Applying an inclusive approach and an equal treatment. It must be positive and rich for all actors involved and the whole community, not only for the targeted group.
- Implementing transparency, sincerity and ownership, without hiding complexities. Giving responsibilities and power to volunteers in the decision-process allows to find innovative and shared solutions.
- Valuing the contributions of all people, maintaining communication and providing feedback on contributions.
- Promoting opportunities for meeting and interaction amongst migrants and refugees, neighbours and social stakeholders, in order to have direct contacts, experiences, challenge prejudices and to build a sense of belonging.

Cities must engage with:

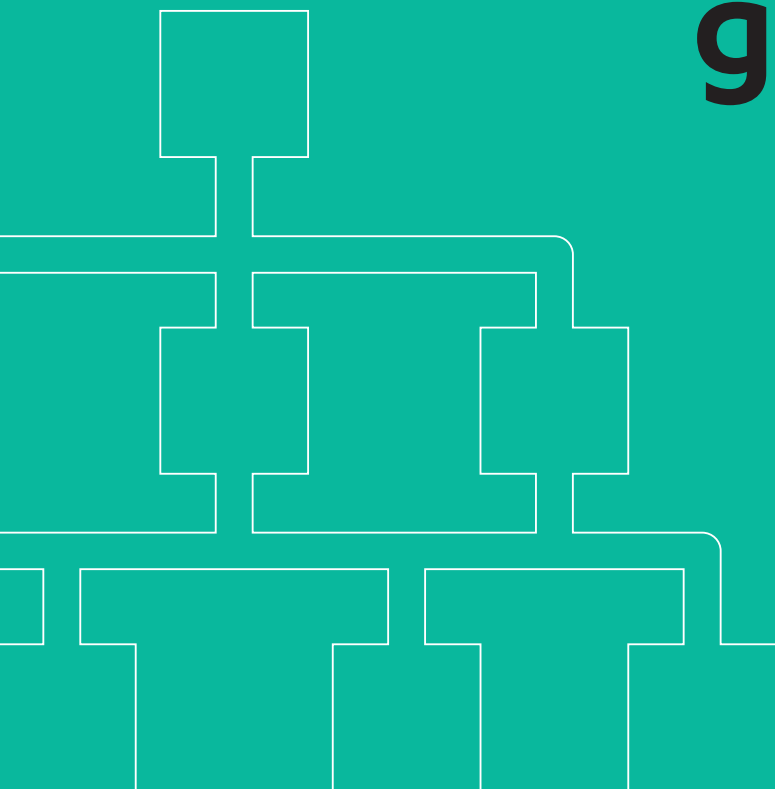
- The local volunteers to whom can be offered new skills, support, advice or even some benefits (e.g. cheaper rent). The local community should be widely reached, to attract a great diversity of profiles and promote the participation of key actors in their respective fields of expertise. They should feel worthwhile and at ease with their tasks.
- The different areas of their administrations, promoting internal participation and a cross-departmental cooperation culture, as a fundamental institutional change to get better solutions.
- The “ambassadors”: some project’s stakeholders can serve as a bridge towards the community and as a connection between the different actors.

Communicate with new and positive narratives:

- Be proactive with the press and provide them with interesting stories and new narratives, avoiding to accept the frame of the negative narratives by emphasising proactively the city’s own topics and stories.
- Collect and share personal stories and bring up new and positive narratives.

Effective integration and the need of a **multi-level governance**

By **Christoph Reinprecht**,
UIA Expert for Vienna, CORE



The **relevance** of this topic



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Cities have become major actors in integration strategies in the field of migration and asylum. In a globalized, increasingly mobile world, the division of tasks and competencies between supranational entities, nation-states and the local level is changing. Cities and local governments are playing an increasingly important role in absorbing and handling migratory flows. This observation has led social scientists to speak about a “local turn” in the field of asylum and migration.

Referring to the “local turn” does not mean to diminish or even to deny the importance of nation-states and supranational bodies. Migration and asylum represent a field of

policy where the impact of national and supranational interests remains powerful.

Nation states continue to claim control over immigration, and integration policies, whereas European legislation and directives more and more shape national regulations and practices. Using the term “local turn” rather means to shift the prism of observation and analysis: cities and local governments are no longer perceived primarily as executors of national and supranational legislation, but with regard to their active role in implementing, adapting, interpreting, and re-designing these policies. It also reflects a changing discourse on cities in the context of global migration.

European cities, particularly the big and hyper-diversified ones, represent important destinations of migration processes. Many of them have developed a self-understanding as “arrival cities” and a sense of responsibility for the agenda of welcoming, integration and participation. Many cities have excellent, also research and indicator based, knowledge about local concepts and dynamics of immigration and integration. They take part in transnational, horizontal exchanges and learning networks, many of them EU-funded.

Immigration and exile are an intrinsic part of urban history. Whereas nation-states are based on exclusive membership and imaginations of homogeneity, cities share the capability of openness and heterogeneity. Against this experience, cities are also mentally better equipped to receive and incorporate newly arriving people. The readiness to address problems of integration less ideologically but as pragmatically and concretely as possible, concern all relevant spheres: from participation in labour and the housing market, access to school and health services and the fight against discrimination and racism, to the social and cultural participation in the ethnic and local community.

According to Peter Scholten and Rinus Penninx, the “local turn in migrant integration policies, combined with the continued salience of the national level and the nascent European dimension, lies at the heart of what policy scientists describe as the multilevel governance of migrant integration” (2016)¹. In other words: multi-level governance refers to the interplay between the institutional level of the European Union, national policy and local municipal policies.

Policies in the field of migration, asylum and integration are in a specific way characterized by an entanglement of different levels of authorities. For

example, cities should develop, and implement, concrete integration measures, ideally in line with national or even supranational policies. In practice, however, the implementation of specific measures is not friction-free. It is not due to the fact that the actors involved – public authorities at different levels, institutions, civil society organizations, associations, not least the targeted population – may have opposing interests. Their way to perceive and define situations and problems or in their institutional functioning may also differ.

In the context of UIA, the four projects have to grapple with tensions and dissonances between the intent of local, regional and national governments; the focus of project partners/stakeholders and the staff involved in the project; and the needs of the target groups and the needs and interests of the local population and neighbourhood. Relevant

questions are: how to find a balance between these different interests and perspectives? How to get over barriers and difficulties in cross-level communication and collaboration? How to manage negative impacts or conflicts resulting from this situation? The key question addressed by the UIA projects on integration of migrants and refugees is to organize the multi-level governance to cope with the challenges of integration.

Utrecht, U-RLP

Closely cooperating with the national level

For the overall functioning and impact of U-RLP project, the city of Utrecht cooperates closely with multiple local stakeholders and with the COA, the national agency for refugee reception, which organises and coordinates reception at national level in cooperation with municipalities. In 2016, this agency agreed with U-RLP project and accepted to test it for 2 years although the shelters management is not a local task. This multi-level cooperation has proved its success, with the recognition of the city's capacity in innovating and working with local partners on a topic which is not a local competence. It has also shown its limits, when the COA decided unilaterally to accelerate the closure of the centre in which the U-RLP project was tested. This decision produced a complex situation and the planned activities had to be ended suddenly. The local pilot was however considered as a success and the COA offered to apply the U-RLP model in the other local reception centre, still in collaboration with the city. COA's willingness to adapt the model to another centre demonstrates a positive impact of this innovative project. This adaptation also requires redefining roles and responsibilities of the different actors involved. The project shows that there is a need for a clear willingness to collaborate among the different actors in order to achieve the best results.

¹ Peter Scholten (2013), *Agenda Dynamics and the Multi-Level Governance of Migrant Integration. The Case of Dutch Migrant Integration Policies*, *Policy Sciences*, 46: 217-236; Peter Scholten and Rinus Penninx (2016), *The Multilevel Governance of Migration and Integration*, in: B. Garcés-Masareñas, Rinus Penninx (eds.), *Integration Processes and Policies in Europe. IMISCOE Research Series*, 91-108. DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-21674-4_6.

How to cope with the challenges of multi-level governance of migration and asylum?

In all four UIA-project cities – **Bologna**, **Antwerp**, **Utrecht**, and **Vienna** - the premises for multi-level governance is complex. The key challenge is the risk of imbalance. CURANT project in **Antwerp** emphasizes the tensions and contradictions resulting from different levels of legislation and the related division of competences. Tensions exist between national (definition of general procedures), regional (responsible for integration and housing policies), city (specification of integration policies) and neighbourhood levels (implementation of concrete measures). Thus, tensions not only occur in vertical accounts but also with regard to the necessity to involve all relevant sectors and departments. To integrate the diversity of perspectives and aspirations, excellent communication structures and a clear role definition are absolutely necessary. This is also a particular concern of the S.A.L.U.S. 'W' Space project in **Bologna**, which considers the challenging combination of vertical and horizontal dimensions as a main task. Whereas the "vertical" dimension refers to the linkages between higher and lower levels of politics and legislation, the "horizontal" dimension refers to multi-disciplinary

and inter-sectoral cooperation. In other words: integration needs integration, meaning trust-building, communication skills, shared semantics and social capital. A strong horizontal stakeholders' network facilitates flexible and creative solutions. At the same time it allows to absorb tensions related to the different vertical levels. In that regard, the project in **Utrecht** points to the problem of scaling. With UIA funding, comparable projects are developed at city levels because they have specific local knowledge, whereas national bodies are reluctant to take risks in doing experimental and innovative projects. On the other hand, the transfer and scaling up of successful projects may meet constraints or even provoke failure. A successful story in a neighbourhood is not always transferable on trans-local or national levels. Scaling up may encourage the national actors to adapt the concept and to change partners and stakeholders, etc. A changing framework will also shift the mind-set. A shared idea, understanding and problem definition is inevitable for a successful transfer of local experiences.

The CORE Project in **Vienna** points out that this precondition may be weak-

ened, if new political majorities impact the relations at the vertical dimension. In **Vienna**, the federal elections have deepened the gap between the city and the national government. With its restrictive anti-asylum policy, legal framework changes and budget cutbacks, the new government threatened the established and well-functioning local integration programmes and activities. This situation complicates the cooperation between the city and national authorities and impacts existing collaborations, both in positive (solidarization effect) and negative terms (weakening of links). It becomes obvious that integration efforts in the field of migration and asylum is undermined when respectful and trust-based communication at vertical and horizontal dimensions is impossible. Finding a balance requires an effort on all sides involved. Risks of imbalance can be reduced by providing mechanisms of consultation and conflict-regulation, and regular information exchange. The balance, however, remains fragile. Local, national and supranational actors may be differently oriented in political terms and do not necessarily share the same interests and problem definitions. Elections and the consequent changes



on political levels may have an impact on the functioning of multilevel governance.

The following challenges of multi-level governance are shared by the four projects:

- A main concern is to establish qualitative valuable space and place for communication. However, the distinct functioning of bureaucratic systems at the different levels may evoke problems in communication, information transfer and mutual understanding;
- Projects succeed if they bring together the different players at all levels. However, this is based on the unrealistic assumption that there are no conflicting political interests;
- The commitment of the local government is of great importance, especially with regard to political instabilities at national levels, e.g. in case of elections or a change of government.

The four UIA projects developed different strategies to confront these challenges. To make the communication barriers as small as possible, it is suggested to implement stable forms of

institutional collaboration, e.g. a steering committee having representatives of all stakeholders on board, including the involved departments of public authorities – e.g. communication, finances, housing. It is important to clearly define decision making processes, and the role of each stakeholder from the very beginning; and to develop good, strong and trustful relations with local authorities. Amongst project partners, trust is the most valuable currency. Also, networking activities are useful for providing cross cutting connections with local projects – e.g. in the cultural, social, educational fields.

A successful and fruitful multi-level cooperation is often hampered by institutional differences, especially with regard to the incongruity of organizational cultures and styles of functioning, different semantics and time management practices. Since their implementation, UIA projects have experienced this phenomena in various ways and learnt how to deal with it. Varying organizational cultures with regard to work flows, time routines, conceptual understandings (degree of pragmatism), and different institutional archi-

tectures (division of functions, flat versus steep hierarchies) may put project teams under pressure. Political and organizational priorities may also impact the different levels of commitment. This situation requires that project coordination takes its responsibility seriously, also with regards to an active communication strategy. In this context keeping the project and its progress visible is needed, e.g. through publications and public events. Multi-level governance may also create redundancy, e.g. with regard to multiple accountability, leading to non-intended consequences which happen if the needs of target groups are not met, or “blind spots” are not identified. The most effective way to handle this problem is a close cooperation and fine-tuning in planning between project partners and stakeholders involved. It requires regular meetings with steering partners, the target group and the stakeholders.

The EU is shaping multi-level governance via direct funding of both local projects and horizontal networking of cities. This raises the question if it can be seen as a way to balance multi-level governance. The UIA projects are convinced that direct funding of cities has a huge impact on the projects’ success and progress. Indeed, cities better know how to address these specific challenges. Direct funding is an excellent opportunity to set innovative solutions. It encourages new initiatives and may also have positive impacts on national or even supranational levels. Transnational and cross-cutting networks are extremely useful for exchange of experience and policy learning. Direct funding of subnational entities is particularly important if national authorities are in conflict with EU-policy. Thus, if EU funds are not directly accessible to local authorities, they may remain untouched when they do not match at a national level. The [AMIF](#)¹ fund is a good example: it supports homeless people in countries where homelessness is illegalized by national law but still a problem that cities face.

¹ Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF)

Lessons to share

- Cities play an important role in the **design of inclusive strategies** in the context of migration and asylum. Strategies for immigrant and refugee inclusion are facilitators of general social cohesion and prevent social and spatial polarisation. Based on their local experiences, UIA projects support the **“integration from day one”** approach to speed up the inclusion of asylum seekers and to enable, at the same time, encounters on neighbourhood levels. At the very local level, asylum seekers, refugees and local population meet as new neighbours, even though it might be temporary.
- Multi-level governance requires to anticipate possible snares in the practice of **cross-cutting, multidisciplinary and inter-sectoral cooperation**. It is useful and necessary to institutionalize from the very beginning the spheres of networking and communication, of exchange and consultation. A specific challenge refers to the different institutional semantics and the **need to implement spaces of listening and translation**.
- Multi-level governance addresses **both vertical and horizontal dimensions**. It represents a huge challenge, requiring specific training and support, as well as (in particular communicative) skills and competences. The European Innovation Partnership¹ model seems to be a good strategy to strengthen new and creative partnerships and solutions. This refers both to the capacity of city administrations to apply adaptive and flexible strategies and to the active involvement of small-scale civil society initiatives as well.
- The success of interventions on local levels is to a high degree dependent on policy-developments at national levels. **Direct EU-funding strengthens the capacity of cities to act**. The consistent amount of funding allows significant interventions in the cities, which also increases the trust of citizens towards local authorities and European Union. Also smaller and more vulnerable cities should be included in requests for tender.
- Multi-level governance is about **the way issues of migration, integration and asylum are framed linguistically**. The definition of goals, problems and situations includes a certain perspective. Being a strong player in the field, with convincing arguments (e.g. referring to spill-over effects of integration) and a narrative framing (e.g. well-being instead of integration) is needed.

¹ EIPs of the EU Innovation Union plan: innovation partnerships between the European institutions, national and regional authorities and business



Annex

The CoRE project



ERDF budget: EUR 4,786,272.00

As a response to the dramatic increase in the number of asylum seekers arriving in Vienna in 2015, posing huge challenges to social welfare and social housing systems as well as to the labour market, the CORE project aims at strengthening the whole integration system and at making it fit for new challenges. CORE develops and provides new integration offers, which address the needs of asylum seekers and refugees. CORE also contributes to the adaption and optimisation of instruments and services in order to make them more user-oriented. Thanks to the innovations implemented within the project, existing ruptures and breaks in the integration process will be overcome.

The project firstly is an empowerment hub jointly planned, utilised and operated by public institutions, NGOs, civil society initiatives and refugees. By pooling resources and know-how and by making refugees equal partners instead of passive beneficiaries, it helps to initiate smart transformation processes for the whole integration system. Secondly, CORE is a physical infrastructure in the form of the CORE Centre, which is adapted to the needs of the project, offering community spaces as well as service spaces. And thirdly, CORE is a think tank, which monitors, analyses, and innovates policies and develops and tests new solutions.

CORE's focus on skills and competences ensures that already during the asylum procedure, refugees' competences are routinely assessed and documented in a newly developed database. Activities in the field of career planning, competence development and specific trainings facilitate refugees' readiness for the labour market. As a result, refugees' preparation for the labour market starts already during the asylum procedure.

With a focus on peer mentoring and information offers in refugees' native languages, CORE ensures that asylum seekers' integration starts right after they settle in Vienna. Thus, refugees will sooner be able to understand basic issues of life in Vienna, such as housing, education, health care, law, rules and codes for living in the city, etc.

Finally, CORE shows a wider public that – despite the existing challenges – integration of refugees can be successful and can add to the prosperity of the city. CORE contributes to making diversity a success in Vienna – by finding solutions to current challenges and by thinking ahead and therefore preparing the city for future challenges.

Partnership:

- *City of Vienna, Municipal Department Integration and Diversity (Lead partner)*
- *Vienna Social Fund (FSW)*
- *Vienna Employment Promotion Fund (waff)*
- *Vienna Business Agency (VBA)*
- *Vienna Board of Education – European Office*

The CURANT project



ERDF budget: EUR 4,894,303.32

The CURANT project seeks to provide integrated services for unaccompanied young refugees once they reach adulthood and are no longer entitled to benefit from social protection as an unaccompanied minor. It will combine co-housing and social integration schemes with volunteer buddies (young local residents aged 20-30 years old) for one to one integration and circular integrated individual trajectories.

A total of 63 co-housing units are set up through purchase, renovation and private renting. In these units a minimum of 75 unaccompanied young refugees cohabit with Flemish buddies for at least 1 year. The buddy helps the refugee with different aspects. The refugees are intensively guided during the whole project, on different levels such as through a social network and integration, education, independent living, language learning, leisure time, psychological counselling and professional activation. During the project, the University of Antwerp measures the impact of the cohousing and intensive support on the integration of the young refugees.

The project aims to help the target group with education, training and work, creating a network of supportive relations and dealing with (war) trauma. The refugees transcend their status as welfare beneficiaries and are able to create a good future in Antwerp. In turn, their success stories set an example for their peers as they personify an effective integration. Positively integrating young refugees to society contributes to a more harmonious urban community and an increased public safety.

The buddy's will sharpen their intercultural qualities and take up an exemplary role as pioneers of a welcoming society. In the meanwhile, both groups benefit from living in affordable housing. The main partners will have actively acquired expertise on working with the target group. Thus they are able to develop cooperative working methods, allowing regular future services to be tuned.

Partnership:

- *Stad Antwerpen*
- *Solentra (Solidarity and Trauma) – unit of the psychiatric division of UZ Brussel*
- *JES vzw – 'urban lab' for children and youngsters in Antwerp, Ghent and Brussels*
- *Vormingplus – NGO*
- *Atlas integratie & inburgering Antwerpen – NGO*
- *University of Antwerpen*

The S.A.L.U.S. 'W' SPACE project



ERDF budget: EUR 4,998,429.46

In Bologna metropolitan area asylum seekers passed from 321 to 816 in 2015. This trend requires a new systemic and structural answer that involves also the third sector and the civil society, to make integration happen effectively. To achieve this goal a major cultural change is required. The purpose of S.A.L.U.S project is to create and define an innovative and replicable model of reception and integration for refugees. The overall objective of the three-year project is to build a centre for housing and work as well as intercultural welfare and wellness. The project uses the regeneration of Villa Salus, an abandoned clinic, as an experimental site that aims to provide temporary housing and create occupation for migrants and refugees as well as disadvantaged groups and to train them professionally to manage the centre and to create entrepreneurial activities for the benefit of the local area. The involvement of the local community is a key feature in the project and it will be in the long-term management of the area, in order to create a centre that's open to the whole town.

The creation of this generative welfare centre for refugees and disadvantaged people, which is also a neighbourhood centre, offers a pleasant and relaxing environment, educational gardens, artistic workshops, co-working areas, a multi-ethnic restaurant, a theatre and accommodation facilities. The centre provides a housing social mix to sustain social cohesion and avoid the "ghetto effect". S.A.L.U.S project also turns threat into opportunity, by supporting the refugees in their process to become more autonomous and fostering micro-entrepreneurial development. Abandoned areas are reused as new lively spots for developing community-based projects, through a participatory design process. Employment support and self-employment guidance are created as a unique field-training experience. The refurbishment itself is conceived as training opportunity. A balanced demographic structure (not really clear what you mean here) is enhanced within the city, giving the possibility to the refugees to become economic actors.

Partnership:

- *Comune di Bologna*
- *Istituto per la ricerca sociale – Research Centre*
- *ASP Città di Bologna – Public Agency*
- *Open Group Società Cooperativa Onlus*
- *ICIE Istituto Cooperativo per l'Innovazione*
- *Antoniano Onlus*
- *Cooperativa Sociale Camelot*
- *Associazione Cantieri Meticci*
- *Società Dolce – NGO*
- *Eta Beta Coop Soc – Onlus*
- *CIOFS FP Emilia Romagna – Training Centre*
- *Microfinanza SRL – Business support organisation*
- *CEFAL Emilia Romagna – Training Centre*
- *CSAPSA – Training Centre*
- *ACLI Provinciali Bologna – National Agency*
- *Università di Bologna – University*
- *Associazione Mondo Donna Onlus*

The U-RLP project



ERDF budget: EUR 4,997, 624.24

Cities play a crucial role in the integration process of asylum seekers. The way newcomers are received into our society has an impact on its future shape and prosperity. The Utrecht Refugee Launchpad (U-RLP) offers an inclusive approach to facilitate integration from day one, involving residents and social networks within the neighbourhood.

The project, locally known as Plan Einstein, seeks to develop a new way to deal with neighbourhood refugee reception facilities. The City of Utrecht is looking to apply an inclusive approach, in order to facilitate integration from day one by introducing a shared living concept in which local youth and asylum seekers can cohabitate. It aims to create an innovative reception facility, which is built upon social networks within the neighbourhood, developing resilient skillsets alongside asylum seekers. It will offer asylum seekers and neighbourhood (youth) alike an active and entrepreneurial environment.

Although the core target group remains the refugee community, by mixing them with neighbourhood participants, or even potentially opposing groups, the thought is to build connections and experience mutual support, rather than increasing alienation. Neighbourhood residents are invited to follow international entrepreneurship or English classes together with the asylum seekers, followed by peer-to-peer coaching and introductions to local businesses.

The U-RLP community-building approach range from co-housing, with a building shared by asylum seekers, youngsters and neighbours; to courses and activities dedicated to both refugees and neighbours of the asylum centre.

The lessons learned in the U-RLP project could be both used within the Netherlands or elsewhere. This way the approach ensures a strong investment in the participants' lives, which could be built further in Utrecht or elsewhere, if the asylum request is denied or when refugees may want to rebuild their home country.

Partnership:

- *City of Utrecht*
- *Socius Wonen – SME*
- *Universiteit Utrecht – School of Economics (U.S.E.) and Centre for Entrepreneurship (UtrechtCE)*
- *Stichting Volksuniversiteit Utrecht – Division of English courses*
- *Social Impact Factory – NGO*
- *Vluchtelingenwerk Midden-Nederland – NGO*
- *University of Oxford – Centre on Migration, Policy and Society*
- *Roehampton University*

Call 2 projects:

Curing the Limbo, MiFRIENDLY CITIES, MILMA

With the second UIA call for proposals, three new projects on integration of migrants and refugees were approved. The Curing the Limbo project (Athens) is explicitly targeting refugees while the other two, MiFRIENDLY CITIES (Coventry) and MILMA (Fuenlabrada), work with young second and third generation migrants.



The Curing the Limbo project

ERDF budget: 4,999,748.80

Just like unsettled souls in the Odyssey, recently arrived refugees and vulnerable locals equally share a state of being inactive, without daily activities, without a sense of being useful citizens or recognised as such: they are “in limbo”. In the last decade, Athens is a gradually shrinking city suffering from a crisis that has also emptied a large surface of its buildings. “**Curing the Limbo**” is about empowering stranded refugees who have been granted asylum to get out of their

state of “limbo” by allowing them to act along and with local citizens, addressing various city and social needs in exchange of housing affordability. Key to the municipality’s effort is to come up with a positive solution for the whole city, help it move out of its own limbo, and make its new citizens champion citizens along with its own public-spirited actors, in a transformative process for all. Addressing the state of inertia and the sense of exclusion through a mechanism that

ignites housing affordability is both original and equally important along other traditional pillars of social integration. The “Limbo Exit Lab” is the space where a “menu of options” is tailored to each individual situation, providing a range of incentives, from housing affordability to skills development in exchange of activities upgrading the city with local actors. Refugees, migrants and equally excluded hosts acquire the social tools for inclusive integration.



The MiFRIENDLY CITIES project

ERDF budget: 4,280,639.20

Coventry is a highly attractive destination for migrants in the UK and it is part of one of the most diverse region in the whole EU (West Midlands). The recent drastic cuts to the local budgets under UK government austerity measures left the city council with no other choice than to look for alternative solutions for the active inclusion of migrants. To fight against their

chronic unemployment, to raise their awareness about rights and services (especially health services) but also to limit the raising prejudice and opposition from local populations, three local councils (Coventry, Wolverhampton and Birmingham) and a very rich group of local actors decided to join forces. With **MiFRIENDLY CITIES**, they will be testing a combination of

training and upskilling activities, communication campaigns led by health champions, support for the creation of social enterprises (including mentoring and financial support) as well as empowerment of migrants as Citizen Journalists and Social Scientists to build together a new narrative about their positive contributions to local communities.



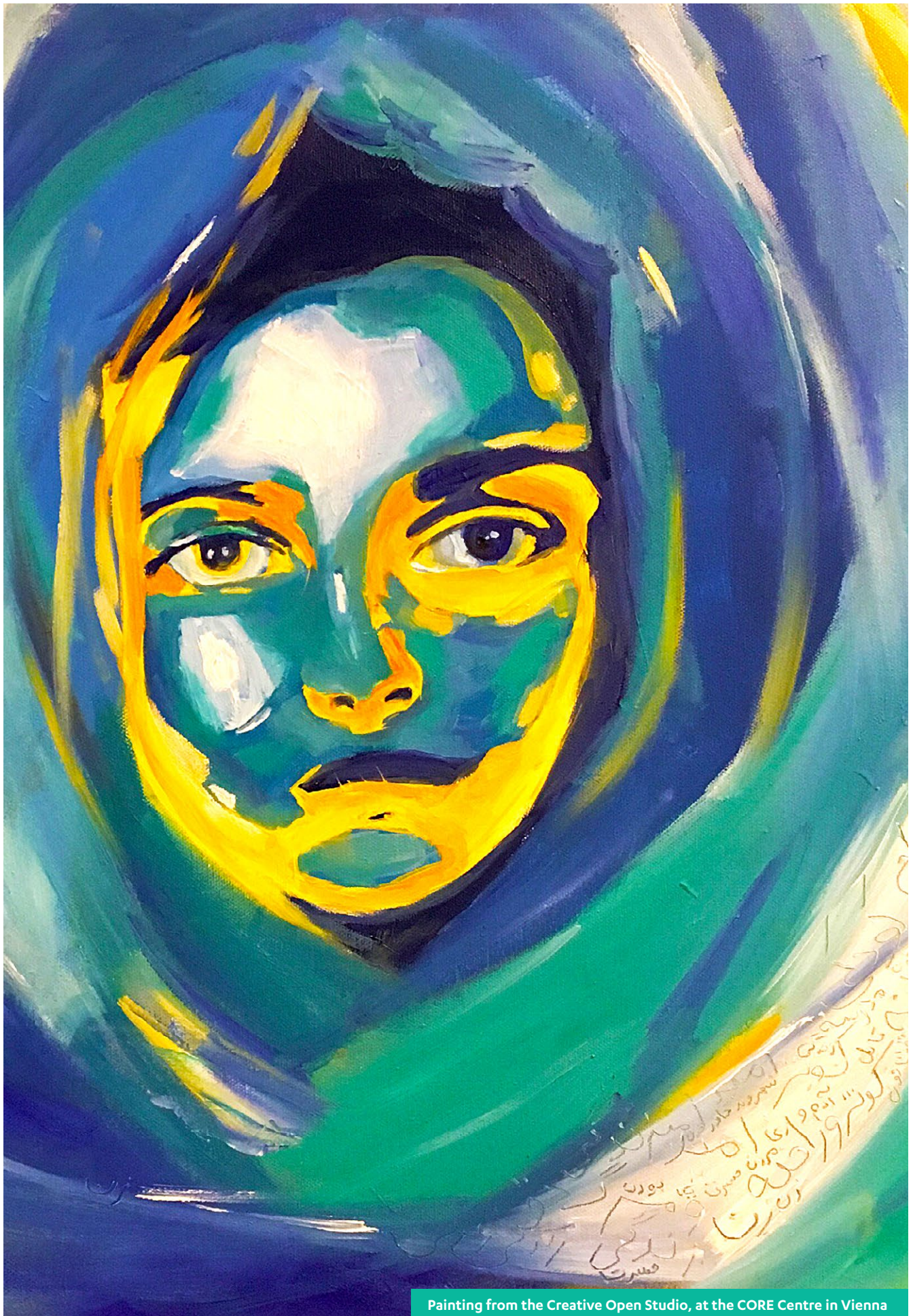
The MILMA project

ERDF budget: 3,593,342.20

Located in the metropolitan area of Madrid, in the last four decades Fuenlabrada has seen its population almost tripled as a result of an intense migratory process both nationally and internationally. The city is still struggling to recover from the financial downturn that has impacted Spain particularly badly and the unemployment rates remain dramatically high especially among low skilled young with migrant backgrounds. The **MILMA Project** aims at increasing migrants’ integration

perspectives through access to employment, with the creation of practical experiences specifically targeted at market niches with present and future potential to create employment opportunities. The project will test an experimental formative process directly connected to the development of products and services demanded on the market through “Business Challenges” (BCs) created in seven specific areas identified as potential generators of employment, and

co-managed by social enterprises and companies. In parallel, integration will be fostered through collaborative work between local and migrant people in the Experimental Teams of Employment and Integration within BCs Labs. This acculturation process combined with the training programme based on Business Challenges will facilitate migrants’ employability and skills acquisition in relevant market areas and promote mutual understanding and strengthen social cohesion.



Painting from the Creative Open Studio, at the CORE Centre in Vienna

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