

Report on the Working Conference on Reception & Housing of Migrants and Refugees

Urban Agenda for the EU



Organised on November 10-11, 2016 by the City of Amsterdam, coordinator of the Partnership on Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees, and the European Urban Knowledge Network

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INTRODUCTION

An Urban Agenda for the EU

Cities are of great importance to Europe. They are not only the engines for economic growth and innovation, but they are also the living environment of over more than 70% of all Europeans. However, the city is also where the impact of the issues faced by Europe is often magnified. In order for Europe to be successful in its collective efforts regarding employment, innovation and migration, its cities have to be successful.

On the 30th of May 2016 , EU ministers responsible for urban policy have adopted the *Pact of Amsterdam*. It states that European cities, on the basis of what is to be called the '[Urban Agenda for the EU](#)', will get more involved with EU legislation, access to financing and knowledge sharing.

The Urban Agenda includes 12 priority themes, which are essential for the development of urban areas. One of the main mechanisms to implement the Urban Agenda for the EU is the setting up of thematic partnerships that involve cities, Members States and European institutions. The Partnerships will contribute to the design of future and the revision of existing EU policies. Currently, there are four active Partnerships. The City of Amsterdam coordinates the Partnership on inclusion of migrants and refugees, together with DG HOME.

Partnership for the Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees

More than 60% of refugees worldwide live in urban areas. In the future, this figure will gradually increase. Migration is a local reality. Cities are places where both migrants and non-migrants interact, be it through working, studying, living or raising their families. Cities offer great opportunities for migrants and refugees, but cities are also faced with challenges regarding integration and inclusion.

Achieving an inclusive and integrated approach tackling both the medium and long-term challenges requires multi-level governance. Cities need to be ensured that European regulations will have no negative impact on the integration of migrants and refugees, that opportunities are funded and that knowledge exchange on best practices takes place.

The Working Conference on Reception & Housing of refugees was organized by [the Partnership for the Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees](#) of the Urban Agenda for the EU and [EUKN](#) on November 10th and 11th, 2016. It aimed to find solutions to the problems established in the Scoping Papers written by *Housing Europe* and *Migration Policy Group* regarding the themes of Reception

and Housing. The working conference brought together approximately 100 participants with an expertise in these fields, coming from both academic and professional backgrounds.

The scoping papers written in advance served an agenda-setting purpose: they identified the so-called 'bottleneck areas'. These are areas where problems significantly slow the integration process of refugees and migrants in their host communities. For example, the scarce availability of houses for refugees granted a status in the housing markets of many cities, or the need to properly inform and prepare a host community for the arrival of refugees in short timeframe. The scoping papers highlighted how the EU funding, EU legislation, and EU knowledge exchange are the 3 key areas in which changes could have a significant impact on the speed of the integration process.

The solutions proposed during the conference also specifically targeted the 3 areas where changes can have a significant impact. The



results of the working conference set out in the next pages are organized according to these areas. They are divided in proposed actions that can be undertaken and other relevant suggestions put forward during the conference.

In order to assure maximum productivity during the two-day working conference, the participants were divided into 4 smaller groups. These groups attended workshops that focused on exclusively housing or reception. The workshops made use of the "speedboat method", a working method geared towards creating concrete results by framing the issue as a speedboat and the problems as anchors preventing it from moving forward. Participants are encouraged to propose solutions that cut the anchors away, allowing the issue to move forward.

BOTTLENECKS FOR CITIES REGARDING

RECEPTION AND HOUSING OF REFUGEES

Based on the scoping papers authored by *Housing Europe* and the *Migration Policy Group*, the Partnership on Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees and EUKN have selected a number of bottlenecks. The working conference was centred around these bottleneck areas and participants have formulated actions and recommendations aimed at solving problems in these bottleneck areas. The bottlenecks focus on EU-regulations, EU-funding and knowledge exchange. Below, you can find a description of the bottlenecks.

DESCRIPTION OF BOTTLENECKS RECEPTION

1. Health care

Relief from physical and psychological suffering is an urgent and most immediate need of a high share of newly arriving people. The health needs are diverse and complex, ranging from treatment of sickness resulting from exhausting and dangerous flight routes, to emergency care for pregnant or chronically ill persons, and the psychiatric treatment of traumas. To meet all these needs, provisions are necessary where comprehensive, early health checks go together with speedy access to specialised treatment. For example, estimates of the share of humanitarian migrants arriving with traumatising experiences in 2015/16 range from 40 to 50%, and at least 20% can be expected to develop post-traumatic syndromes without treatment.

- **Bottleneck 1a: untimely treatment**

The EU Reception Conditions Directive requires that asylum-seekers receive emergency care, essential treatment of illnesses/mental disorders and adapted services for special needs groups. Full access to the health systems, however, is provided only after status recognition. Not timely addressing specific physical and mental issues allows for a worsening of problems, while it complicates the early and long term integration process.

- **Bottleneck 1b: low minimum standards**

The EU minimum standards foresee only basic medical support, including for special health needs. Long asylum procedures and delayed access to comprehensive health care, in combination with the wide-reaching, often protracted health needs of people seeking international protection, means that in practice this minimum often does not suffice. Therefore, many sick persons remain untreated or undertreated.

- **Bottleneck 1c: funding mismatch**

Specialised NGOs and other organisations or initiatives outside the mainstream health system have a strong role in providing health support for asylum-seekers. Local or regional governments often have a stake in them, including financing. Dedicated funding opportunities, e.g. from priority areas of national AMIF programmes, however are rare and do not match the needs across Europe.

- **Bottleneck 1d: lack of knowledge about treatment options**

In general, there is a poor data situation regarding the treatment options for physical and mental health problems, while many countries deal with refugees who have comparable mental trauma. With no monitoring and impact assessment, it is difficult to establish common quality standards in care.

2. Early integration

After arrival, refugees have immediate need for basic practical knowledge to get by daily life and for orientation about the institutions, administration and social norms of the country. Moreover, as the key to all ensuing steps of integration, they require opportunities to learn the language of the receiving society. A big challenge for newly arrived migrants is to build trust in the new country, to connect to its people, and to find the confidence that a new life will succeed. All these needs and demands arise from day one, regardless of whether the persons are staying in refugee reception centres, temporary housing or emergency shelters. Cities with their diverse populations and a multitude of possible points of contacts are ideally suited to be the place where a new sense of belonging can grow.

- **Bottleneck 2a: lack of early integration support measures**

Currently, the EU Reception Conditions Directive does not include provisions on early integration (the recast Directive currently under negotiation would not change this either in the proposed form). Missing out on language learning and social orientation activities, or other support measures means missing a head-start opportunity into integration. Opportunities for asylum seekers to meet with citizens, take part and feel accepted can foreclose feelings of rejection and alienation that are a root cause of failed integration. Thus arguably, a lack of early integration support entails rising costs of later interventions.

- **Bottleneck 2b: lack of funding opportunities**

Lack of funding for early integration programmes is a key issue, in particular in Member States with less financial resources. EU funding (AMIF, ESF after labour market access) is available in principle, but difficult to access in reality and not sufficient to compensate all gaps. Whether cities can gain from EU programmes often depends on spending priorities

and rules set in programmes under shared EU/Member States management, and consideration of cities' needs in national programming procedures. Also, small-scale projects carried by civil society organisations or voluntary initiatives that fill key gaps in support for early local integration often fail to access (or even try to access) EU funding opportunities.

- **Bottleneck 2c: Lack of good practice transfer and little awareness**

Knowledge on what works and what doesn't work is not sufficiently shared across Europe, leading to a phenomenon of 'reinventing the wheel' and a loss of time when introducing programmes or developing projects. There is little awareness for the high relevance of early community building for later integration outcomes. Experiences and results of activities focused on the reception phase are seldom shared beyond the national context.

DESCRIPTION OF BOTTLENECKS HOUSING

1. Access to housing

The provision of social housing is one way public authorities can ensure access to decent and affordable housing to promote social cohesion and to facilitate the integration of migrants and refugees in society. However, countries, regions and cities face limited fiscal capacity to address a rapid increase in housing demand. Cities facing a shortage of affordable housing are looking for solutions to accommodate both the needs of their citizens and the needs of refugees and migrants.

- **Bottleneck 1a: shortage of affordable housing**

Many cities experience a shortage of housing options for migrants and refugees. The three options are: offering existing social housing, building new social housing, and transforming existing (empty) buildings (schools, offices, private residential building) into social housing. Cities with limited budget margins cannot provide funding for the transformation of empty buildings into accommodation for refugees, while this is regarded as one of the solutions to overcome the shortage of housing options. Shortage of housing increases the risk of placing refugees in places with low job prospects and limited social services. This will complicate the integration of migrants and refugees in society.

- **Bottleneck 1b: limited assistance**

Cities do not have enough budget capacity to house and assist no/low income groups due to budgetary cuts and recruitment freezes. Therefore, there are limits in terms of providing assistance to refugees when they are searching for an accommodation. One way for refugees to find an accommodation is to go to search on the private rental market, most commonly with the assistance of social service providers, charities, etc. which can strike agreements with private landlords for instance guaranteeing the payment of rent. However, support from such associations is not institutionalized, while their role is crucial in helping refugees with status to find a home. Furthermore, even when there is an institutional link between the associations and cities, they often do not have the capacity to answer demand.

- **Bottleneck 1c: Inflexibility of funding**

European rules related to the calculation of public deficits and rules related to implementation of ESIF Operation Programmes make it difficult for local governments to spend on services helping better access to housing. Currently, the AMIF does not finance accommodation, social integration and urban development in Member States. Furthermore, the ESIF is not directly accessible to cities. Moreover, the ERDF mostly allocates support to those countries that do not need to deal with the migration crisis. Lastly, the Operational Programmes do not show enough flexibility in case of a crisis. Notably, their change is only possible for emergency measures for the reception systems which include the construction or extension of shelters but not long-term lasting facilities.

2. Capacity Building

When it comes to providing access to long term housing for refugees, cities and housing providers are faced with a lot of questions and challenges regarding the physical structures and built form in cities. There is a need for more financial and technical expertise to accommodate rapidly emerging new housing needs, for instance with regard to architecture, urban planning, transport infrastructures, public procurement and state aid rules.

- **Bottleneck 2a: Issues with State Aid rules and public procurement**

The EU has limited competencies when it comes to housing and integration: this lies with the Member States. The EU does influence housing by rules in other policy areas, such as competition and internal market. Rules on state aid and public procurement serve to foster competition within the EU and the growth of business in the area of housing. But when the market does not provide for enough or suitable housing options for migrants, public (financial) support is sometimes required. In that case, local governments must abide by the state aid and/or the public procurement rules. These rules are not always

clear and lack the flexibility to enable local governments to respond swiftly in times of a crisis. Also, local authorities may lack knowledge on the interpretation and explanation of these rules. So, implementing the EU rules on state aid and public procurement can be complicated and time-consuming. As a result, the process of providing migrants with viable housing options may be hindered.

- **Bottleneck 2b: Need for more knowledge exchange, esp. peer-to-peer learning**

Cities facing similar issues with the inclusion of migrants and refugees can learn from each other. EU instruments focus on multiple city networks; there is however a need for targeted peer-to-peer learning between cities facing similar problems and knowledge demands.

- **Bottleneck 2c: Access to EU funding**

Cities do not have direct access to ESIF funding. European funding needs to become more flexible and adaptable to address new challenges in society, like the refugee crisis (see also bottleneck 1c). Current knowledge exchange programmes and capacity building mechanisms are too complex and too time-consuming to set up.

RESULTS

Below are the main findings from our working conference. Concerning the input we are especially thankful towards all conference participants, Migration Policy Group, Housing Europe, and Europa

Decentraal. Based on practical feasibility and relevance to the EU level, a number of actions and recommendations have been selected. The selected actions and recommendations have been grouped under EU funding, EU regulations, and EU Knowledge exchange. It is further indicated whether this action or recommendation predominantly concerns the area of reception, housing, or both. Actions are considered more attainable and pertinent than recommendations.

Chapter 1: EU FUNDING

Action 1: RECEPTION

Reduce funding barriers and provide support with application and reporting

Focus:

To apply for EU funding can be complicated. However, it is not only the application effort that deters NGOs, civil society etc. from participating in EU programmes. Often also structural barriers - such as pre-financing requirements - render these programmes unattractive for small-scale projects. Furthermore, less experienced actors (with regards to funding application) often find it difficult to report on the funding they have received.

Method:

It is suggested to reduce such structural barriers in the programmes as to allow NGOs, civil society etc. access to EU funding adequate to their pre-eminent role in refugee reception. It is proposed that these actors take up funding with the involvement of local authorities. It is further preferred that funds can be directly applied for at EU level. In addition, a helpdesk/one-shop stop can be set up to provide EU level assistance to actors who are in need of that.

Goal:

The goal of this action is to provide all cities, civil society, NGOs etc., within and across Member States with equal opportunities to receive funding.

Action 2: HOUSING

Redistribute EIB financing to build housing

Focus:

A combined use of existing financing and funding programmes can generate more innovative working methods. Distinct programmes and funding programmes can supplement each other and thereby increase their effectiveness.

Method:

More specific, it is suggested that governments use an EIB loan based on 'Disasters Reconstruction' to build new housing for refugees. This (re)construction takes place while refugees wait for status recognition. After status recognition has been received, refugees repay these loans via their rental costs. This payment of rent is in turn financed by 'Refugee Aid' funding. Put differently, the status holders pay off the EIB loan by means of another government subsidy. The repayment will approximately take 3 to 5 years. Thus, the key here is to enable local governments to redistribute EU funding to individuals.

Goal:

The goal of this action is to make the provision of housing most efficient and effective with the use of existing financing structures and funding programmes to create a typical rental building cash flow.

Action 3: RECEPTION / HOUSING

Blend EIB financing and EU funding to give cities direct access to funding

Focus:

To combine existing EU funding programs with EIB loans.

Method:

It is suggested to make part of the AMIF fund resources available to cities or enterprises directly in relation to expenditures concerning refugee inclusion. At present, AMIF funding is channelled through central governments. An opportunity for more direct access by cities or enterprises would be a 'blending facility' between the AMIF grant resources and EIB loan resources, under which AMIF grants could be combined with EIB loans to cities or social impact funds. In the case of such blending facilities - which are administered by EIB - the EIB enters into a direct relationship with the city or fund, rather than channelling the funds via central government. However, from a governance perspective, central government approval is still assured through representation of the Member States in the Board of the EIB which would approve the blending scheme and have information on its monitoring through reports.

Goal:

The goal is to streamline the reception, housing and integration of refugees by making efficient use of funding and keeping the lines of communication short.

Other recommendations

Recommendation 1: RECEPTION

Financing/funding of medical care from day one

Focus: Funding and/or financing should be made available to tackle urgent mental and psychical health problems of refugees in reception centres.

Method: To provide additional means and/or compulsory spending priorities on refugee health in national implementation programmes (e.g. extent the possibilities for ESF funding, AMIF funding and/or the Urban Innovative Actions programs). It is also suggested to make available EIB loans to finance emergency programmes.

Goal: The goal is to support Member States in providing adequate medical care to refugees from day one. Treating posttraumatic stress syndrome and/or physical disabilities in an early stage will prevent a worsening of the condition.

Chapter 2: EU LEGISLATION

Action 1: RECEPTION

Raise the minimum standards for medical support

Focus:

The current minimum standards on medical care for refugees in reception centres are not always sufficient.

Method:

The reformed Reception Conditions Directive currently under negotiation should raise the minimum standards for medical care. Especially more attention should be given to mental health issues.

Goal:

To provide timely and adequate medical treatment to all arriving refugees before (possible) status recognition. A worsening of medical conditions should be avoided.

Action 2: RECEPTION

Define early integration standards and procedures

Focus:

A head start opportunity to integration is extremely important to foster long-term integration. Currently, early integration measures (i.e. language learning, social orientation, and skills assessment for asylum seekers) are executed mostly on an ad-hoc and voluntary basis, while general procedures are lacking.

Method:

The reformed Reception Conditions Directive currently under negotiation should clearly define general early integration standards and procedures.

Goal:

The goal of defining these standard and procedures more clearly is to increase the chances of successful long-term integration and to avoid the costs of later interventions due to a lack of early integration.

Action 3: HOUSING

Relax state aid rules and public procurement

Focus:

Rules on state aid and public procurement serve to foster competition within the EU and the growth of business in the area of housing. But when the market does not provide enough suitable housing options for migrants, public (financial) support is sometimes required. In that case, local governments must abide by the state aid and/or the public procurement rules. These rules are not always clear and lack the flexibility to enable local governments to respond swiftly in times of a crisis. Also, local authorities may lack knowledge on the interpretation and explanation of these rules. Two examples to illustrate this:

State aid

It is unclear which social groups fall under the definition in the Service of General Economic Interest (SGEI) rules. The Commission states that 'disadvantaged citizens and socially disadvantaged groups' can make use of social housing under these rules. In case of mixed housing, for example, do students fall under this category? If so, the project could be more easily made state aid proof. This definition issue has been put forward by Housing Europe to DG Competition. In the Netherlands, an innovative form of housing migrants is mixed housing: social housing combined with commercial housing in the private sector. The state aid rules exempt social housing through the exceptions for SGEI. Due to the strong competition on the commercial housing market, state aid for commercial housing is much more complex and time-consuming to make 'state aid proof': a request for approval by the European Commission is often necessary,

resulting in long and burdensome procedures.

Public procurement

A municipality would like to purchase prefab cabins in order to be able to meet the most urgent need of housing refugees. Because total value of this public contract exceeds the European public procurement threshold of €5,225,000 for works and €209,000 for deliveries, the municipality is obliged to follow a European public procurement procedure. An average public procurement procedure has a lead-time of several months. Still, the city needs the cabins without delay. Therefore, the municipality is forced to start looking for exceptions to the public procurement requirement.

There are two options:

1. The municipality can consider the possibility to initiate a negotiated procedure without prior publication of a contract notice. This is less time-consuming. However, this option can only be used in case of 'extreme urgency', e.g. in the event of natural disasters. But, the court very rarely approves of a ground that can only be relied upon in exceptional cases.
2. The municipality can consider whether, on the basis of such 'urgent grounds', an accelerated non-public procedure may be applied. The requirements to be met by the municipality are comparable to those that are applicable to extreme urgency. However, they are less strictly applied. Nonetheless, the procedure can still take several months.

Method:

It is suggested that EU rules become more flexible, mainly in terms of interpretation of exceptions in times of a crisis. The exceptions for situations of 'humanitarian urgency' should become more accepted as a common practice. For example, exceptions should be made in the EU sphere of competition and internal market for certain forms of housing for refugees. (Emergency) accommodation such as tiny houses, modular housing, containers, laneway housing etc. should be subject to more lenient rules on state aid and public procurement.

Goal:

Avoid time-consuming and complicated procedures on state aid rules and public procurement in an area where competition and internal market is less applicable. A further goal is to foster speedy processes and as such adequate care for refugees.

Other recommendations

Recommendation 1: HOUSING

Relax rules on building renovation and transformation

Focus: Often cities experience a shortage of available housing for status holders. Solutions are found in the renovation or transformation of old (vacant) building/offices. However, it can take a long time to obtain permits for such actions. In some cases this can be traced back to EU requirements concerning biodiversity and environment (that do not sufficiently take into account the need to act quickly in times of crises).

Method: Consider a fast track decision procedure for a (possible) relaxation of such rules and regulations.

Goal: Make Member States and local governments more resilient to the varying degrees in which refugees arrive. Make sure that Member States and local governments can start with housing procedures as soon as possible

Recommendation 2: HOUSING

Link housing to employment

Focus: Even though EU legislation provides full and immediate access to the labour market, the access to housing is a vital element to get hired and integrated into the labour market as well.

Method: The EU should foster a better relationship between employment services and social housing providers to achieve more effective labour market integration.

Goal: To advance labour market integration by relating housing to employment.

Recommendation 3: RECEPTION/HOUSING Urban regulation impact assessment

Focus: Ideally, EU legislation should take into account and reflect urban knowledge and practices.

Method: In order to make this happen it is suggested to use an urban impact assessment for assessing EU regulation ex post and ex ante. In 2015 for example, DG REGIO, the Committee of Regions, and national experts led a successful pilot project for a Territorial Impact Assessment (TIA) on the European Energy Performance of Buildings (EPBD), showing that cities can deliver expertise. It is thus proposed to enlarge the existing instrument of economic, social, and ecological impact assessment with a territorial -especially urban- dimension.

Goal: The goal of this recommendation is to improve and advance EU legislation by making 'urban proofing' part of the TIA.

Chapter 3: KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

Action 1: RECEPTION

The introduction of an EU medical passport or dossier

Focus: A certain degree of refugees travels through several EU countries before arriving in their host country. This may lead to information loss about their medical history, hindering the work of practitioners.

Method:

It is suggested to introduce an (electronic) EU medical passport or dossier for each recognized refugee upon arrival in the EU.

Goal: The goal is to keep track of a person's medical history in order to ensure the most effective and efficient treatment of any possible conditions.

Action 2: RECEPTION

A programme to raise awareness of the cultural dimension of mental health issues

Focus:

It is expected that a fair share of refugees have mental problems due to traumatic experiences. However, treatment –and acknowledgement- of mental health issues can be culturally determined.

Method:

It is suggested that the EU sets up a programme to raise awareness about this cultural dimension of medical care. This programme should provide trainings from medical practitioners that have

thorough knowledge of the cultural practices and needs within the relevant sending societies.

Goal:

The goal of this programme is to treat mental health issues most effective and efficient.

Action 3: RECEPTION / HOUSING

Create a database for best practices

Focus:

Best practices on reception, housing and early integration of refugees are not sufficiently shared among the different Member States and local governments/institutions.

Method:

Create or improve an (existing) EU database that allows the sharing of best practices on different issues, including reception, housing and integration. Existing knowledge tools/institutes/platforms such as the European Website on Integration, Europa Decentraal, Housing Europa, and EUKN etc. should be involved. Such actors could form partnerships to offer cities, NGOs and civil society easy access to collected know-how from within and across Member States. A monthly newsletter (by topic) should further ensure dissemination. The database should be easily accessible to all relevant actors in the field: e.g. policy makers, NGOs, civil society, and academia.

Goal:

The goal is to ensure that successful programs and initiatives are shared so that other actors can also adopt them.

Other recommendations

Recommendation 1: RECEPTION

Mutual learning programmes for civil servants

Focus: Many civil servants across and within Member States face similar challenges concerning the early integration of refugees. However, most of them hardly get the chance to learn from each other's work.

Method: To create a mutual learning programme at EU level for civil servants from local authorities in the field of integration. This could take the form of organising twinning (whereby civil servants spend some time in the administration of another city) or study visits.

Goal: The goal is to accelerate the spreading of effective solutions. Furthermore, cross-pollination might lead to innovative solutions in itself.

Recommendation 2: RECEPTION

Cooperation and knowledge exchange in bordering regions

Focus: There are a lot of entities created for dealing with issues that are present in bordering regions such as urban development issues and lack of tourism. However, tools should also be used to tackle the integration of migrants in Southern bordering regions.

Method: To confront this issue it is suggested to make use of the tool of interregional cooperation

- European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC). The EGTC is a legal instrument designed to facilitate and promote cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation. As a legal entity, the EGTC enables regional and local authorities and other public bodies from different Member States to set up cooperation groupings with a legal personality.

Goal: The goal is to make sure that national boundaries do not hinder solutions and that the use of EGTC will be better exploited.

Recommendation 3: HOUSING Peer to peer learning networks

Focus: Cities that face similar housing issues can learn from each other. There is a need for targeted peer-to-peer learning between cities that face similar problems and knowledge demands.

Method: To make available a knowledge exchange programme for professionals in the field. This can be tied to existing exchange networks (URBACT, INTERERG, ERASMUS+) by making special calls in relation to migrants and refugees. Knowledge exchange networks should stimulate peer-to-peer learning on (alternative) financing and provide (peer-) assistance in writing proposals.

Goal: Ease knowledge sharing, stimulate the use of most effective and efficient solutions and avoid that misunderstandings are repeated across Member States and cities.

RECEPTION / HOUSING A Covenant of Mayors

Focus: A vast majority of refugees (around 70%) finds shelter in urban areas. This puts local governments on the frontline when it comes to the provision of care.

Method: Set up a Covenant of Mayors on the inclusion of refugees and migrants. This can be done based on the rules of the existing Covenant of Mayors for climate and energy, an initiative of the European Commission in partnership with the Committee of Regions. Following that particular form, the Covenant of Mayors is a bottom-up movement that can mobilise a great number of local and regional authorities to develop action plans and direct investments towards the inclusion of migrants and refugees. The Covenant is not only for big cities, but also for smaller cities and towns, as well as regions as a whole. Furthermore, the Covenant's website acts as a network portal and support structure for participating cities and citizens alike.

Goal: The goal is to reinforce the priority and knowledge sharing at the local level and to bring together local and regional authorities to voluntarily commit to the implementation refugee and migrant inclusion objectives on their territory.

ANNEXES

- **Annex 1: Scoping Paper Housing Europe**
- **Annex 2: Scoping Paper Migration Policy Group**
- **Annex 3: minutes of the working conference Reception & Housing**

Scoping paper

Summary

Main bottlenecks and potentials in meeting housing needs and ensuring successful integration of refugees in cities.

1. Structural challenges in cities

The increasing migration bringing refugees into Europe is not only due to warzones but also to poverty, climate change, drought and demographic change. This has added to challenges that European neighbourhoods and providers of affordable housing were already confronted with:

- **Lack of temporary and permanent housing in appealing areas:** Europe builds less since the beginning of the crisis in 2008, regardless of the sector (private, public, cooperative), with the sole exception of Germany. Rising construction costs make it even more difficult for most countries to keep up with the demand.
- **Empty houses in unattractive areas that do not offer much future:** In Southern and Eastern Europe, a significant part of the housing stock is empty, mainly because the economic downturn and the demographic evolution.
- **Difficulty to maintain and improve building standards:** Poor or inadequate housing implies a risk associated to health and safety. Accommodating 6-10 peoples in a hostel room should not be an option even for a short period. Regarding the newly built houses, the issue lies in ensuring the quality requirements which involves not only high building costs but also long procedures to get a building permit.
- **More vulnerable peoples on waiting lists:** The situation of the most vulnerable keeps getting worse and phenomena of social exclusion become more intense. The social housing sector needs to be supported to address this issue, at times when the state retreats from the social housing sector and hands over a big share of responsibility to private initiatives.
- **Discrimination & anti-immigrant sentiment among the public:** While Member States are strengthening the anti-discrimination legislations, third-country nationals all still confronted with exclusion. Migrants are often met with hospitality but also with hostility. This can get many forms, such as the denial of accommodation by private property owners; imposing restrictive conditions or criteria limiting access into publicly supported accommodation; and opposition from neighbours.
- **Information gap and lack of administrative capacity to allocate housing:** When looking at the allocation of housing we can distinguish the difference between closed and open systems. Some countries will tie the delivery of a residence permit to a certain city that will have a dwelling ready for that person. Other countries deliver a permit without a housing solution or sometimes

only a housing allowance. These different approaches are probably explained by the relevance of public or social housing and its ability to coordinate with the national/regional reception system.

- **Budgetary issues:** Cities do not have enough budget capacity to house and assist no/low income groups due to budgetary cuts and recruitment freezes. Furthermore, cities get very little financial support from national or regional governments compared to the given responsibilities. Like that, the cities lack upfront funding to local service providers which can hamper both reception and integration services for refugees. One practical example is the lack of skills and personnel to integrate, train and teach new refugee households.
- **Political issues:** Threat of losing votes to nationalist parties changes the political narrative, contributing to the uncertainty for long-term investments such as social and public housing. Finally, it is politically controversial to adopt measures for new housing exclusively for migrants/refugees and leave other groups behind. Much broader consensus could be built by adopting more general housing measures that will benefit broader segments of the population.

2. Access to housing for refugees

Hidden discrimination, high prices and lack of adequate supply on the private rental market

One way to find an accommodation for refugees is to go to search on the private rental market, most commonly with the assistance of social service providers, charities which can strike agreements with private landlords. As other groups with specific needs, they will face difficulties in gaining access to appropriate private accommodation, partly due to a shortage of accommodation in areas perceived by them to be adequate, the high prices compared to their social benefits (or income if they find a job rapidly) and the lack of appropriately sized accommodation for larger refugee families. Despite the work of charities and associations to liaise with private landlords and the anti-discrimination legislation related to good and services including housing, hidden discrimination is a further obstacle.

Priorities in allocating social housing

Another way for refugees to find an accommodation is to apply for social housing. In most cases social housing is allocated according to criteria reflecting the households' financial situation, family size, and time spent on the waiting list. Refugees which have been granted asylum have no higher priority than other groups when applying to social housing. However, since in most cases, when they apply, they are low-income, living in temporary shelter or hostels, with young children, or single parent, they rank high on the priority list. In a nutshell, refugees which have been granted asylum have no extra right to access to housing or housing assistance. Furthermore, because of the situation they are in, they are likely to be among those that are entitled social protection services (as long as they have an address) and access to social housing (to the extent that supply of social housing is sufficient). Besides, associations and charities work with refugees help them to find an accommodation by liaising with landlords. A home is for refugees a first crucial step in any case to get access to employment and social protection.

1. Definition and background

While it is becoming increasingly common to see the terms 'refugee' and 'migrant' being used interchangeably in media and public discourse, there is a difference in the nature and level of support they receive in the hosting country.

Using the UNHCR definitions¹, we can make the following distinction

Migrants (Economic): Persons who leave their countries of origin purely for economic reasons not in any way related to the refugee definition, or in order to seek material improvements in their livelihood. Economic migrants do not fall within the criteria for refugee status and are therefore not entitled to benefit from international protection as refugees.

Refugee: A person fleeing armed conflict or persecution. There were 19.5 million of them worldwide at the end of 2014. Refugees are people fleeing conflict or persecution. They are defined and protected in international law, and must not be expelled or returned to situations where their life and freedom are at risk.

In this paper, we will focus on the challenges and solutions concerned with permanent housing for refugees which have been granted asylum. However migration in all forms is a important challenges for cities. ²

As large scale migration towards and within Europe is becoming a norm, political leaders at the EU level are trying to agree on common measures. At the local level though, cities, local government and relevant stakeholders like providers of affordable housing in many countries are already offering solutions to the integration of refugees. However, the issue goes far beyond the refugee crisis and changes the social dynamics of the continent. By providing better regulation, better funding and better knowledge on the topic, the European Union can help practitioners make the difference for communities.

While there is a Common European Asylum System³, policies aiming at integrating refugees and other third country nationals remain mainly a competence of the Member States. Since the Tampere programme in 1999, the European Union has developed a strong framework for policy-making in this area. This framework (made of several guidelines and action plans⁴) underlines the importance of a holistic approach to integration and aim, inter alia, at assisting EU States in formulating integration policies.

Back in 2011 the European Commission had formally acknowledged the crucial role of cities in the integration of migrants and refugees⁵ and created internal inter-service groups and the European Network on Integration to coordinate the efforts of different services in integration policies and practices.⁶

Even though housing is not an EU competence either, several initiatives linking integration and the role of the housing sector can be noted. In its recent Action Plan on the integration of third country nationals the European Commission highlights⁷ that access to adequate and affordable housing is

¹ See for instance : <http://www.unhcr.org/refugees.html>

² And as we will see in the chapter 2.1. in terms of access to housing, refugees and other migrants face similar problems, although refugees can usually benefit from the assistance of charities or dedicated associations.

³ http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum/index_en.htm

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/legal-migration/integration/index_en.htm

⁵ Cities of tomorrow, October 2011, Directorate-General Regional Policy,

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/studies/pdf/citiesoftomorrow/citiesoftomorrow_final.pdf

⁶ <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/clip-european-network-of-cities-for-local-integration-policies-for-migrants> ⁷

⁷ June 2016, Communication on the Action Plan on the integration of third-country nationals

crucial for third-country nationals and declares its commitment to assist Member States in the integration process by providing structural and financial support.

In particular, access to housing is prerequisite to enter the labour market. As the recent report of DG ECFIN highlights: *"Inaccessible rental markets and a shortage of social housing may not only limit the chances of finding proper accommodation but also of integrating in the labour market. In Member States where the stock of affordable housing is low and prices are high, such as Sweden, policies may also be needed on the supply side, to encourage the construction of new housing."*⁸

Nevertheless, the following questions still remain to be answered: Is the help of the European Union enough to address the needs effectively? Is the role of affordable housing providers' key to integration? How can policies deliver results more efficiently? Why is a holistic approach needed? How can the communities of our future be shaped in a sustainable way?

2. Bottlenecks in housing at the national and local level

2.1 Structural challenges in cities:

The increasing migration bringing refugees into Europe is not only due to warzones but also to poverty, climate change, drought and demographic change. This has added to challenges that European neighbourhoods and providers of affordable housing were already confronted with:

Lack of temporary and permanent housing in appealing areas:

Generally speaking, Europe builds less since the beginning of the crisis in 2008, regardless of the sector (private, public, cooperative), with the sole exception of Germany. Rising construction costs make it even more difficult for most countries to keep up with the demand. For example, in Sweden 436,000 homes are needed until 2020 while the government's national objective is 250,000. 245,000 new homes are needed in the UK every year and not even half of them are being built.

This has an impact on the capacity of countries to meet housing demands from new comers (asylum seekers and refugees). As an example, Sweden has been for years one of the countries in Europe receiving the highest proportion of asylum seekers compared to its population. By the end of 2015, the country had received 163000 asylum seekers. Most Swedish municipalities lack both temporary and permanent housing solutions. Our member SABO has managed through framework agreement procurements of Kombohus to cut construction costs by 25 percent, showing the way forward to build housing where more people can afford to live.

In the Netherlands 48.000 people are entering the country as a refugee of which still 28.000 people are in need of finding a house before the end of 2016. Aedes members are looking for solutions in realizing additional housing in the metropolitan areas⁹. In rural areas where there is no need for more homes, social housing providers are allowed to make a construction in which they rent the houses of private owners to permit holders.

In Germany, the migration challenge with more than 800.000 people entering the country in 2015 must be added to the existing housing shortage in metropolitan areas and in university cities. Our member GdW has issued 3 key demands that would make

⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/publications/eeip/pdf/ip033_en.pdf p. 27

⁹ F.e project Riekerhaven in Amsterdam, More information: <http://www.startblok.amsterdam/en/>

addressing the growing needs easier: a) temporarily lowered standards & accelerated procedures b) ensuring social support c) considerably more cost-effective construction.

- **Empty houses in unattractive areas** that do not offer much future:
In Southern and Eastern Europe, a significant part of the housing stock is empty, mainly because the economic downturn and the demographic evolution. For instance, in Portugal, vacant dwellings make 12,5% of the total housing stock. In Germany, while there is strong demand-side pressure in metropolitan areas, on the contrary, population is decreasing in other areas resulting in costly structural vacancy in the housing stock. The current forecasts for the population level in Germany in the near future leaves no doubt: the population will shrink in more and more cities and municipalities.
- **Difficulty to maintain and improve building standards:**
Poor or inadequate housing implies a risk associated to health and safety. Accommodating 6-10 peoples in a hostel room should not be an option even for a short period. The question of how that has an impact on housing allowances can be raised. Regarding the newly built houses, the issue lies in ensuring the quality requirements which involves not only high building costs but also long procedures to get a building permit. Thirdly, the problem of empty buildings being awaited for future use (ex. former offices) should be tackled as well.
- **More vulnerable peoples on waiting lists:**
From 2009 to 2012, the waiting list increased in Belgium from 140 000 to 186 000, in Italy from 600 000 to 650 000 and in France from 1,2 million to 1,7 million.¹⁰ Homelessness is also on the rise across the continent. The situation of the most vulnerable keeps getting worse and phenomena of social exclusion become more intense. The social housing sector needs to be supported to address this issue, at times when the state retreats from the social housing sector and hands over a big share of responsibility to private initiatives
- **Discrimination & anti-immigrant sentiment among the public:**
While Member States are strengthening the anti-discrimination legislations, third-country nationals all still confronted with exclusion. Migrants are often met with hospitality but also with hostility. This can get many forms, such as the denial of accommodation by private property owners; imposing restrictive conditions or criteria limiting access into publicly supported accommodation; and opposition from neighbours.¹¹
- **Information gap and lack of administrative capacity to allocate housing:**
When looking at the allocation of housing we can distinguish the difference between closed and open systems. Some countries will tie the delivery of a residence permit to a certain city that will have a dwelling ready for that person. Other countries deliver a permit without a housing solution or sometimes only a housing allowance. These different approaches are probably explained by the relevance of public or social housing and its ability to coordinate with the national/regional reception system. After all, an important information gap lies between EU and local level; and a multisectorial communication between stakeholders is also apparent issue.

¹⁰ State of housing in the EU, 2015, published by Housing Europe, page 16

¹¹ Malcolm Harrison et al (2005), Migrants, Minorities and Housing: Exclusion, Discrimination and Antidiscrimination in 15 member states of the European Union, EUMC, page 5

- **Budgetary issues:**

As the latest Eurocities report highlights¹², cities do not have enough budget capacity to house and assist no/low income groups due to budgetary cuts and recruitment freezes. Furthermore, cities get very little financial support from national or regional governments compared to the given responsibilities. Like that, the cities lack upfront funding to local service providers which can hamper both reception and integration services for refugees. One practical example is the lack of skills and personnel to integrate, train and teach new refugee households. Some service providers on the ground can offer provisions without any clear commitment to be reimbursed, which can be problematic especially for smaller organisations.

- **Political issues:**

Threat of losing votes to nationalist parties changes the political narrative, contributing to the uncertainty for long-term investments such as social and public housing. For example, the ongoing political discussions about the removal of the current priority status of refugees on waiting lists for social housing in the Netherlands¹³. Or the lack of public involvement and policies to inform and involve local citizens when refugees arrive. Finally, it is politically controversial to adopt measures for new housing exclusively for migrants/refugees and leave other groups behind. Much broader consensus could be built by adopting more general housing measures that will benefit broader segments of the population. This will help the inclusion of refugees and solve the housing shortages that is affecting many people, especially in cities.

2.2. Access to housing for refugees

As already mentioned, in this paper we focus on the refugees¹⁴ which have been granted asylum¹⁵. Newly recognised refugees with asylum are considered as legal migrants (unlike undocumented migrants) and are allowed to apply for social benefits¹⁵ in the hosting country. In general one prerequisite is to have an address and thus a permanent home. One way for refugees to find an accommodation is to go to search on the private rental market, most commonly with the assistance of social service providers, charities, etc which can strike agreements with private landlords for instance guaranteeing the payment of rent, thus easing the match between demand from refugees and supply. As other groups with specific needs, they will face difficulties in gaining access to appropriate private accommodation, partly due to a shortage of accommodation in areas perceived by them to be adequate, the high prices compared to their social benefits (or income if they find a job rapidly) and the lack of appropriately sized accommodation for larger refugee families. Despite the work of charities and associations to liaise with private landlords and the anti-discrimination legislation related to goods and services including housing, hidden discrimination is a further obstacle.

¹² http://nws.eurocities.eu/MediaShell/media/RefugeeReport_final.pdf, page 5

¹³ <http://www.aedes.nl/content/artikelen/klant-en-wonen/bijzondere-doelgroepen/statushouders/aedes-behoud-voorrang-vergunninghouders.xml>

¹⁴ People under temporary or subsidiary protection have broadly speaking the same rights therefore we will not make a distinction

¹⁵ Before getting the asylum, refugees are usually housed in specialised shelters, hostels, or private (or more exceptionally public and social) accommodation provided by associations or municipalities.

Another way for refugees to find an accommodation is to apply for social housing. In most cases social housing is allocated according to criteria reflecting the households' financial situation, family size, and time spent on the waiting list. Refugees which have been granted asylum have no higher priority than other groups when applying to social housing. However, since in most cases, when they apply, they are low-income, living in temporary shelter or hostels, with young children, or single parent, they rank high on the priority list. For instance, in France, refugees which have been granted asylum and are in temporary shelters or hostels for more than 6 months, or which live in bad quality housing, will be part of the groups which can claim an enforceable right to housing (DALO)¹⁶. It means that local authorities are obliged to make an offer for an accommodation within 3 months (6 months in Paris) after the decision of a special committee that verify that the claimant is indeed eligible.

In a nutshell, refugees which have been granted asylum have no extra right to access to housing or housing assistance. Furthermore, because of the situation they are in, they are likely to be among those that are entitled social protection services (as long as they have an address) and access to social housing (to the extent that supply of social housing is sufficient). Besides, associations and charities work with refugees help them to find an accommodation by liaising with landlords. A home is a first crucial step in any case for them to get access to employment and social protection.

3. Solutions from the ground

The integrating role of housing providers¹⁷

Part of the daily job of social housing providers is to understand residents' needs and provide early support, which could take various forms: from employment and skills training to advice on welfare support and direct care provision. They already cooperate with a wide range of stakeholders from various sectors, including health and homelessness, within the community, even more now that communities and neighbourhoods are hit by unemployment and poverty as well as new migration flow. Thereby cities can ensure that nobody is left behind and an integration into the society can start effectively.

In Lyon, France

The Accelair programme was launched in 2002 within the framework of EQUAL by Forum Réfugié and aims at fostering social and professional integration of refugees through a coordination response providing access to employment, training and housing. The key elements of the programme are the following:

- All refugees can benefit from support if they live in the Lyon region or if they are housed in a shelter in the Rhône-Alps region; and if they have obtained refugee status for less than one year
- Accelair is a partnership project which associates all stakeholders related to refugees – such as housing & employment...
- This program is based on a local platform which works on employment and housing for refugees. The platform tries to develop all actions which can help to overcome the obstacles which prevent refugees from having access to their rights.

In 2008, the Immigration Ministry asked Forum Réfugié to transfer its methodology to national level. On December 31st 2010, 20 counties in France asked Forum Réfugié to develop a program

¹⁶ <https://www.service-public.fr/particuliers/vosdroits/F18005>

¹⁷ Accessible at <http://www.housingeurope.eu/resource-629/the-communities-of-our-future>

like Accelair in their own areas. It's not exactly the same program in each area, but they try to transpose some key principles such as integration and actions at local level.

In Bradford, UK

Horton Housing Association in Bradford works closely with partners including Bradford Council, private landlords, schools, its own training centre and other training providers and the Job Centre to make sure people coming to the city are given a warm welcome.

BRICSS is a scheme to prevent 'bed blocking' by providing high quality accommodation for people being discharged from hospital that are homeless or living in inadequate housing. The support offered includes providing suitable accommodation, access to education and health services, support with language skills and cultural orientation, and other housing-related support, including counselling, drop-in services and maintaining connections to family and friends. Run in partnership with Bevan Healthcare CIC, the scheme is one of the first of its kind in the country and has since been adopted as a pilot in other areas.

In the Netherlands

The "Home again" Platform¹⁸ is aimed to accelerate the housing of refugees. The national federation of social housing association, Aedes, is also involved in this platform. In the Netherlands, each municipality receives a task from the central government to provide housing to legalized refugees. Each one has a minimum housing quota.

The Platform Home Again offers a digital map which allows to see the housing progress in the different municipalities and gives a picture of the country (see illustration) with the monthly progress of the housing quota, by municipality or by province. Furthermore, a monthly newsletter is distributed and there is an online forum so members can communicate with each other and exchange good practices. For instance a project where refugees and students are sharing an apartment block and where the social housing provider cooperates with a Vluchtelingenwerk, an NGO with volunteers that help refugees with practical support¹⁹.

Besides refugees social housing providers have other urgency targets. They make local arrangements about this with municipalities. In 2013 one out of three social housing allocations was based on urgency in Amsterdam. This example shows social housing providers, regions and municipalities can provide solutions in the short and long term by working with public authorities and other social actors to help with the housing and integration of refugees.²⁰

Other Best practices from the city level

Complex programmes of Leipzig link housing, health and educational support

The city council is committed to housing refugees in different areas across the city as it aids integration by working against the concentration of migrant communities in particular areas of the city. There are serious health, education and social issues that have to be taken into consideration when integrating refugees, citing the educational examples of finding kindergarten places or placing refugees in apprenticeships.

According to the Deputy Mayor (Thomas Fabian) the key element of integration is employment and this is dealt with from day one he states, in terms of offering refugees languages classes and support and exploring employment and to training options, from their initial reception. Private partners have a role to play in the housing of refugees and in managing their integration into the

¹⁸ <https://www.opnieuwthuis.nl/>

¹⁹ More info at <http://www.housingeurope.eu/resource-674/dutch-housing-associations-and-the-integration-of-refugees>

²⁰ More info at <http://www.housingeurope.eu/blog-514/housing-refugees-in-the-netherlands>

labour market. In terms of fostering inclusion. It is important that migrants engage with the range of social, health and education available services they have to learn to help themselves, although assistance should be offered where required. Leipzig city council approach is that the idea of separate services should be rejected as this would limit engagement with local people and work against integration into the broader society.

Initiative of the Belgian Ngo Convivial to recruit landlords to rent houses to migrants

More than two thousand landlords are involved in the programme. It highlights the importance of housing refugees and migrants throughout the city, both in terms of encouraging integration and minimising possible ghettos. The initiative counters criticisms that migrants are housed in poorer areas, with the resultant pressures on local services.²¹

All these examples from local level show that bringing human contact and high quality increase the effectiveness of integration and gives better results. Learning successful techniques is the first step to achieve a more integrated approach in order to help people in need.

4. Interlinkages with EU instruments

The way we treat the peoples arriving in our local communities is a first step in long term integration and social cohesion in Europe as whole. It is crucial to find more good examples and constructive ideas in order to get food for thoughts. Therefore, Housing Europe and our partners prepared a list of recommendations divided in three areas that can help us to further improve our practices:

1.1 ✓ Better use of EU regulations and policies

The EU can help promoting a holistic approach to migration that address accommodation & housing from a number of perspectives:

- Emergency mobilisation of resources: A challenge being faced by local authorities;
- Temporary housing: use of existing buildings/alternatives to regular stock;
- Medium & Long term Housing Needs including social issues - the impact of new influx;
- Social inclusion of immigrants (the launch of comprehensive programmes is needed)
- Integration: Local experience which shows what can work on the ground

We know well that the local level has a major role to play in adjusting to the new situation. However, cities have difficulty to impact the European policy making, even though they are the ones that should respond quickly in a creative way, by coordinating different partners on the ground (social service providers, churches, etc.). The recent Action Plan of the European Commission on integration recognises the importance and role of local authorities, including cities which would give a ground to them to have greater policy input at national and EU level. Being the representative body at local level, it would be important to strengthen the role of the regions and cities in the policy making processes of the European Commission for communities. This way, the voice of cities is echoed in a stronger way.

The Urban agenda and its partnerships offer a good opportunity to organize exchanges. This could indeed be the oppoturnity to discuss and peer review examples of national legislation aiming at

²¹ More info: <https://www.convivial.be/devenez-proprietaires-malins/>

better integrating disadvantaged groups. For instance the new French legislation proposal on 'égalité et citoyenneté' includes 'social mix of habitat' aiming at:

- improving transparency in the allocation of social housing, with the obligation to make public the criteria;
- clarifying the priority criteria (disabled persons, poor housing, victims of domestic violence, etc.)
- giving the possibility for social landlords to differentiate rents across sectors or within the buildings to promote a social mix;
- obliging local authorities to award at least 25% of social housing to priority households²²²³;
- giving the possibility to the Préfet of issuing planning approvals in municipalities that do not meet the criteria of the SRU law on social housing.

The proposal suggests that these objectives will be financially supported by the national level.

Change of the regulation on the access of asylum seekers to the labour market: In fact, the current EU legislation already provides full and immediate access to the labour market²⁴. Member States have to ensure that applicants have access to the labour market no later than 9 months from the application date²⁵. However, beyond the regulatory framework, the integration into the labour market is influenced also by issues linked to discrimination, lack of qualifications and difficulties in the recognition of qualifications acquired in a third country. The recent EP Report of MEP Benifei²⁶ suggests a quicker process and proper implementation which recommends access to the labour market for asylum seekers within maximum 6 months. The recent Commission proposal to reform the Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection goes into this direction proposing to reduce the time limit for access to the labour market from the lodging of the application, when an administrative decision on the asylum application has not been taken, from 9 to 6 months²⁷.

Putting forward ideas to the discussion

- ✚ How to strengthen the voice of the local actors? Can the Committee of the Regions provide with effective tools?
- ✚ To which extent does the EU regulatory framework need to change? Would a stronger EU integration policy make the situation easier?
- ✚ Is it worthwhile to define minimum standards of housing conditions for refugees? Is social mix the solution for all our problems?

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²³ % of the financial support needs to be allocated to the priority households (marginalized neighbourhoods)

²⁴ Article 26 of the Qualification Directive DIRECTIVE 2011/95/EU

²⁵ Article 15 of the Reception conditions directive DIRECTIVE 2013/33/EU

²⁶ Report on refugees: social inclusion and integration into the labour market (2015/2321(INI)), EMPL, Rapporteur: Brando Benifei

²⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposalimplementationpackage/docs/20160713/proposal_on_standards_for_the_reception_of_applicants_for_international_protection_en.pdf

1.2 ✓ Better use of EU funding

Cities seem to lack funding to tackle the changing needs. However, we know that in the framework of the European Structural and Investment Funds 2014-2020 (ESIF) more than the already available €351,8 million should be spent on urban and social regeneration of cities, integrated urban development and change of use of empty buildings. The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) should further finance accommodation, social integration and urban development in Member States with regard to the integration of asylum seekers in communities in order to avoid housing refugees neither in places with no job prospects, no social services nor in places with already high level of segregation.

The initiative of the Commission in the frame of its recent Action Plan on integration aiming to strengthen AMIF financial support in the context of the 2017 draft budget is welcomed by the civil society. However, the procedure to reach that point is rather complicated, considering that the draft budget should be approved by the budget authority after adoption of the Commission.

Since currently cities do not have direct access to ESIF, we need to make European budget more flexible and adaptable to allow cities to deal with changing needs. The proposal of the Budgetary Committee in the European Parliament is going this way, suggesting to increase the share of European Social Fund (ESF) up to 25 % instead of 20 %. Concerning European Regional and Development Fund (ERDF), the issue lies in the fact that most of the support is allocated to those countries that do not need to deal with the migration crisis. This doesn't mean the refugees will be housed in richer areas though, often the contrary. Also, the Operational Programmes do not show enough flexibility in case of a crisis. Notably, their change is only possible for emergency measures for the reception systems which include the construction or extension of shelters but not long-term lasting facilities.

Is the potential solution not to allocate the ESIF budget at national level but rather divert it to specific urban and rural areas in need?

Regarding AMIF, the access to funding could be more easily facilitated if more players (in health, education, housing and social services) could be eligible to access directly the emergency financial assistance. In order to adjust to these needs it should not be necessary to create a different funding tool with different eligibility and rules as this would probably slow down the effective use of existing funding mechanisms.

Nevertheless, there is a clear need to get more support for building affordable homes more quickly. Regarding the long-term finance for new construction, the European Fund for Strategic Investment (EFSI) should be mobilized as a way to step up the activities of national public banks or other agencies in the field of affordable housing. Strengthening cooperation not only between the EIB and local players (housing associations, city councils, and other services) would be very beneficial. The European Commission should take a lead and promote the exchange.

On the other hand, in order to provide adequate support around sustainable and permanent housing, it is crucial to strengthen local acceptance and preventing extremist reactions and in breaking down stereotypes. Safeguarding the liveability of neighbourhoods and fighting segregation is part of the daily work of many social and affordable housing providers in the EU. For this they need to gather the support of their inhabitants and clear mandates from political leaders. However, housing providers will only be able to do their part if the various components of the welfare state are properly functioning and funded: education, health and employment measures must be applied to support the smooth integration of refugees.

Putting forward ideas to the discussion

- ✚ How to get the political will back on track at the national and EU level to invest in (social) housing?
- ✚ Should be AMIF the main instrument to tackle the long-term housing demand or Do we need a special European Fund for Housing and Integration coming from EIB loans and Member States?
- ✚ Are subsidies out of date? How can local players get used to loans?
- ✚ Do the sustainable financing schemes bring a solution for housing shortages and quality problem as well?
- ✚ What are the best practices for the construction of housing for refugees?
- ✚ Do we need to focus on temporary housing or directly invest in long-term solutions?

1.3 ✓ Better use of EU data and knowledge

Besides more effective policy making and EU funding schemes, we need to tackle the communication barriers between us. Learning from each other is a crucial element to be able to succeed in long term. Starting from the city administration level, IT services development is the first step (knowledge sharing networks) to have a stable structures to inform asylum seekers about the different housing options and application procedures.

Furthermore, due to the big overburden on city administrations, the involvement of volunteers (including through the European EVS initiative) can help not only to assist to the daily tasks but bringing an open minded, welcoming and supportive attitude to the team. A good example is community work when volunteers help identifying tenants' needs and work on complex support projects.

As far as the regional level is concerned, promoting peer learning exchanges between cities in the form of study visits, peer reviews and sharing of best practices on how to address housing challenges, including ghettoization would be a good starting point. The role of interregional cooperation can play a role here, especially the tools of Cohesion Policy (Interreg and the relatively young EGTC (European Groupings for Territorial Cooperation) that can be created to tackle a common problem in the bordering regions. The excellent example of EGTC Amphictyony in Greece (in the island of Chios) is a result of the big effort of local authorities to cope with the refugee challenge and turn this into possibilities.

Joint cooperation between civil society projects and efforts at city and state level would be important for the follow-up of the latest developments. The organization of regular meetings within the city administration and events involving different actors could be a key element in exchange facilitation.

The improvement the communication between the various cooperation partners at local, regional and EU level should be a continuous exercise by capacity-building workshops, guidance and counselling.

Concerning the European level, the existing Partnerships (Housing and Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees) under Urban Agenda have also their share in bringing high level decision makers. A creation of an online network where cities can directly exchange (peer-to-peer chat) would be beneficial for all the involved parties. This could potentially lead to an intelligent monitoring system that could provide data on migrant housing. Further, the European Migration Forum and round-table discussions with Mayors should be reinforced in order to more pro-actively address

issues of integration, through working with the relevant local authorities and services who are operational on the ground.

Putting forward ideas to the discussion



How do the discussion groups at European level can offer an added value?



Can the involvement of local actors in the partnerships facilitate the implementation?



How does the civil society need to be organized?



Are skills and housing availability to be taken into account at early stage before refugees are allocated to certain countries, regions or cities?

Annex 2: Scoping Paper *Migration Policy Group*

Scoping paper on the urban reception of refugees

Towards identifying bottlenecks and potentials

This scoping paper provides a starting point for the Urban Agenda development partnership with regard to the reception of refugees on urban level. It identifies key challenges cities face when dealing with the arrival of people seeking international protection, particularly in case of high or

unexpected numbers. It relates the identified challenges to the threefold goal of the Urban Agenda to achieve better use of EU policies, funds and data/knowledge.

In terms of the Urban Agenda Working Programme, the scoping paper builds a bridge from the initial 'stocktaking phase' to step two, 'identification of bottlenecks and potentials' on which the future Action Plan should focus. It is an impetus for a discussion among the partners on priorities, additional aspects to be covered and first proposals for concrete actions; and help the partnership to agree on a common agenda. The scoping paper draws from different sources, with a combination of desktop research and contributions of the five cities represented in the partnership.

The particularities of refugee reception in cities has guided the analysis throughout, including e.g. the scope of voluntary/civil society engagement and the related potentials for community building, challenges of communication and awareness-rising in complex urban societies, the arrival of refugees in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and schools etc. In a first phase, cities' responses to the current developments were analysed, inter alia by making use of a questionnaire for the participating cities, and reporting by European and national urban stakeholder organisations. In a second phase, the key policy challenges were brought into the Urban Agenda context by asking for improvements in the use of existing EU instruments when addressing the challenges.

Urban reception & early integration: How cities matter & how Europe matters to cities

Already in the reception phase (i.e. when migrants seeking international protection arrive and wait for the decision on their asylum application), local authorities play a decisive role across a range of interlinked areas from day one. Cities have to:

1. implement the EU reception standards on accommodation and material support, wherever they have a role in hosting asylum-seekers within national systems;
2. work with local health providers involved in the medical and psycho-social care for persons seeking international protection;
3. fulfil their direct responsibilities in the care and integration of unaccompanied minors and other vulnerable groups;
4. work together with local schools and education providers on where, when and how refugee children are enrolled;
5. fill gaps to promote early integration, language learning and orientation needs, make public services accessible and support civil society;
6. cooperate with public employment services, or even have own active labour market programmes, to provide early labour market integration; and
7. play a key communication and leadership role for community building among newcomers and citizens at local and even EU level.

EU policies and laws, funding opportunities or information tools exist in all of these policy areas. Some are entirely determined by EU standards, while in others the EU currently has a more complementary role. Cities can raise the issue of multi-level governance on refugee reception and community-building as they are affected and sometimes directly responsible for implementation of EU policies, but not always included in EU policy-making and monitoring. Each of these areas involves a different set of institutions, authorities and actors on local level in reception and early

integration. The timely horizontal coordination within cities poses as much of a challenge as the vertical coordination with national and EU policymakers.

The main section of the scoping paper points out, for each of the seven key policy areas, the relevance of the EU frame conditions and highlights the policy, funding or knowledge gaps to be addressed by the partnership.

Summary: Key bottlenecks and potentials

- **Implementation gap on EU reception standards**, especially with national and local challenges in the provision of accommodation and material support. Cities, within the context of national reception and dispersal systems, can gain from improved support and guidance on proper implementation of the Reception Conditions Directive, potentially through an enhanced role of urban umbrella organisations and peer learning.
- **Policy and legal gap on dispersal policies to municipalities** of asylum-seekers and beneficiaries of international protection. People are rarely allocated to municipalities based on objective criteria matching the city's specific capacities to the individual's specific integration needs; including specific health needs, education needs, care standards for unaccompanied minors or future employment opportunities. Cities can gain from harmonised rules for dispersal policies if Member State governments or the European Parliament in the ongoing negotiation of a recast Reception Conditions Directive puts such amendments forward.
- **Policy and legal gap on early integration**, including early language training, orientation knowledge, local registration or access to public services, all of which is NOT covered by the Reception Conditions Directive. Cities can gain from EU-wide harmonised early integration standards with clear obligations for the national level, which would also require amendment of the recast Reception Conditions Directive currently under negotiation.
- **Policy and cooperation gap** on the mandate and work of the **EU Asylum Agency**, which will have an increased role in monitoring and advising on reception conditions. Cities can gain from technical and operational assistance provided by the Agency on accommodation and material standards, health support, groups with special needs or schooling; based on a clear multi-level mandate in an amended Asylum Agency Regulation.
- **Policy-making gap** on cities' participation in **EU legislative processes** in areas where formal and informal EU decision rules do not appropriately reflect the implementation responsibilities and legal competences of cities (i.a. concerning material reception standards, care for unaccompanied minors or early employment support). Cities can gain from improved multi-level governance, including timely involvement in the drafting phase of Commission proposals, greater exchange in Council and Parliament negotiations, comparable consultation standards in all relevant policy fields and continuous policy dialogues.
- **Funding gaps** on the rules, priorities and accessibility for cities of **AMIF**, the key EU fund for supporting reception and early integration. Whether cities can access funding across the entire range of relevant policy areas depends on spending priorities and rules set in national AMIF programmes, or good intra-state coordination to co-benefit from AMIF Emergency Assistance. Cities can gain from improved national programming processes based on the partnership principle, taking into account cities' needs, and amended AMIF regulations in the upcoming programme period.

- **Funding gaps** on other delegated EU funds under **shared management** (incl. ESF and FEAD), when national programmes and their rules do not allow access to funding for early integration in the reception phase. Cities can gain from improved national programming based on the partnership principle; including the transfer of EU best practices in multi-level programme planning and amended regulations in the upcoming programme period.
- **Funding gaps** at the **nexus of different EU programmes**, resulting from EU programme rules and national implementation patterns (e.g. early skills and qualification assessments not eligible under AMIF or ESF in certain constellations). Cities can gain from systematic efforts in all Member States to strengthen synergies between the existing programmes, improved intra-state cooperation among managing authorities and amended regulations in the upcoming programme period.
- **Accessibility gaps** on the **use of EU funds for small-scale projects** carried by civil society organisations or voluntary initiatives, which fill key gaps in support for early local integration. Community building efforts, early integration initiatives or school-related activities have numerous EU options (from AMIF to Erasmus+, Europe for Citizens and REC), but often fail to access funds. Cities can gain from more civil society-driven projects enabled by EU-funds, based on lower thresholds for small-scale projects and funding instruments geared towards non-public/non-profit project carriers.
- **Data gap** regarding the availability of **disaggregated data** on local level, including on numbers of asylum seekers and unaccompanied minors in cities, persons with specific health needs or school enrolment of refugee children. Cities can gain from Europe-wide comparable data as a foundation for informed policy and funding decisions; collected at national and local level through Eurostat, OECD, the Asylum Agency or independent research.
- **Knowledge gap** on the practices and success of **early local integration policies**, including the language training, orientation and other measures provided on the local level. Cities can gain from extended mapping, analysis and evaluation as well as opportunities for exchange and mutual learning; based on extended efforts by the Commission to create appropriate frameworks and financially support the measures.

1 Meeting fundamental humanitarian needs: Accommodation and material support

European policies, hard & soft law. The Reception Conditions Directive provides the standards for the accommodation and material support of asylum-seekers across the EU. Transposed into national law, cities may be responsible for implementing these standards wherever they have a role in hosting asylum-seekers within national reception and dispersal systems. The quality of the implementation of the Directive's standards is known to be uneven and often insufficient across Europe, including at sub-national levels. Diverging reception and integration policy standards can cause secondary movements, exacerbating the unequal distribution of burdens among European cities. National dispersal policies, by disregarding specific integration needs (as allowed by EU law) can also reinforce secondary movements that are not in cities' interests. Reception systems that foresee temporary accommodation after initial stays in reception centres can add additional movements between and within cities, throwing back integration. The proposed recast Reception Conditions Directive, though, does not intend to harmonise reception and dispersal systems with an eye to increase people's local integration prospects. To address the overall implementation gap, the proposed EU Asylum Agency (i.e. today's EASO with a strengthened mandate) is to monitor and assess reception conditions based on operational standards, benchmarks and

indicators, and then support reception systems with technical and operational assistance. However, the current Asylum Agency regulation under negotiation would need amendment, as the current draft does not mention sub-state levels.

→ *Proper implementation of EU reception standards at all responsible levels of government is a core concern. This would include better guidance from the Commission and future Asylum Agency about practical local administrative and material standards within the context of national reception and dispersal systems and direct, frequent two-way communication with cities, potentially through an enhanced role of urban umbrella organisations and peer learning. The current Asylum Agency regulation under negotiation would need amendment, as the current draft does not mention sub-state levels.*

European funding opportunities, data & knowledge tools. Funding of reception support is highly dependent on the quality of national coordination and distribution mechanisms, as cities usually access both national and EU funds (i.e. AMIF National Programmes, AMIF Emergency Assistance and FEAD) through Member State authorities. Cities may not be able to act as co-beneficiaries from AMIF emergency support. National AMIF funds may not be readily available to meet the needs of cities due to the National Programmes' specific priorities and calls. Member State Operational Programmes for FEAD may not include asylum seekers as possible beneficiaries. Funding may also not get to the right local authorities because of a major data gap across the EU; urban authorities may not know the exact number of refugees currently present on their territory. EU statistics on the number of asylumseekers applying in each Member State are not disaggregated at regional and local level. Among national statistical institutes, the local or regional statistics on the distribution of asylum-seekers is patchy, not only in emergency times with high inflows.

→ *The accessibility of EU funds could be addressed from two sides. On the one hand, in the development and implementation of the national AMIF and FEAD programmes, the national practice of the "partnership principle" must fully consider local needs. AMIF and FEAD could live up to the high standards and procedural rules for multi-level stakeholder involvement applied in the partnership principle of ERDF programmes. On the other hand, future programme regulations could allow for sub-state levels of government to be directly eligible for Emergency Assistance and/or automatically receive a certain share of available funding based on objective statistics. In addition, financing opportunities for local authorities can be developed with the EIB and Council of Europe Development Bank. The accessibility of data would require the disaggregation and collection of data on asylum-seekers. A future Asylum Agency could be mandated to gather indicators on local-level needs.*

2 Access to health services & support for groups with health-related special reception needs

European policies, hard & soft law. The EU Reception Conditions Directive requires that asylumseekers receive sufficient medical support, including for special health needs. Although national health systems and governments cover care in first-line reception centres, local health providers also regularly become involved. Asylum-seekers may bring or develop many complex health issues and traumas. Yet those in need may end up in areas without sufficient local specialised health resources. This pattern can be reinforced by national dispersal systems that do not take into account specific health needs when allocating asylum seekers to municipalities. Access to health care may also be complicated by requirements of local registration as a precondition for services.

→ *The rules of national dispersal systems and local reception practices can better take into account health needs if such provisions are added to the recast Reception Conditions Directive and to future Asylum Agency benchmarks and operational standards.*

European funding opportunities, data & knowledge tools. AMIF national programmes and emergency assistance can support access to health care, but the availability of funds depends on national programming and bidding procedures – while asylum-seekers’ physical and psychological health needs must be addressed under EU law. In reality, AMIF is mostly supporting reception infrastructures and asylum procedures under the asylum/reception chapter of National Programmes (Specific Objective/SO 1; Art. 5 AMIF Regulation). Health support under the integration chapter (SO 2; Art. 9) is only open to asylum seekers upon the decision of Member States’ national governments. Additional EU funding can be provided under the EU Health Programme if prioritised in EU-level annual work plans. Similar data gaps emerge with refugee health as with their distribution.

EU indicators only exist in terms of asylum-seekers’ rights and support (MPG’s MIPEX and ECRE’s AIDA report) but lack in terms of their health needs and outcomes.

→ *Health support could figure more prominently in AMIF spending. Data on the health of asylum-seekers and refugees could be improved by DG Health and DG Home in cooperation with the future Asylum Agency and with Eurostat through a new EU-SILC variable/ad hoc module on the situation of different categories of migrants.*

→

3 Support for groups with special reception needs that are not health-related (in particular unaccompanied minors/UAMs)

European policies, hard & soft law. The recent rise in the numbers of unaccompanied minors has become a priority for the major transit and destination cities, as youth welfare is usually a local or regional competence. Cities have full and direct responsibility for the well-being of asylum-seeking children when Member States choose to place them in mainstream youth welfare institutions (e.g. Germany and Sweden which together host 56% of UAMs applying for asylum in 2015). The EU Reception Conditions Directive requires that unaccompanied minors receive effective support to address their special reception needs and vulnerability. However, the level of capacity and preparedness of local youth welfare institutions is not a criterion for national dispersal policies under EU law. Even when national governments provide targeted reception facilities and funding for UAMs, this support may not reach local social and education services that could respond to these children’s diverse integration needs.

→ *Local authorities should be privileged partners in all policy debates around UAMs and in the implementation of relevant EU rules and funds. This support could be provided through future Asylum Agency benchmarks, operational standards and technical assistance, as well as the relevant provisions in the recast Reception Condition Directive.*

European funding opportunities, data & knowledge tools. Access to EU funding to support UAM (AMIF National Programmes & Emergency Assistance) should reflect cities’ direct needs. A relatively small share of AMIF support goes into this local infrastructure in terms of social care, custody and guardian work, depending on priorities set by AMIF National Programmes. Erasmus+ funding can fulfil a supplementary role to support activities and cross-border learning for youth-related organisations.

Local data is missing across the EU not only for asylum-seekers, but also for UAMs, with all of the same negative repercussions for policymaking, programming and the allocation of funds.

→ *AMIF could function better for the local reception not only for asylum-seekers, but also for UAMs. Reinforced European funding could also target support for social care, custody and guardian work for UAMs in mainstream youth welfare systems. The numbers and needs of UAMs and other special needs groups could be mandated or collected at EU level and included as part of policy and funding mechanisms.*

4 Access to education and early enrolment

European policies, hard & soft law. EU law requires access to education for asylum-seeking minors and schooling under similar conditions as nationals at the latest three months after application. Schools are often the first mainstream public service that asylum-seeking parents and children encounter. In the early reception phase, a key task is assessment of the prior learning/education and the choice/placement in an appropriate school; followed by provision of language support and quality insertion programmes. However, educational needs are often not a criterion for national dispersal policies. Under such systems, children and families can be placed in areas without quality school and local targeted support, a practice contrary to EU case-law. Whether or not schools and education are a direct municipal competence, cities often have to work with schools to facilitate enrolment and fund capacity building so that local schools maintain the required legal and education standards for all children.

→ *Education needs and support need to be taken into account in dispersal policies, funding and coordination mechanisms, including in future provisions in a recast Reception Directive as well as EU Asylum Agency benchmarks and operational standards. EU reception policies must live up to the high EU and national standards for the education of children, youth and adults.*

European funding opportunities, data & knowledge tools. National AMIF programmes can support education under the reception and asylum chapter (SO 1/Art. 5) and integration chapter (SO2/Art. 9) so long as education funding is prioritised in the national programme and extended under SO 2 to asylum-seekers. Likewise, under ESF and ERDF funding, the national (or regional) programmes determine whether or not funding is available for integration and infrastructure for the education of migrants. Erasmus+ supports transnational Strategic Partnerships (Key Action 2) to innovate and transfer best practices, including for newcomer children. Erasmus+ also supports education policy reform (Key Action 3), i.e. innovative policy development, policy dialogue and pilot implementation, in a few Member States, based on specific EU-wide calls. Cities can benefit more from these activities by actively supporting local education actors to apply, for example through the provision of the necessary co-financing and preparation support.

In education statistics, comparable European or international data is lacking on the enrolment and early school leaving of refugee and asylum-seeking children and youth. Tracking the educational success of refugee pupils will be a major task for the coming years. Disaggregated data at city and school level is highly relevant for refugee pupils, who may be more likely to be concentrated in specific—often disadvantaged—areas and schools.

→ *AMIF funding could become more accessible for education, while other EU funding opportunities could be better targeted at early education integration for asylum-seekers and newcomer refugee children and youth. Comparable statistics, including on enrolment, could be collected at national and local level through Eurostat, OECD or independent research and then integrated into policymaking and funding mechanisms.*

5 Early integration: Language, orientation & municipal services

European policies, hard & soft law. EU law does not require that Member States prioritise integration from day one. Early targeted integration support for asylum-seekers is required under neither the current Reception Directive nor its recently proposed recast. Whether or not to fund and organise early integration is left up to each Member State, including sub-state levels of

government. As a result, many destination countries' systems were not prepared for the massive societal challenge following the 2015 arrivals to quickly integrate the large number of asylum-seekers who will have to wait for much longer periods of time before receiving a positive decision and, by extension, access to targeted integration support. On the front-line of reception, sub-state governments are often pressed into action, even in the absence of national funding or support, in order to respond to these immediate needs and demands for orientation, language teaching and other targeted support to access a wide range of essential public services from public transport to social infrastructure. If this integration policy gap is not addressed early on, the later integration costs will be much greater and fall disproportionately on cities, leading to an issue of multi-level governance of shifting the burden.

→ *EU and national rules and funding requirements on the provision of early integration support and targeted support for access to public services are critically missing for many cities in the discussion around the recast Reception Condition Directive and future EU asylum and integration support.*

European funding opportunities, data & knowledge tools. National AMIF programmes can support language, information, translation and other services under the reception and asylum chapter (SO 1/Art. 5), and possibly under the integration chapter, including orientation activities (SO 2/Art. 9) so long as this is prioritised in the national programme and extended under SO 2 to asylum-seekers. Under the 2016 Integration Action Plan, Erasmus+ will provide online language learning modules, while national ESF programmes are encouraged to support employment-oriented language training.

No mapping exists of the policies and uptake of early integration support, as the EMN and OECD are largely focused on labour market integration and beneficiaries of international protection. The European Website on Integration (EWSI) has a map of local and regional best practice based on ad hoc updates by users and country coordinators, although early integration support has not been the subject of a specific EWSI analysis.

→ *A more binding use and local distribution of national AMIF funds could address early language training and orientation purposes, while a better picture of the current local and regional state of play and good practices could be collected as a starting point for mutual policy learning and benchmarking.*

6 Early integration: Employment

European policies, hard & soft law. While access to the labour market is mostly a national competence, active labour market programmes (ALMPs) have become an area of multi-level governance. Cities are not only cooperating with the national public employment service, but also operating their own bodies and ALMPs. Important measures in the early reception phase include the assessment and validation of skills and formal qualifications, targeted multilingual trainings and bridging qualifications, facilitating access to work permits as well as networking and mentoring with potential employers. Local administrative practice can also affect asylum-seekers' access to the labour market (after maximum 6 months under recast proposal and most national practices). The application of labour market tests in a minority of Member States has strong local-level implications. Urban authorities carry an additional responsibility where proper local registration is a precondition for labour market access.

→ *Cities must be fully recognised and involved as a multi-level governance partner in labour market integration, bringing together EU, national and sub-national levels for policy development including around the Common European Asylum System and employment and integration guidance.*

European funding opportunities, data & knowledge tools. At first glance, EU funding opportunities for early labour market integration seem to be extensive. While AMIF national programmes can support trainings during the reception phase (under SO 1/Art. 5), ESF has considerable means to support asylum seekers with labour market access and the national ESF programmes can broadly support the labour market integration of migrants. ERDF funding is also available for employment promotion of marginalised groups and integrated urban actions, when these are included in the Operational Programmes. EaSI specifically supports pilots with a potential multiplier effect.

After close inspection, a critical funding gap seems to appear for early skill and qualification assessment. ESF excludes asylum seekers without labour market access. AMIF only covers preparatory labour market actions for asylum-seekers based on national programming decisions by the Member States (making SO 2/Art. 9 funding available for the reception phase). As a result, asylum seekers without labour market access may not be eligible as direct beneficiaries of EU programmes in assessment measures that are implemented as ALMP. While EaSI can support policy development (e.g. Skills Toolkit), broad-based implementation may be critically dependent on AMIF or ESF funds. Beyond the labour market access restriction, the actual use of ESF funding for early labour market integration depends on the priorities and procedures set at national level, as with other EU programmes implemented through delegated national programmes.

EU data and knowledge tools have yet to collect data on local level policies, uptake or effects of early labour market access, employment opportunities and early support measures, despite a flurry of recent studies (EMN, OECD, etc.) that focus on the national level.

→ *The entire spectrum of early labour market integration measures (incl. skills and qualification assessments) for asylum seekers could be better supported from EU funds and made more accessible for cities, particularly in cases of large influxes. The EU could also support policy mapping, indicator collection and evaluation of early labour market integration measures for beneficiaries of international protection.*

7 Community building & public communication

European policies, hard & soft law. Refugee reception and integration requires the involvement and information of the local population from day one. Early interaction and civic participation are inherently local. Proactive and transparent public communication as well as leadership are key factors for promoting refugee reception and a welcoming culture. Urban leadership can also translate into European leadership if urban decision-makers can create networks of refugee destination cities and work together with the EU on solutions like the relocation scheme. EU policies and support on local community building and public communication are very limited in these regards, beyond the normative framework set by the Common Basic Principles and the tools promised by the new Integration Action Plan (incl. handbooks and toolboxes for practitioners on cultural awareness, intercultural dialogue and active participation of TCNs in political, social, cultural life).

→ *The limited cooperation for cities and the EU to work together on community building and communication can create and even exacerbate policy gaps in many other areas of integration and reception. A stronger EU policy framework and cooperation can pave the way to increased uptake of EU funds for community building purposes. Making community building a more visible part of the EU Integration Action Plan should entail a broad involvement of cities.*

European funding opportunities, data & knowledge tools. National AMIF programmes can support information for local communities under the reception and asylum chapter (SO 1/Art. 5), and possibly under the integration chapter (SO 2/Art. 9) including civic participation and local interaction – but only if prioritised under the national programmes and deliberately expanded to asylumseekers. The new EU Integration Action Plan points to other EU funds less dependent on national programming, where community building activities can be supported: AMIF EU-level actions, 'Europe for Citizens' town networks/civil society projects on civic participation, 'Rights, Equality and Citizenship' projects on combating racism and xenophobia, as well as Erasmus+ support for goodpractice transfer of social inclusion activities. Cities can call for the expansion of these funds and encourage their uptake by municipal and civil society actors, including through the provision of the necessary co-financing and preparation support.

→ *Support for early community building could be more visible and facilitated at EU level, for example as a binding part of national AMIF programmes. The accessibility and usefulness of EU funds for NGOs and voluntary initiatives is another key issue given the key role they play to foster local interaction, civic participation and public communication. Better use of EU funding for community building will result from more opportunities on the level of programme priorities and calls, better involvement in programming in line with the partnership principle, targeted consultation, information and support for potential project carriers and fewer obstacles in terms of procedural and financial requirements.*

Annex 3: Conference Minutes

Bundled notes – Working Conference migrants and refugees

Content:

- Workshop 1 Housing – day 1
 - o Access to housing
 - o Capacity building
- Workshop 2 Housing – day 1
 - o Access to housing
 - o Capacity building
- Workshop 3 Housing – day 2
 - o Access to housing
 - o Capacity building
- Workshop 4 Housing – day 2
 - o Access to housing
 - o Capacity building

- Workshop 1 Reception – day 1
 - o Health care
 - o Early integration
- Workshop 2 Reception – day 1
 - o Health care
 - o Early integration
- Workshop 3 Reception – day 2
 - o Health care
 - o Early integration
- Workshop 4 Reception – day 2
 - o Health care
 - o Early integration

- It should be noted that some suggestions have been miscategorised in the workshops (for example, a better funding solution under better regulation).

Workshop 1 Housing – Access to housing

1) Better funding:

- 1a: Realise affordable housing for mixed audience and upgrade neighbourhoods.
- 1a: Incentivise subsidies for people to live in unattractive areas.
- 1a: Install a social housing supervising authority per country on a national level.
- 1c: Extend scope for AMIF to cover housing.
- 1c: Give funding to cities that address two topics at once: for example refugees and affordable housing (specific and general).
- 1c: Like Mayor Van der Laan said: Mayors are unable to shelter refugees due to lack of public support. Should send their EU funds to cities that do shelter refugees.
- 1c: Extend ESF for countries with higher amount of refugees.
- 1c: Funding for capacity to help people at 1b (easy access, guidance, etc.).
- 1c: Make it easier to use the funds, there should be less bureaucracy.
- 1c: Abolish legalisation on state aid temporarily for housing of refugees.

2) Better regulation:

- 1a/b/c: Neighbourhoods should become stakeholder in housing solutions for refugees.
- 1a: Social services apply when you have a post address or a rental contract.
- 1a: Allow self-construction and refurbish model, use refugee labour for transforming buildings, link to vocational training to improve access to labour market.
- 1a: Distribute asylum seekers evenly across EU and also nationally according to available housing.
- 1a: Extend affordability rule forever. The distribution of asylum seekers creates affordability problem. More conditions for redistribution mechanisms (based on more complex allocation design).
- 1a: Legalise squatting into municipality owned housing.
- 1a: Take Care BNB, involve the neighbourhood, network of social cohesion.
- 1a: Building regulations should be easier and compatible.
- 1b: Involve the neighbourhood to provide assistance combine brain power to find housing and address shortage of housing and limited assistance.

3) Better knowledge exchange

- 1a: Mapping unused properties belonging to public and private institutions.
- 1b: Involve and make existing migrants communities visible (how to get around, bureaucracy etc.).
- 1b: Protect refugees from black market, bad networks or criminals by providing easy access to information.

- 1b: More use of internet, WhatsApp and visible points of information.
- 1b: Institutional agency network of housing providers .

Workshop 2 Housing – Access to housing

1) Better funding:

- 1a: Money.
- 1a: Tap break to private owners to rent at lower prices or even donate their houses.
- 1b: Support cities that accept more refugees with more funding.
- 1b: Strengthen role of social rental agencies as intermediaries between renters and housing providers.
- 1c: AMIF programme 2017 should prioritise housing.
- Consult housing providers (priority: access to housing).
- 1c: Use of blending facility EIB and AMIF to potentially enable direct access of cities to loan and grant funding using member state oversight via EIB loan/grant approval process.
- 1c: Use EFSI to enable access to cities or social housing companies with low credit quality.
- 1c: Urban funds. All EU cities contribute, cities who welcome refugees will receive the funds.
- 1c: Find a policy mechanism to provide funds directly to cities in need.
- 1c: Facilitate reallocation of OP funding in response to emergencies in next programming period or through ESIF simplification process.

2) Better regulation

- Simplify regulations by identifying points to act on.
- 1a: Funding is not the biggest issue for our cities, but shortage is. Some solutions could be: more time, more jobs outside of big cities, using temporary options such as containers or change regulations to build faster.
- 1a: Subsidise access to public housing.
- 1a: Support by NGOs.
- 1c: Modification of structural funds regulation (already under wage) to include housing simplification of cost.

3) Better knowledge exchange

- Focus on social inclusion and participation (empowerment), sustainable mobility.
- 1a: Accessibility to urban area (through e.g. improved transportation).
- 1a: Give public money to private owners and public services in order to transform old buildings and streets, in a social mixed approach.
- 1a: Incremental open floor housing: adequate and lower budget.
- 1a: Promote successful case studies.

- 1a: Using expertise from migrants and refugees to transform existing buildings into social housing.
- 1a: Crowdfunding: we want to see what is happening with our money so use crowdfunding to fund projects.
- 1a: Matchmaking (local elderly with refugee families in vacant elderly homes).
- 1a: Let refugees and migrants fix houses themselves: transform empty buildings themselves with professional assistance (in this way provide work and housing).
- 1a: Accompany measures by a pilot to improve access to housing (transformation and guarantee in private sector).
- 1a: Encourage, allow and oblige different political levels to work together to renovate and create new houses.
- 1a: Political will and consensus to communicate to civil society and economic actors.
- 1b: Housing first: generalise if we want to have an effect! Identify and prioritise the problems: first give a house, then, via a contract ensure the social integration.
- 1b: Use of volunteers in building projects.
- 1b: Facilitate local meeting occasions.
- 1b: Urban resource centres: centres for assistance in neighbourhoods provide assistance with housing/work/etc., matchmaking supply and demand.
- 1b: Social real estate agencies: NGOs funded and created by local authorities. Their goal is to be between private sector tenants and "poor" people. They provide a guarantee for the on time payment of loan, take care of the good state of the place, obligation of keeping the level of the loans below the market level.
- 1c: Integrated urban renovation contracts (4 years): funded through ERDF and National regulating authorities: limit public and private space to renovate small neighbourhoods.

4) Extra bottlenecks

- Shortage of national (political will) and EU funds to deal effectively with the needs. EU (and national funds) committed to other needs such as poverty.
- Acceptance policy about refugees and migrants by all locals.
- Communication strategy about policy.
- 1a: A government that is really willing to welcome refugees.

Workshop 3 Housing – Access to housing

1) Better funding

- 1b: Funding for civil society organisations.
- 1b: Creating a call for funds to support the help of private committees.
- 1c: Direct EU funding to the cities.

- 1c: Open the ERDF for social housing.
- 1c: Crisis reserve (proposal of the EU commission) to fund and support urgent issues. Filled with structural funds that have not been used.
- 1c: Fund the (sub-) local level to foster flexibility.
- 1c: Crowdfunding (and public funding).

2) Better regulation

- 1a: Mobilize existing houses or rooms.
- 1a: Use containers.
- 1a: Co-create → involve local government and community.
- 1a: Flexible standards for transformation of buildings (from maximum to average).
- 1a: Mobil Homes with lower standards.
- 1a: EU should regulate better rent quality control from member states.
- 1a: Combating usage of housing space which is used for other purposes (e.g. holiday apartments).
- 1a: Obligatory percentage of social houses with housing projects.
- 1a: Use tiny houses in public space with support of EU fund.

3) Better knowledge exchange

- 1b: Speak with refugees, not only about refugees.
- 1b: Combine volunteers and refugees.
- 1b: When you search for a house you could support to families/individuals to understand the housing market (mentors).

4) Other:

- New model in Belgium on housing (no results yet):
 - o The collective stay in collective centres. Once they get status they go to individual reception places. Within four months they can look for their own place. If they don't succeed they can use their own individual reception as a new place. The issue is whether it is possible for migrants to find a new place.
- Inspiration from an initiative from Amsterdam. They prepare the arrival for status holders by being in touch with them prior to their arrival. They try to connect that to available spots in neighbourhoods (community). Could be office buildings or big (public) gardens. Supported with EU funds. Local governments should sometimes ignore the rules (zoning etc.).

Workshop 4 Housing – Access to housing

1) Better funding:

- 1a/1c: Combined housing for refugees and for example students or elderly people should be expanded e.g. by extra EU money.
- 1a/1c: Everybody should be able or eligible to access any tenure. The financial model: shortage of housing stock, the idea is to finance new building constructions from EIB (European Investment Bank) loan, the housing is categorised as 'disaster reconstruction'. The period that refugees are waiting for a status, is the time for construction. After getting a status refugees can pay back the money in 3-5 years with another funding. With refugee aid status holders can repay the loan from the rent. (Typical rental building cash flow).
- 1a: More houses spread over neighbourhoods.
- 1a: Link housing to employment: big employers can take refugees on board and provide housing for them.
- 1b/1c: More funds from EU to support local housing.
- 1b: Close cooperation between central government and local authorities.
- 1b: Provide incentives to locals to host refugees/people in need (tax, rent, etc.). Make world of housing and integration closer to each other.
- 1c: Use the existing aid funding to finance housing construction.
- 1c: Funds from government should go straight to projects: ERDF directly to governments.
- 1c: European Investment Bank and/or social impact funds. Financial partnerships.
- 1c: Joint AMIF and EIB funding and use AMIF funding to decrease overall credit amount or decrease interest rates: change AMIF regulation.
 - o Ensure part of the AMIF fund resources (i.e. under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund of the EU) be made available to cities or enterprises directly in relation to expenditures relating to refugee integration, including through the use of financial incentives. At present, AMIF funding is channelled through central governments. An opportunity for more direct access by cities or enterprises would be a "blending facility" between the AMIF grant resources and EIB loan resources under which AMIF grants could be combined with EIB loans to cities or social impact funds – in the case of such blending facilities which are administered by EIB, the EIB enters into a direct relationship with the city or fund, rather than channelling the funds via central government; however, from a governance perspective, central government approval is still assured through representation of the member states in the Board of the EIB which would approve the blending scheme and have information on its monitoring through reports.

2) *Better regulation:*

- 1a: Recreational or second house can be a (temporary) house for refugees.

- 1a: Cheap, modular housing for anyone in empty spaces in cities.
- 1a: Allow social Airbnb platforms.
- 1a: Housing organised where there is work/education.
- 1a: European organisation should organise rooms with private people (take care BNBs).
- 1b: Allow locals to legally host refugees or people in need in their homes.
- 1b: Small groups in small towns or villages to stimulate the role of civil society. Local associations take care of finding housing for them providing a strong role for civil society. Local families willing to offer trainings/jobs.
- 1b: Mix students and refugees.
- 1c: ESIF accessible to cities directly.

3) *Better knowledge exchange*

- 1a: Transit houses for people who don't immediately find houses.
- 1a: Holistic local approaches to reuse empty housing to revive deprived towns. Improve exchange of best practices.
- 1b: Housing buddies to provide assistance to search for housing and buddies to provide assistance afterwards.
- 1b: Better assistance from volunteers, associations or NGOs to help refugees interact with landlords or look for and apply to housing, both private and social housing.
- 1b: Provide open and transparent information on housing to facilitate matching between supply and demand (website for housing).

Workshop 1 Housing –Capacity Building

1) *Better funding:*

- 2a/2c: Lack of knowledge and capacity at local authority level, therefore provide more training capacity building.
- 2a: Look at different knowledge sources such as smart, sustainable procurement: different knowledge sources for alternative funding and procurement; ICLEI portal on that exchange platform around procurement (innovative and sustainable ideas).
- 2b/2c: If nobody can find you, something goes wrong. European funds should act more pro-actively in connecting local initiatives and cities. On a national level cooperation fails. This is a chance to stimulate solidarity and to connect cities more proactively. Cooperation fails at national level. EU funding should find solidarity on local level.
- 2b: The local level has much information, but too little time. Therefore specific projects should be supported on demand: direct access for urgency (fast track) state of urgency should trigger fast track procedure for spending EU money; do not limit cities' possibilities.

- 2c: Other way of funding: UNHCR → private sponsor.
- 2c: Make it less complex.
- 2c: Access for cities.
- 2c: Train managing authority. PO on special excl.

2) Better regulation

- 2a/2c: Fast-track procedures depending on urgency or amount given.
- Simplify regulations.
- Housing market should be seen in light of its social function and not so much as a market. For example the Canadian platform of citizens: refugees are resettled when private sponsors are found → find apartment and help for registering etc., pay for one year, after this they are supposed to be self-sustainable.

3) Better knowledge exchange

- 2a: Changing state aid rules.
- 2b: Combine data of national and local observatories.
- 2b: Use and relate to existing EU exchange network programmes (e.g. URBACT, INTERREG, ERASMUS+, Horizon2020) special calls in relation to migrants/refugees.
- 2b: Stimulate peer-to-peer learning on alternative financing.
- 2b: Learn from non-EU cities.
- 2b: Solidarity cities initiative: launched in October supported by Eurocities. Make such existing peer-to-peer platforms more known, but they should also be expanded to cities where refugees come from.
- 2b: Knowledge exchange useful but could be dangerous for cut and paste policies in different contexts.
- 2b: Include cities of origin (where refugees come from) or countries with big influx of refugees (outside of Europe).
- 2b/2c: Peer assistance to writing of proposals – from one city to another.
- Short term mobility of professionals e.g. funding application experts (solidarity cities).

4) Other:

- More going on through EU that cities do not know about, like information sharing, peer-to-peer networks etc. Communication could be made a lot easier. It would be a waste if platforms are already in place on European levels. Ghent agrees: often EC is not running such platforms but supporting it e.g. via Eurocities or URBACT.
- URBACT does this for cities of all sizes. They have ten years of experience, not all cities know about this. National dissemination points are a good source of information. Local

language meeting offers bringing together URBACT cities and people who want to participate. National training scheme.

Workshop 2 Housing – Capacity Building

1) Better funding:

- 2c: More targeted approach on individual cities and their problems: more down-to-Earth, less conceptual.
- 2c: Simplify administrative regulations for EU funding.
- 2c: Improve coordinated lobby of urban agenda. National and EU governments for access to funding.
- 2c: Developing strategy and teams for quick response to solve problems for new migrants and refugees.

2) Better regulation

- 2a: State aids amend working on social/affordable housing in SGEI regulation.
- 2a: Procurement regulations need to be more flexible in matters of humanitarian urgency.
- Pay attention to global context of income discrepancies.

3) Better knowledge exchange

- 2b: Erasmus for local civil servants: exchange programme to improve capacities (for key experts only).
- 2b: Platform for member states to share approach for handling state aid in housing.
- 2b: Building an online platform to share local level practices related to housing inclusion for refugees: Cities can look for solutions that other cities made with the same characteristics. Compare similar cities with each other. Also smaller cities should be included in urban agenda.
- 2b: Online platform or tool box of best practice case studies: peer to peer, small cities should be addressed as well.
- 2b: EU procurement experts to be send to new housing projects (to accelerate the process and knowledge exchange with personnel)
- 2b: Improve knowledge exchange.
- 2b: Urban impact assessment of EU policies

4) Comments:

- Implementations are a question of political will. Have a seminar with representatives of administrations and of political level councillors.
- Explain challenges we have on daily issues to EU level. Get an understanding in how things can be changed. Bring people on working level and EU level together.

- I see this as a chain: the levels of responsibilities. People should stand up to own responsibilities and act to it.
- Urban investment platform: take forward some ideas in practical ways. For us it is quite helpful to improve these ideas.
- Link ideas to EU semester and country specific organisations and push member states further to act.
- Meeting was most about money and funds; also focus on acceptability we have to find a way that locals and migrants accept each other.

Workshop 3 Housing – Capacity Building

1) Better funding:

- 2a: Creating unified code for public financial support from EU to local.
- 2c: Make funding accessible to cities, but leave regional issues to national government funding, local problems to be funded by European money.

2) Better regulation:

- Support private house owners when they provide their houses according to a plan.
- 2a: Common market rules could be changed if housing market reaches a certain point of crisis which leads to an automatic leverage of competition rules (because these rules and the market have proved to have failed then).
- 2a: Create room for pilots and local experiments to inform general regulation. Flexibility should be given to local level. Leave cities to decide what the best target group for social housing is. Hence change regulation to allow for this flexibility.
- 2b: Legislation should take into account input from technical experts when formulating begins.

3) Knowledge Exchange:

- 2b: Don't just copy best practices but see it as source of inspiration.
- 2b: Private Public Partnership Platform (PPPP): volunteers, private sectors, civil society should be collected in platform to exchange more efficiently including incentives.
- 2b: European Cities Data Base, create a committee or database where each city provides analyses and screening.
- 2b: Diversity: also include other types of knowledge (local, global, residents, refugees) in peer-to-peer learning.
- 2b: Larger cities have an advantage in comparison to small and medium sized cities. Therefore, the twinning method could work well for small and medium sized cities, pairing up cities with the same or different size.
- 2b: Professionals in data-base open for cities to research make offers and needs visual.

- 2b: Solidarity cities network is officially launched and needs to be filled with life and cities that participate.

Thomas: common trends: make funding more accessible to cities is evident, but role to Member States should be maintained, cities should deal with their own problems, refugee crisis has most impact on cities because they are sought after and also where we want refugees to work etc. Competition rules are indeed not comprehensive and working, we know that free market does not deliver housing for all. More input from local experts before agreeing on European legislation, Eurocities proposes urban impact assessment (UIA); need for more including private sector and local knowledge, include all stakeholders, we saw that public administration would have not coped with the situation without civil society in e.g. DE and SE; best practices as incubators, mentoring instead of peer-learning and study visits;

Solidarity cities explanation by Thomas:

Proposed by Athens in April 2016; technical development in Eurocities. Launched 1 month ago, a mix of many ideas and needs. It is about lobbying, on the 7th February, EU and local policymakers will come together. Methodology: EU projects on labour market inclusion of refugees, looking for funding to have this multiplied can be done via twinning or different city teams, will be placed outside Eurocities network, include also smaller cities; Eurocities will call on EC to dedicate a specific funding. Eurocities will provide the matchmaking, support/financing is pending, political proposal because it is about circumventing national level, but is about putting Member States in front of their responsibility. City pledges by cities to receive relocated refugees, introduced by Athens and Barcelona.

Workshop 4 Housing – Capacity Building

1) Better funding:

- 2c: More direct access for cities and less administrative procedures for the rapportage.
- 2c: More social housing: EU funding for buying empty houses/buildings → transform in social housing.

2) Better regulation

- Too many rules that hampers to act now. Less regulation? Gross national product why no gross national happiness as regulator?
- 2a: Change state aid rules and public procurement rules at EU level: housing partnership is working on this. Try to connect the two partnerships and work together.
- 2b: Peer-to-peer region or small villages.
- 2b: Broaden scope of availability of social housing to non-vulnerable groups to avoid ghettoization.

3) Better knowledge exchange

- 2b: Coordination discussion in between stakeholder groups: Coordination and cooperation between networks of cities/universities/businesses that talk about migration issues .
- 2b: Organise study visits among cities between more “experienced” ones and “newcomers” to facilitate knowledge transfer.
- 2b: Information sharing about ways to access housing when housing is not available, for example transformation.
- 2b: Information sharing about ways to access funding for housing.

4) Comments:

- Cities want responsibility over funds (are national governments working against this?).
- Combine partnerships.
- We will not get more money; we have to focus on how to spend the available money for the best results.
- National regulation is difficult to change. For example land use plan of an office is difficult to change in order to make it social housing. EU is not the problem for cities. However, it is very difficult to change regulation on national level. Countries don't want EU commission to be involved.
- We can influence national policies; the question is if we want this or if we want to focus on this.
- Composite indicator to go against housing crash?

Workshop 1 Reception – Heath Care

1) *Better funding*

- 1a: Medical screening for all refugees at arrival.
- 1b: Psychological care given by native speakers.
- 1c: Funding the local level sufficient staff (medical personnel / medication).
- 1c: EU funding (almost) directly to local level with room to manage the right reception condition (within limits): The local level need to have enough discretionary space to manage the health care of migrants.
- 1c: More facilities for day activities (EU channels).

2) *Better regulation*

- 1a: Family reunion (as soon as possible family reunion is important and also tackles the problem of inactivity. People have to do something daily).
- 1a: Activate in open settings from day one and prolonged stay on one place. Only then you can create a safe environment to treat healthcare problems of refugees. In Utrecht we have the idea to combine a healthcare centre and housing people in the same building.

Mixing migrants and local people. Hereby they can talk with each other. Making people live in a healthy (read: social) environment, can be partly a replacement of PTST procurement.

- 1a: There is a need to develop standard variables to assess the health condition of migrants and to assess the standard of the health care (system). It is better to send a dentist to a place and cure a lot of people in once instead of sending people individually to a dentist (as done in Ghent). In Ghent programmes for traumas are set up. Same problem as mentioned before. You can start 'curing' traumas but the uncertainty if the migrant is staying is big.
- 1a: Health insurance on submitting refugee application.
- 1a: Come up with refugee profiles on the basis of length of stay (or other variable) provide treatment on the basis of those measures.
- 1a: EU regulation should have high standards to treat refugees in time (no 'delay-policies').
- 1b: Change (reception) directives/ legislation. Including minimum standards in reception and antidiscrimination.
- 1b: Same treatment Asylum Seekers Centre and Dutch People: quick and adequate.

3) Better knowledge exchange

- 1a: Not always treatment of PTSS but post traumatic growth in healthy environment and continuing narrative. PTST is biggest problem. You have to resolve that personally. You can do that best in your native language. It is difficult to do that in another language. It is hard to find the doctors e.g. who can work in the native language of the migrants.
- 1a: Refugees don't know about health care system (it is complicated, difficult to understand).
- 1a: Difference for asylum seekers with residence status, the type of health care differs per 'status' you have in the Netherlands. It is very difficult to get to know these different types of health care systems per status. For example they do not know if they will have to go to a 'normal' doctor or to a hospital. A chain-approach is really important, because all the actors need to be able to work in the right way and to know what to do when confronted with a (health) problem of the migrant. The actors themselves need to know e.g. if they will have to go to the doctor or to another medical professor.
- 1d: Mutual problems: "wise not crazy" (taboo), we need to know somebody before to talking about these things.
- 1d: Exchange best practices including cost-benefit analysis (long term). There should be an exchange of best practices. When you do so, you should include Cost-Benefit analysis.

Send numbers and results along when exchanging knowledge. Especially to be able to show if it is better to treat now, or if it is more expensive to treat later.

- 1d: Improve cultural sensitivity, no go issues, family traumas.
- 1d: Recruit health workers among refugees to solve language/cultural barriers.

4) Other;

- Extra input: Facebook Page: Syrians healthy. This page is both in Dutch and in Arabic. Each week an online topic is published where people can comment on. For example: "Dentist appointments in The Netherlands". The questions are answered by Syrians. The Facebook Page is facilitated by Pharos.

Workshop 2 Reception – Health Care

1) *Better funding*

- 1c: Funding: problem is that activities are funded by NGOs (fragmented funding). Solution: funding by government.
- 1c/d: Funding of more in depth research
- 1c/d: Mental health service available in collective reception centres, funded by government (no project funding – GAPS).

2) *Better regulation*

- 1c: Make health care as much of an integration priority as housing and language.
- 1d: Decrease barriers to access health care, e.g. by: being more culturally aware, preventive measures get refugees in touch with health care professionals.
- Better identification of vulnerabilities and barriers to access.
- Screening wishes!

3) *Better knowledge exchange*

- 1a: Better communication and information provision for refugees.
- 1a: Inform refugees after arrival at the asylum centres about their rights and possibilities regarding health care and inform them about the Dutch system.
- 1a: Setting up health systems at the asylum so refugees have a place where they would go with questions or health problems.
- 1d: Training and exchange network program for medical staff working with refugees and asylum seekers in EU.
- 1d: Training both for medical health and mental health: intercultural competences.
- Rephrase health care as humanitarian need.
- 1d: Medical staff with cultural background.
- 1d: Health care 'buddy' coupled with refugee at asylum standard procedure.

- 1d: Interpreters / translators / cultural mediators must be sufficient.
- 1d: Mental health care is not always accepted in cultures where refugees come from, therefor self-help groups or conversation groups could function as prevention measures with standby.
- 1d: Cooperation between professional organisations and grass-roots organisations.
- 1d: Database for refugees.
- 1d: Database: who is expert for which disease / trauma (EU and UN level)?
- 1d: There is an EU network of psychologists (EEPA) who work on intercultural therapy and human rights in therapy. They can be linked to practitioners on the ground and provide trainings.

4) Other

- Health guideline list

Workshop 3 Reception – Heath Care

1) Better funding

- 1a: Reach reception: centre with medical health, psychological support from day one (not after refugee status).
- Mobilise retired doctors as volunteers.
- 1b: Funding to municipalities for humanitarian emergencies (medical).
- 1b: Increase minimum and funding standards, because it is a certainty that many people are traumatised.

2) Better regulation

- 1a: Make medical assistance available for all, no matter the status.
- 1a: Task force creation for emergency.
- Revision of the EU reception directive: provision for health care support from day one.

3) Better knowledge exchange

- Publish EASO report that compares reception conditions in EU countries.
- Mapping different practices at city level: e.g. health card for asylum seekers (Germany), volunteer doctors / social pharmacy, involvement of NGO, COOP and health providers.
- 1a: Early identification / recognition of traumatised and vulnerable groups.
- 1a: Passive vs. active medical support (provide opportunity to practice sport activity, e.g. URBACT network vital cities).
- 1d: Knowledge exchange from Southern countries with experience in reception.
- 1d: Sharing of knowledge and improving exchange by training, work schooling being focused on the learning of cultural sensitives, language and communication.

- 1d: Knowledge exchange network.
- 1d: Carry out quantitative research (EU wide) on new, short-term trauma therapy to determine effectiveness for refugees.
- 1d: Using knowledge of refugees themselves.
- 1d: Screening different needs, sickness, and age.

Workshop 4 Reception –Health Care

1) Better Funding

- 1c: Increase ESF funding to medical systems.
- 1c: More funding national health system (HR resources and organisation).
- 1d: Training non-medical social workers to recognize signals of diseases and/or psychological problems on time so they can connect them to health care.
- 1d: Advisory council that provides training for reception services staff members with regard to provision of health care.

2) Better regulation

- Integrated services within the reception services.
- EU to take into consideration cities when attending EU reception directive recast.
- 1a/1b: Get refugees/migrants a health insurance.
- 1b: Define higher minimum standards at EU level for health support to asylum seekers.
- 1b: Change the regulation before status recognition.

3) Better knowledge exchange

- 1a: Use the refugee capacity for help.
- 1a/d: Involve asylum seekers in provision of health care services (support cultural knowledge translation)
- 1a/1d: Use expertise from refugees with a medical degree in practices/shelter to recognise and translate the problem. This can be an internship for the refugee who used to be a doctor in his/her country but his/her degree doesn't get recognised.
- 1d: Training doctors, specialists and psychologists to recognise specific refugee problems and how to tackle them: training by funding and training at European network.
- 1d: Facilitate coaching to overcome traumas with the help of experts in the countries of origin via skype.
- 1d: Language skills for medical personnel of the host country.
- 1d: Continue the education of migrants with a medical profession.
- 1d: Train doctors to care for refugees with other cultural ideas about health and illness.

Extra bottleneck (proposed by participant City of Gent): how to convince local people that refugees that are coming need help and that is interesting and valuable to empower them within society.

Workshop 1 Reception – Early integration

1) Better funding

- 2b: Lack of financing, not funding! Offer financing by use of loans combined with AMIF Grant money.
- 2b: Direct funding of all EU Funds to local level and AMIF/ESF can only be granted if local government is involved in the project e.g. urban innovative action.
- 2b: Directly funded by innovative EU funds.
- 2b: European funding (like ESF) should be easier and friendlier to use, less bureaucratic, bottom-up stimulation.
- 2b: Ease the admin burden of EU funding: more moves, more focus.
- Financial incentives to local SMEs to employ refugees (special work permit?).

2) Better regulation

- EU regulation overrules Dutch Rule.
- Don't shift people from one camp to another camp, they can't start anything.
- Invest in English courses in all reception centres.
- Reception agency makes a labour market profile at day one of providing permit.
- 2a: Status: Dutch class. No status: culture, values, habits, English.
- 2a: Most refugees are accepted in the end, so why must we waste so much time.
- 2a: Start teaching them our values and our language. The reception directive should change to make integration on day one possible. The refugees should get an incentive to start integrating.
- 2a: Not waste time and money but help to stop radicalism from inside refugees centre.
- 2a: Asylum procedures should have a limited duration otherwise recognition.
- 2a: Integration from day one by skilled volunteers and professionals or neighbourhood support measures.
- 2b: All countries pay for refugees, countries that house refugees should get this money.
- 2b: 10% more money for early integration measures under AMIF.

3) Better knowledge exchange

- 2b: Facilitating, clustering, and cooperating of NGOs to react to grants (more volume, 1 tire monitoring and accounting).
- 2c: Centre for hospitality of refugees and support to unaccompanied minors, minors stay at the same place (Italy).

- 2c: Cooperation with municipalities, NGOs and local associations to support migrant and refugees (Portugal). There are no reception centres, but around sixty local centres to support refugees, founded on a partnership between municipalities and NGOs. Remarkable is that arriving refugees are entitled to housing.
- 2c: Creating European and national platform to push exchange of local practices.
- 2c: Give research institute as independent monitoring agency access to best practices.
- 2c: Exchange experiences between cities: community building, education problems, integration supporting infrastructure.
- 2c: Share knowledge through Eurocities and universities (knowledge platforms).
- 2c: Accommodation bodies should have stronger link to integration bodies (have a coordinator for all stakeholders). These are two difficult organisations with their own responsibilities.
- 2c: Make data open access to researchers: High commission on migration has an observatory in close cooperation with university on comparing of public policies and have a lot of access to data. It is independent from the high commission. There could be cooperation between these kinds of national observatories for the exchange of knowledge.
- 2c: Exchange of experiences between cities about community building. The neighbourhood is important to communicate with especially regarding integration. There must be 'infrastructure' to connect to the neighbourhood. Every Member State has to pay for the integration. Also the countries that do not shelter refugees. So make this 'service' commonly paid by the Member States. Make a budget for every refugee who has to be integrated.

4) Other:

- Living together in centres with refugees and local people.
- Learning together improves inclusiveness. E.g. English and entrepreneurship.

Workshop 2 Reception – Early Integration

1) Better funding

- Shorten the application process.
- Financial sanction to non-cooperative.
- 2a: partial fund programs to support running language and education programmes.
- 2b: More lenient criteria.
- 2b: Better promotion of funding opportunities.
- 2b: Easier bureaucratic process could improve digitalisation justification during the whole project.

- 2b: Creating specific fund for cities.
- 2b: Creating specific fund for NGOs.
- 2b: Make reporting easier. Reporting (funding) is incredible difficult. So: better systems/assistance.
- 2b: Access to funding must be less complex for NGOs and civil society, less bureaucracy, trust is important.
- 2c: Use of adequate experts who have to evaluate the funding proposals and sufficient timeframe.
- 2c: More funding in the frame of: AMIF, ESF, innovative actions.

2) *Better regulation*

- EU directive clear definition of early integration: political resistance.

3) *Better knowledge exchange*

- EU database: academic and EU-administration, but not acceptable local worker per member state translated bottom up (for example VNG project for refugees).
- 2a: Contact between civil society groups and state-organised reception and NGOs so that reception centres allow civic society inside.
- 2c: Mapping of EU projects of socially innovative projects: often small and fringe.
- 2c: Criteria for social innovation projects and research.
- 2c: City peer groups: city-to-city exchange of knowhow.
- 2c: Exchanging successful experiences programmes: Video, booklets, database etc.

Workshop 3 Reception – Early integration

1) *Better Funding*

- 2a: Invest in everyone who arrives in a country: an investment that will pay itself back later.
- 2a: Emergency funds for cities to apply to instead of national governments.
- 2b: Money for civil society provided by municipality.
- 2b: Member states take responsibility flexible funding for little.
- 2b: Give funding opportunities to civil society organisation through municipalities (cooperation) co-funding.

2) *Better regulation*

- EU support for fast asylum decisions (emergency deployment team).
- 2a: Make early integration into law, so that countries are obliged to start on day one.
- 2a: Create an introduction or welcome programme that involves locals and migrant communities.

- 2a: Dine with the neighbourhood and empower people from day one.
 - o We host a network dinner for newcomers in Amsterdam (Pakhuis de Zwijger) monthly. For this, we have to reach refugees and invite them. We need funding for that. We had a lot of difficulties to reach refugees who are in asylum centres. It is easier in the emergency asylum centres. But within the centres of COA it is much more difficult; they are not such an open organization. About money, it is a city question. The city should divide the money because they are better equipped to choose between (local) initiatives.
- 2b: Fast track procedure to apply for AmiF, ESF funds in order to react quickly on high refugee influx.

3) *Better knowledge exchange*

- 2a: Underline the importance of early integration to EU.
- 2a: Open up reception centres to give room to civil society.
- 2c: Responsibility from member states → knowledge.
- 2c: Solidarity cities network.
- 2c: Exchanges to learn from the past 60 years of integration.
 - o We have had 60 years of integration in EU. Last year people started to say. Oh it is new. This 'surprise' might be solved with a more structured administration. Find out why Turkish women do not attend languages courses. Now again, people wonder why Syrian women do not go to languages courses. They found out that the husbands did not want to send their wives to class in evenings where other men attend class. So the city of Köln started languages courses during school hours for women only. That helped.
- 2c: URBACT method for cities exchange for peer to peer learning.
- 2c: providing information on initiatives that are in EU platform: newsletter.
- Research on results!

Workshop 4 Reception – Early integration

1) *Better funding*

- Include early integration in recast of directive to ensure eligibility for funding.
- 2a: Capacity building at early integration stage as form of development aid: capacity can be used in home country as well when applicant is sent back.
- 2b: Direct funding of opportunities! For Syrians with manifest challenges.
- 2b: Funding innovative ideas vs. building on tested practices.

2) *Better Regulation*

- 2a: Integration courses open (also) to asylum seekers.

- 2a: One shop stop: all integration companies (work, health, administration, houses, etc.) in one physical building with translators so it is clear where to go. From there on they have access to a holistic approach.
- Buddy system (volunteers) exchange and set up between cities and countries.
- Avoid disincentives to find employment (e.g. loss of benefits).
- Development of smaller reception centres in cities.
- Improve infrastructure possibilities to reach cities. For example: free public transport for the weekend, or providing shared cars they may borrow.
- Provide early integration from the start to those with high perspective to attain asylum
- Individual screening on day one focussing on: skills, perspective to attain asylum and initial reception needs.
- Combine language with jobs skills development.
- Internship: opportunity for refugees to observe/train professional situations adapted to their former activities.
- Speed up relocation process.
- Meeting programmes to involve (national) citizens in reception integration as a two-way process.
- Connect local community with refugees. Take your local responsibility. Make a place for it.

3) *Better Knowledge Exchange*

- 2c: Get to know the refugees as soon as possible.
- 2c: Improve language skills with training.
- 2c: One app for newcomers: one portal for all integration info: bank id, Q&A, one EU app (or worldwide) and choosing country or city.
- 2c: Better use of digital technologies to learn language and culture: app, games, social media.
- 2c: Dispatch experience from successful project, cases or stories to other regions, cities and countries.
- 2c: Involve local partners in the value conveyance.
- 2c: Partnerships of NGOs at EU level to learn from each other.