

Report on the Working Conference on Work & Education of Migrants and Refugees

Urban Agenda for the EU

2017

Berlin

**February
16th and 17th**

Organised by the Cities of Amsterdam and Berlin
for the Partnership on Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees

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 per cent 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 Work and Education of migrants and refugees was organised by [the Partnership for the Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees](#) of the Urban Agenda for the EU and the City of Amsterdam and the City of Berlin as members of the Partnership. It aimed to find solutions

to the problems established in the Scoping Papers written by [the Migration Policy Institute Europe](#). 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. 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.

¹The aim of the Working Conference on Work and Education for Migrants and Refugees was to propose solutions for the bottleneck in the field of employment and education for migrants and refugees. Problems in these areas are critical obstacles for the integration of migrants and refugees into society. Access to the labour market and access to appropriate education are vital: firstly, quick access to work is important for the development of autonomy. Secondly, providing the right education on individual basis to refugees - from children to adults - creates a command of the language and an understanding of the new society that migrants and refugees find themselves in. It further generates the necessary knowledge and skills to integrate in the labour market on a equal footing with nationals. The solutions proposed during the conference also specifically targeted the 3 areas where changes can have a significant impact: knowledge exchange, funding and regulation. The results of the working conference set out in the next pages are organised 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 work or education. 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.

¹ Figure made by piktochart.com

BOTTLENECKS FOR CITIES REGARDING WORK & EDUCATION

Based on the scoping papers authored by the Migration Policy Institute Europe, the Partnership on Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees has selected a number of bottlenecks. The working conference was centred on 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 find the bottlenecks as presented during the workshops.

DESCRIPTION OF BOTTLENECKS WORK

LABOUR MARKET I

Subtopic: Employer engagement

This section will discuss the potential for the European level to help deal with employer engagement bottlenecks. Specifically analyse the current blockages in the EU to municipal pipeline in addressing the labour market insertion of migrants and refugees, namely in relation to funding, knowledge sharing, and policy influence.

- a. Foreign-acquired qualifications and skills assessment and navigating complex rules. Experiences at the local level have shown that engaging with Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs) is particularly valuable for improving the labour market integration of migrants and refugees. SMEs constitute the bulk of Europe's economy, but these are also the firms which face greater recruitment difficulties—let alone in the case of foreign workers' recruitment. Obstacles include navigating complex immigration and labour legislation, reaching out to migrants with the skills they are looking for and understanding the value of foreign-acquired qualifications and skills. These obstacles can prove insurmountable barriers for many small firms without dedicated human resources departments or experience in hiring foreigners.
- b. Funding and capacity constraints. Existing employer support programmes for immigrant recruitment (into actual jobs or vocational training) implemented at the local level have shown greater results with SMEs, including with regards to the retention of the trainees or temporary workers into employment. Yet many such programmes have

suffered from funding and capacity constraints, which have limited their sustainability and scalability beyond the pilot phase. Moreover, the distribution of such programmes across European cities has been uneven, reflecting the varying strength of local ecosystems and labour markets—with cities in crisis-hit countries typically lacking funds to implement such programmes—. This further illustrates the different level of organization of SMEs into representative confederations, as well as the difficulties cities that are relatively new to immigrant and refugee inflows, have in acquiring the knowledge and support needed to start implementing sound programmes.

- c. Lack of knowledge sharing. Local authorities often have a clear understanding of the regulatory difficulties and diversity issues that limit the capacity of SMEs to fill their labour shortages by recruiting migrants, and refugees in particular. However, this knowledge is often not widely distributed and leveraged, and therefore the unique understanding of local ecosystems is not fully benefitted from. In addition, this limited knowledge sharing hinders public-private cooperation on labour market integration. The difficulty coordinating between relevant stakeholders may also limit opportunities for cities to invest cost-efficiently in the labour market integration of migrants and refugees.

LABOUR MARKET II

Subtopic: Migrant entrepreneurship

This section will evaluate the potential for the European level to help cities releasing migrant entrepreneurship integration potential. Specifically, analyse the current blockages in the EU to municipal pipeline in responding to the facilitation of this alternative pathway into economic activity, namely in relation to funding, knowledge sharing, and policy influence.

- a. Tackling immigrant-specific barriers. Cities have traditionally been the key laboratory where migrant entrepreneurship support programmes have been piloted. They aim to help newly arrived as well as settled migrants overcome the various barriers that they face to start and manage a business in their host locality. These barriers may include limited professional networks, lack of familiarity with administrative and legal requirements to start a business in the host country, and difficulties securing funding—notably linked to a lack of credit history or secure legal status. Opportunities to start a business may be further constrained for migrants and refugees by legal restrictions on their ability to establish and administer businesses.

- b. Funding constraints. The wide array of programmes designed over the past decade to help migrants set up their own businesses can benefit also newly-arrived refugees, provided that they are accessible by this subgroup. Such programmes may offer services such as mentoring, professional networking, and information sessions on designing a business plan or securing funding. Migrant entrepreneurship training and support programmes have been launched in some cities; yet, many have remained small scale. Often cities and local authorities face funding constraints hindering them to support these programmes beyond the pilot phase. Furthermore, cities that are new destinations for migrants or refugees may struggle to navigate EU funding application processes without guidance on which funds to apply for and how to best leverage resources to do so. Finally, some of the most innovative initiatives to support migrant entrepreneurship are implemented independently by civil society actors, suggesting that cities need not start from scratch, but ought to think carefully about how they can best support these programmes.

- c. Lack of concrete stock of best practices. There is currently a lack of capacity for cities which are new to immigration or refugee flows and/or to diversity entrepreneurship support to concretely take stock of best practices piloted elsewhere. . Beyond its recent activism in identifying, mapping and disseminating best practices in this area, the EU does not yet provide concrete support to local authorities and stakeholders. Innovative knowledge exchange mechanisms, such as city-to-city mentoring exist but often they hinder “peripheral” cities to implement migrant entrepreneurship support initiatives in a cost-effective fashion. In this respect, it is required to find a way to sustain and scale up best practices in this area.

DESCRIPTION OF BOTTLENECKS EDUCATION

EDUCATION I

Subtopic: Changes in demand

This workshop will evaluate the potential for the European level to help deal with challenges related to adapting to changes in the demand for education for migrants and refugees. Specifically analyse the current blockages linked to EU regulation, funding and policy to respond to rapid population changes at the municipal level.

- a. Difficulty finding places for large numbers of inflows. Unpredictable changes in the influxes of migrants and refugees (for instance, as a result of the establishment of a new reception centre) can make it difficult for localities and schools to adapt quickly enough to the needs of new arrivals. As large numbers of new students enroll in schools, physical premises often need to be renovated, expanded, or otherwise modified to prevent overcrowding. Furthermore, local authorities are often subjected to restrictive requirements to place children in schools within a short period of time, placing them under a huge amount of pressure. For adults large numbers also make it more difficult to meet demand for language classes and vocational training.
- b. Funding gaps. The scale of the migration inflows has forced municipalities to play a significant role in the initial reception and integration of newcomers, even in areas where they lack a legal mandate. In many cases, this has involved bridging funding gaps. The timing of budgetary planning decisions can also create problems. Localities (or schools) must present plans to funding authorities months to years in advance, which can hinder local efforts to adapt rapidly to unanticipated population changes. Moreover, in many countries these short-term funding gaps arrive on the back of year-on-year austerity cuts that have required local authorities to do more with less.
- c. Strained knowledge flow. Platforms for sharing best practices that meet the rising demand often operate at a superficial level, giving local governments the chance to share small-scale innovations, while refraining from expanding to a deeper level of knowledge sharing and policy making. Decisions in the areas of curricula, teaching standards, and workforce training and development are generally set at the national or regional level. However, for municipalities to respond adequately to their local context, it is essential that best practices are widely disseminated across and within Member States and between all levels of government. Scaling up successful approaches can also be a challenge.
- d. Unaccompanied minors. Unaccompanied minors (UAMs) create particular challenges for localities, since municipalities may be under a responsibility to register them for school, but reception systems in countries with particularly high inflows of unaccompanied minors can be overwhelmed, with minimal foster places available. As a result, UAMs often live in large facilities with few support structures, with limited supervision and support. When coupled with long processing times and other assessments (such as age assessments), these obstacles can hinder the support they receive to successfully participate into education, as well as delay access to education indefinitely.

EDUCATION II

Subtopic: Facilitation of integrated service needs

This section will evaluate the potential for the European level to help deal with bottlenecks related to the facilitation of integrated services. Specifically, we will analyse current blockages in the EU to municipal pipeline in responding to the need for integrated services, namely in relation to funding, knowledge sharing, and policy influence.

- a. ECEC accessibility and appropriateness. Most cities have some responsibility for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) programmes that are critical to the future educational success of young arrivals, as attendance from an early stage can support social integration and language learning. Across the EU, ECEC is divided in two cycles, the first being for children of 0 and 3 years old, and the second for children between 4 and 6 years old. However, the first cycle of ECEC is sometimes not considered to be part of the education system and is rarely compulsory. Children from ethnic minority and low-income families are often registered at lower levels than their peers, and often in programmes of lower quality.
- b. Funding difficulties. Some of the most effective efforts at the city level are in blending different services, for instance through whole-place and multigenerational approaches. These services do not easily lend themselves to traditional funding streams, which tend to fall into policy siloes. Multiagency services that offer a combination of services (such as language and skills training, and mental health services) may face challenges in attracting and maintaining funding, particularly when funding for ECEC and adult language learning comes from two different sources. Also, it may be complicated for new programs to draw from more than one funding source if the children they serve do not share the same immigration status as their parents.
- c. Suboptimal evaluation. Granular, up-to-date data on local populations is essential to good planning for everything from budgetary decisions to targeted policy interventions. It is also important to create a more rigorous culture of evaluation, where policy interventions are analysed through high quality methods such as randomized controlled trials or quasi-experimental studies. However, local actors often do not have the resources to conduct such evaluations. Cities are often sitting on high quality data on the distribution of immigrant populations—or are best placed to collect it—but lack the incentive or tools to share it.

- d. Lack of knowledge exchange. Sharing platforms are excellent vehicles to discuss what works in education, and to guide others newer to these issues. Municipalities maybe best placed as the focal point of data collecting and sharing efforts. However, European level programmes to establish practice guidelines are often directed at actors either above or below municipal level. Thus currently, collecting input from cities is not fully institutionalized, hindering valuable contribution to EU-level processes, such as the European Semester.

RESULTS

Below are the main findings from our second working conference. We are especially thankful towards all participants for their input during the conference and to the Migration Policy Institute Europe for helping defining the scope of the conference. 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 work or education, or both. Actions are considered more attainable and pertinent than recommendations. Please see the conference minutes (Annex I) for a more complete report of the proposed solutions per workshop.

Please note that the actions mentioned in this report are not automatically endorsed by the Partnership on the Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees of the Urban Agenda for the EU. This report will serve as input for the Action Plan of the Partnership.

Chapter 1: EU FUNDING

Action 1: WORK

Make better use of the EIF/EaSI microfinancing instrument

Focus:

The distribution of microfinance can help newcomers overcome immigrant-specific barriers to entrepreneurship (many refugees experience difficulties with securing funding notably linked to a lack of credit history).

Method:

It is suggested that cities and public authorities promote the use of the European Investment Fund (EIF) microfinancing possibilities. Microfinance consists mainly of loans less than EUR 25,000 for people who face difficulties in accessing traditional banking services. Under the European Commission's Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI), EIF has been

entrusted by the European Commission to manage the EaSI guarantee instrument, which aims to increase access to finance for (amongst others) vulnerable groups. EIF does not provide financing directly to micro-entrepreneurs. Through the EaSI Guarantee Instrument, the EIF offers guarantees and counter-guarantees to financial intermediaries, thereby providing them with a partial credit risk protection for newly originated loans to eligible beneficiaries. Intermediaries are selected after an application under a call for expression of interest followed by a due diligence process. Once selected by EIF, these partners act as EaSI financial intermediaries, and start originating loans to eligible beneficiaries within the agreed availability period.

Thanks to the risk-sharing mechanism between the financial intermediaries and the European Commission, the EaSI Guarantee Instrument enables selected microcredit providers to expand their outreach to underserved microentrepreneurs.

Goal:

Facilitate entrepreneurship in order to support refugees to become part of the economic system, and give them access to the labour market as soon as possible. Throughout the EU 99 per cent of all start-ups are micro- or small enterprises, and one third of those are launched by unemployed people. By making better use of the funding scheme the access to finance for vulnerable groups wishing to launch their own enterprises, micro-enterprises can be increased, both in their start-up and development phases.

Action 2: EDUCATION

Combine different streams of funding/financing for integrated services

Focus:

When it comes to finding proper education for refugees, the integration of services (e.g. family centres with kindergartens, language classes and orientation support) proves very successful. Newcomers and families generally lack orientation in their new living environment and they have to co-ordinate several needs. By offering support for both parents and their children in one place, these services become accessible to them. However, funding for such integrated services is difficult to obtain.

Method:

It is suggested to combine different kinds of funding streams for setting up integrated service centres. For example, EIB loans can be used to finance infrastructural investments such as the building and technical equipment. This can be combined with an EU programme supporting at least the beginning of the operational costs. These funding opportunities can be part of an incentive package to start integrated services. To ensure more sustainable financing, private funding (or from regional/national banks) can then offer further support to the (special) needs of migrants and refugees. An advantage of involving different actors is that being part of a larger scheme makes it more attractive to commit to a project with regards to risk sharing.

Goal:

Combine services *and* funding for a more holistic and innovative approach. By overcoming funding rigidities, as funds are sometimes constrained within the boundaries of different policy siloes, educational support can become more efficient.

Action 3: WORK/EDUCATION

Provide cities and local authorities with direct access to funding

Focus:

Cities and local authorities are at the forefront when it comes to the inclusion of migrants and refugees. Currently, there seems to be a large distance between where practical action takes place and the distribution/management of funding. In order to implement the most effective policies for the inclusion of refugees and migrants (e.g. proper education and access to the labour market) cities should have direct access to funding.

Method:

It is suggested to make part of the AMIF fund resources directly available to cities in relation to expenditures concerning refugee inclusion. At present, AMIF funding is mostly channelled through central governments. An opportunity for more direct access by cities 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 integration of refugees (e.g. provide adequate education, training and access to the labour market) by making efficient use of funding and keeping the lines of communication short.

Other recommendations

Recommendation 1: EDUCATION

EU Funding directly to schools

Focus: Sometimes schools work like commercial companies; the number of students that obtain their diploma gains financial benefits. However, this is counterproductive with regard to refugees.

Method: EU funding should go to schools without complicated requirements to apply for funds. Only schools with enough time and knowledge get funding. The European Commission should give a clear outline about what is expected and what indicators should be used.

Goal: To provide refugees and migrants equal access to education.

Recommendation 2: WORK/EDUCATION

Making longer funding periods to gain better results

Focus: There is a general need for longer funding periods in order to get projects rooted and start-up issues tackled. Additional funding might demand innovation, while actually continuity is needed.

Method: Having additional funding pools to continue successful projects. In addition, a European council composed of a diverse group of stakeholder/pundits should examine projects and decide

whether funding should go on after the ending of the funding programme.

Goal: Avoid 'pilot and crash' due to a lack of continuous/structural funding.

Recommendation 3: WORK/EDUCATION

Funding for integration projects that include also refugees in the implementation of the projects and not only as beneficiaries

Focus: The dominant discourse focuses very much on projects 'for' refugees instead of 'with' refugees. As a result, the opportunity to actually involve and include refugees is often missed.

Method: Organise capacity building for civil servants and implementing bodies to promote inclusion of refugees in the design, implementation, and evaluation of projects. Use the ex-ante conditions in the structural funds to promote this more generally.

Goal: To include refugees as much as possible, advancing their skills development and integration into the host society. Active participation gives a sense of purpose and stimulates the feeling of self-worth. In addition, including the voice and experiences of migrants and refugees is key to improve the quality and effectiveness of integration projects.

Chapter 2: EU LEGISLATION

Action 1: EDUCATION

Set minimum conditions to protect Unaccompanied Minors (UAMs)

Focus:

Unaccompanied Minors (UAMs) often face several unique challenges, such as unstable living conditions, complex psychological and protection needs, and difficulties finding schools that will enroll them. Guardianship frameworks are often faced with backlogs and differ between Member States. There is a need for recognition of practical barriers for minors to receive basic protection, get access to proper education and housing, as well as to participate in the social/cultural public life of the city. It is also important to engage in the legal process (which can be intrusive).

Method:

The EU could streamline the different guardianship frameworks across Member States. Regulation should make sure that the guardianship framework is professionalized and that all guardians receive EU remuneration. A standard legislative framework with minimum conditions for the provision of basic needs for UAMs should be further developed. Such minimum conditions could be that (migration trained) interpreters are ensured when guardians and UAMs don't speak the same language; that the child receives the necessary and medical and psychological care; that the age assessment process is conducted quickly and does not lead to disrupted support; that school enrolment happens within two months after arrival; and that basic support is provided concerning the legal aspects of the determination process. The best interest of the child should be reflected in the minimum standards and a primary consideration in all actions concerning UAMs.

Goal:

A minimum conditions framework should warrant basic care and protection for all UAMs across Member States. These minimum conditions should guarantee that the needs and gaps faced by UAMs are reflected and covered in legislation (follow up: take into account related proposals currently debated in EP).

Action 2: WORK /EDUCATION**Temporary derogation from the internal market rules on public procurement****Focus:**

Member States and local authorities have to satisfy the most immediate needs of asylum seekers for education and access to the labour market. The Communication from the European Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on Public Procurement rules in connection with the current asylum crisis (COM2015) provides guidance for national, regional and local authorities to ensure that they understand and comply with EU law when procuring these services.

Method:

With regard to the current asylum crisis, the Communication offers an overview of the public procurement possibilities for national authorities under the existing EU rules. Notably, the current Public Procurement Directive allows for an “accelerated restricted procedure” in cases of urgency, and a negotiated procedure without prior publication in exceptional cases of extreme urgency. Moreover, the Public Procurement Directive 2014/24/EU also provides for an “accelerated open procedure”. All these existing provisions make it possible to award contracts quickly to address asylum seekers' urgent needs. A further stretching and/or promotion of this derogation would be required to enable cities to actively deal with private sector actors in/from local neighbourhoods when it comes to the provision of education services and providing access to the labour market. Clearly, close monitoring is required, and the specific objectives of the project should be clarified beforehand.

Goal:

Case by case derogation from the internal market rules on public procurement can advance (local) authorities to respond adequately to the needs that are specific to the education and employment of migrants and refugees.

Other recommendations**Recommendation 1: WORK/EDUCATION****The inclusion of more diverse stakeholders**

Focus: Legislation is often largely determined top-down, with little previous consultation of other stakeholders and the target group.

Method: Institutionalize more diverse stakeholder involvement in new policy formulation (e.g. migrants and refugees, civil society, third countries, researchers etc.).

Goal: make policies as comprehensive as possible, taking into account all the relevant perspectives.

Chapter 3: KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

Action 1: WORK

Develop an EU tool to support and sustain employer engagement

Focus:

Cooperation between (local) authorities and companies is beneficial to the integration of migrants and refugees in the labour market. Currently, a lack of knowledge about different rules and regulations, complex processes of skills assessment and qualification recognition, and a lack of awareness of existing support services, may hinder cooperation.

Method:

An EU tool should help support and sustain employer engagement. The tool should be accessible for refugees and migrants, companies (SMEs), employer organisations, trade unions, and public authorities and would take the form of an online repository that consists of several elements. First, it could provide an overview of the current migration and asylum regulations concerning labour market access and residence rights of refugees and migrants in each Member State. Second, it should include an online competence card designed at EU level to help companies assess the skills of migrants and refugees. It is suggested to involve different companies and chambers of commerce in this process. It is not necessary to create new structures; the tool could present an inventory of existing instruments for skills assessment (e.g. EURES, ESCO) and suggest how to adapt them to the specific situation of refugees. Optionally, this tool could allow migrants and refugees to upload their resumes in order to match them with employers in the region. It could also offer online support to create a standard resume similar to Europass. The use of anonymous profiles can be considered (suggested follow up: check Skill Profiling Tool already under development).

Goal:

This tool would help to connect migrants and refugees to employers and vice versa, while taking into account the existing rules and regulations. Access to the labour market is accelerated and the competence card helps to establish a better fit between the relevant parties. The stock of initiatives helps to distinguish best practices, while the overview of different support programmes may help actors and services make headway (suggested follow up: check existing apps; make link

with European Social Innovation Competition).

Action 2: WORK/EDUCATION

Establish an academy for practitioners on integration

Focus:

Many practitioners seek the most efficient and effective way to carry out their work. In this respect, one can learn from the experiences from other actors: what worked well and what did not? In addition, the scientific community can help practitioners with the formulation of evidence-based policies and approaches.

Method:

It is suggested to establish an offline academy for practitioners (e.g. policy makers, but also teachers and vocational trainers, migrant counselors, employment services) offering courses related to the inclusion of migrants and refugees in general, and the issues of work and education in specific. Different kinds of modules should be available, such as short intensive courses (SICs), summer/winter schools, and semester courses. Courses are taught by renowned experts/scientists in the field and tailor-made to the educational needs of practitioners in the field. Applicants should be able to apply for (EU) funding. In addition, the academy could organise and/or support exchanges between practitioners as a sort of Erasmus programme (see also recommendation 2).

Goal:

An academy for practitioners should improve the transferability of knowledge; not only do participants learn from the course contents, but the academy also brings together those working in the same field. Furthermore, public authorities can use the knowledge exchange in the academy to improve and coordinate its services and activities.

Action 3: WORK/EDUCATION

Co-evaluation by shared ownership

Focus:

It is important to create a rigorous culture of evaluation, whereby all relevant actors are involved. Only by including all perspectives, essential targeted policy interventions can be made.

Method:

It is suggested to implement co-evaluation programmes, with shared ownership as an instrument but also as an objective. For this purpose a panel of migrants and refugees, NGO's and scientists can be established, that monitors the respective project(s)/policies. These actors are taken along for the entire duration of the process, while municipalities (also) organise feedback and feed that bottom up.

Goal:

The evaluation of projects/programme should include all relevant perspectives in order to avoid biased/one-sided outcomes (suggested follow-up: link to 'Pisa for Cities' of the WG Education of EUROCITIES).

Other recommendations

Recommendation 1: WORK**Buddy schemes between retired/older employees/SMEs and migrants/refugees**

Focus: Navigating the labour market can be complex for newly arrived migrants and refugees, which hinders them in finding employment.

Method: A buddy system can provide personal support for migrants and refugees who face challenges with employment. Buddies can offer professional advice and may function as a coach. It is suggested that 'older' migrants from a similar ethnic backgrounds are matched with newly arrived to help understand and bridge potential cultural differences.

Goal: Provide personal support to newly arrived migrants and refugees to accelerate their access

to the labour market and support sustainable employment.

Recommendation 2: EDUCATION

Promotion and support for Erasmus +

Focus: There is a lack of knowledge about the Erasmus + programme, while cities/practitioners are in need of instruments that allow them to gain or share knowledge more easily.

Method: Erasmus + supports actions in the fields of education and training, youth and sport. It has a budget of 14.8 billion EUR for the period 2014-2020. The programme helps European countries to modernise and improve their education and training systems. It provides the opportunity to gain competences and professional development through studies, training, work or volunteering abroad. Research is needed as to why cities/practitioners do not make so much use of this programme. One of the reasons might be that filling out applications takes lot of time and the rate of approval is preventing actors to apply. Therefore, it is suggested to establish an EU training programme to assist and support with applications. In general the EU should aim for more targeted promotion of the programme as well.

Goal: The Erasmus+ knowledge alliances and their Regio Partnerships should be used better and more. The more actors cooperate and share, the better the knowledge input and outcome will be.

Recommendation 3: WORK/EDUCATION

Weed out and/or maintain online project websites/platforms

Focus: Too many project/programme websites and platforms are built without clear maintenance plans. Many websites are outdated or not functioning well.

Method: A special monitoring task force installed at the EU level should weed out all outdated websites, and/or give incentives to update. A clustering of websites may be considered.

Goal: To provide and establish a better overview by removing online 'noise'. Websites should be funded and supported in a sustainable manner.

ANNEX

I : Conference Minutes

Content:

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- Day 1 - Workshop 2 Labour market
 - o Migrant entrepreneurship
- Day 1 - Workshop 3 Education
 - o Changes in demand
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 - o Facilitation of integrated service needs

- Day 2 - Workshop 1 Labour Market
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- Day 2 - Workshop 3 Education
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- Day 2 - Workshop 4 Education
 - o Facilitation of integrated service needs

**Please note that the letters a- d correspond with the bottlenecks discussed during the respective workshops.*

Day 1 – workshop 1

Labour market: Employer engagement

1) Better funding:

- a: Facilitate the access of municipalities to ESF and also facilitate access of SMEs to EU funding to help them in the recruitment of refugees.
- b: EU Funding for Programmes to link business owners and refugees, provide trainings.
- b: Support bilingual vocational training in the home country and the host country language.
- b: We need more long-term EU funding. A framework of two years is not enough to implement structural changes.
- b: Facilitate access to EU funding SMEs and municipalities.

2) Better regulation:

- a: Subsidize companies willing to hire refugees (also better funding).
- a: More flexibility in regulation for hiring refugees to reduce administrative hurdles for SMEs. For example less regulations needed in the work with public employment services.
- a: Reduce red tape for companies.

3) Better knowledge exchange

- a: New job matching app: Winder (work-tinder) where companies can match with refugees and migrants. Refugees can present their skills and companies, publish their needs, and the app would

match them. There could be a unique app at EU level but than with several versions for each country.

- a: Online competence card at European level to help companies to assess the skills of migrants/refugees.
- a: Map with companies with job opportunities to help refugees find the companies and move where there are jobs.
- a: Buddy schemes between retired employees/SME CEOs and refugees/migrants.
- a: Facilitate access to good practices for SMEs, for example in the skills assessment/recognition of qualifications.
- a: Network of bridge builders between SME/Companies and refugees.
- a: Link working with training for example part time working while they attend training.

Objective: to start working and start earning asap.

- a: Increasing awareness of importance of diversity in the workforce.
- a: Using a skills bank in the relocation of refugees. Matching asylum seekers with the skills needed at the local level in the different countries. Skills of the asylum seekers should be assessed already at registration when they arrive and then their skills should be matched with the skills needed in other countries/areas.
- a: Translate ESCO (identifies and categorises skills, competences, qualifications and occupations in a standard way, using standard terminology in all EU languages) also in non-EU language + use the revision of Europass to include more focus on migrants/refugees.
- b: Promote exchange of information between cities for example through exchanges of civil servants between European cities. EU funding would be needed for that.

Day 1 – workshop 2

Labour market: Migrant entrepreneurship

1) Better funding:

- a: improved information provision at a local level; less bureaucratic funding requirements at EU level (reduce red tape) -> support from EU to help them (TA/funding support); cooperation between smaller communities to apply for funds.
- a/b: Targeted funding (not regular channels for all): micro credits at local level.
- a: More EU funding for more individual counselling/mentoring (human contact) from people they trust (ethnic community, or others). Guide people through the process (rather than guideline alone on paper).
- b: Private sector funding/fundraising.
- b: Technical assistance (TA) for financial intermediaries (EU guarantee to cover risk via EIF (900 m Euro) -> channelled via financial intermediaries). Incentivise intermediaries through grant to train/provide TA (it's worth to do it).
- b: Re-allocate grant funding to mechanisms with higher leverage (e.g. micro-credits) (e.g. oK Euro in NL over 3 years for integration, switch part of this to micro-credit).

2) Better regulation:

- b: Alleviate legal constraints to micro-finance in general. E.g. in Germany you need banking license to hand out money (hard to get into micro-finance).
- b: More diverse stakeholder involvement in new policy formulation (migrants, civil society).

3) Better knowledge exchange:

- a: Foster/empower existing communities to help newcomers - (Albanian, Syrian, etc.).
- a: Create/facilitate network of migrant entrepreneurs – be aware of ethnic segregation.
- a: Better promote existing apps in community/network channels (more outreach to promote online info) .
- a: Online platform (e.g. Open Embassy P2P platform (post question and get answers) Yala network NL.

- a: Work-offices (general overview) with dedicated counselling for migrants (mobile offices to go to where migrants live).
- a/b: Set up a platform and network for immigrants with help from 2nd and 3rd generation migrants.
- b: Make the option of micro-financing (<25 k Euro) (not targeted at migrants specifically) better known.
- c: Set up a platform to share stories all over Europe to create a repository of good practices for entrepreneurs.

Day 1 – workshop 3

Education: Changes in demand

1) Better funding:

- a: Offer funding to enable to train up teachers to help municipalities with the strong shortfall. In this respect, focus on training of teachers for German as a second language.
- b: Direct access to funding for humanitarian challenges. For cities that face main challenges, together pilot project with money proportionate to population, and then to have it scale up. This leads to connecting cities with similar problems, having a clear vision of where the pilot project is, and how to scale it (e.g. in Germany)
- c: ESIF, more focused on knowledge exchange
- c: Increase Erasmus+ to support officials who want to go on knowledge exchange.
- c: Providing of interpreters at local level for EU fund interpreters.
- d: Set up guardianship models.
- d: Bridging space between higher educations schools, to enable the space (could be funding and regulation).

2) Better regulation:

- c: Derogation from internal market to enable cities to deal with private sector very active in local neighbourhood, without doing the tender, especially for very specific projects with specific objectives (of course monitored). Context: public procurement = need tender except for very very small projects. But in any case, you never know at the end.
- d: Age assessment and guardianship framework

3) *Better knowledge exchange:*

- a: Better and faster assessment of education needs of refugees, and challenges of doing that given diversity in language abilities and competencies, and then how to match them into the current educational system. Berlin for example had to do this very fast. This knowledge should be distilled into good practices that can be shared.
- c: Creating a web platform where you can have more criteria (problem identification & solutions) so that knowledge exchange can be facilitated better).
- c: How to provide local knowledge from the practice to the policy makers (usually national level)? for this could have a city advisory board, which could inform national government
- c: Have a clear visions/best practices guidelines
- c: Connect cities with similar problems
- d: Migration journeys in Europe, welfare concerns of missing children in Europe

Day 1 – workshop 4

Education: Facilitation of integrated service need

1) Better funding:

- a: transversal funding for education (e.g. like the EU programme to improve education systems and training in 4 fields of action: policy cooperation; language learning, ICT, and dissemination)
- b: Develop language courses for refugees who are working and create a bonus for language schools to offer courses in the evening. EU could create funding models.

- b: Issue of direct funding. Good example of Sweden but too much time between the arrival of target groups and the funding is actually available. Need for an emergency funding. Municipalities should be funded directly.

- b: Simplification of procedures for accessing /administering EU funds.

- b: Longer evaluation period

- b: Risk of demotivation – costly to respond to a call (administrative burden and management).

National authorities have the tendency to have a narrow interpretation of the rules set out at European authorities (e.g. Gent – big discrepancy). Solution: direct funding. AMIF regulation – not compulsory.

- b: Eliminate funding barriers separating age group

- b: Create the possibility of up scaling funds that worked.

2) *Better regulation:*

- a: Changing the testing of the level of refugee. Create 'multicultural' tests to assess capabilities apart from language.

3) *Better knowledge exchange:*

- c: Shared ownership – more exchange between practitioners and refugees.

- c: More qualitative focus instead of quantitative

- c: Evaluation needs to be independent

- c: Evaluation should help project on the long term

- c: Evaluation processes should be used to adjust instead of final judgements.

- c: Lack of direct dialogue between cities and the European institutions. Now too much a top-down approach. We would like to switch to a bottom-up system: Channels of feedbacks from city level to EU institutions. This channel exists though – the European Commission is engaging with cities and is inviting cities to give their inputs. Finally, it is important to know what is happening at the local level.

- d: More exchanges instruments; Involvement of local authorities as experts at EU level.
- d: Simplification privacy regulations
- d: Issue of upscale. No recognition if it works. Need to piloting.
- d: Create think tanks to provide data to learn and find the best solutions.

Day 2 – workshop 1

Labour market: Employer engagement

1) Better funding:

- b: Reduce waiting times for programmes and getting money under ESF
- b: Use public procurement for promoting hiring of migrants and refugees
- b: Better monitoring of how funding are used, to avoid that companies use funding for training but they not offer a quality and sustainable employment.
- b: Funding for integration projects that include also refugees in the implementation of the projects and not only as beneficiaries.

2) Better regulation:

- a: Harmonizing EU guidelines on skills assessment

3) Better knowledge exchange:

- a: Platform matching companies and refugees where refugees can present skills that are not officially recognized but that can be useful for companies
- a: Oslo: training centre for refugees placed in a business centre/shopping mall where small companies are located. Companies support the training and look for possible employees in the training centre. 70% success rate (people finding employment)! The city support its but key is to get employers on board and social entrepreneurs.

- c: Knowledge sharing platform and training for antidiscrimination/diversity in companies (EU funding? EU providing the platform)
- c: Use the Skills Profile Tool currently under development at EU level
- c: Better use data collected by cities on the skills of migrants.
- c: Promote exchanges and partnerships between SMEs and NGOs working with migrants/refugees

Day 2 – workshop 2

Labour market: Migrant entrepreneurship

1) Better funding:

- a/b: EIF – micro finance support to refugees
- a/b: Micro-credits (demand of refugee) rather than grants (respond to needs as formulated by the EU)
- b: Reduce thresholds to EU funding (easier access) – match making between cities
- b: Bonus if you hire refugee (support/refugee) – franchise system, launching customer
- b: Combine different funding streams (national + EU). Blend funding.

2) Better regulation:

- a: Legalise entrepreneurship as early as possible (make it possible to start up a business – EU, national)

3) Better knowledge exchange:

- c: Use existing network better (and merge them) and raise awareness of them;
- c: Connect incubators for regular start-ups with incubators for refugees (coaching/mentoring) – buddy system
- c: Make entrepreneurial support part (business plan, talking to banks etc.) of language training

- c: Early introduction of possibilities on entrepreneurship (incl. local entrepreneurs).
- c: Build on strengths of people (make use of unique expertise/background of entrepreneurs) e.g. let people with Arab background start exporting business to Middle East.
- c: Make local community more aware of refugee entrepreneurs (better reception)

Day 2 – workshop 3

Education: Changes in demand

1) Better funding:

- a: does not need to be always a qualified teacher. Use students to teach languages to refugees, reintegrate retired teachers, volunteers etc. Allow refugees with a teaching degree to teach. EU could stimulate this initiative by funding.
- b: Overview needed of EU funding available
- b: National governments sometimes focus too much, like ESF only on work leaving other important issues behind. Thus, less red tape is required.
- b: Direct funding to cities: UIA. As city you can do things and innovate. Look for links with universities.
- b: More funding directly to schools. Sometimes schools work like commercial companies. Benefits are gained by nr of students getting diplomas. This is contra-productive with regard to refugees.
- d: Post-traumatic stress is an issue for children. Create infrastructure for this upon arrival. Children integrate quickly but the stress stays and can become a problem in future. Education of (EU?) psychologists needed to deal with this as it is hardly addressed at schools.

2) Better regulation:

- a: EU needs to regulate influx. Influx needs to be proportionate to the size of population.

- a: Use own language and culture when there are enough people from a specific country to make it easier to learn and exchange within own language
- a: Newly build schools should be flexible to be used by other services in future. Combine student and refugees housing. Use this as a chance to supply housing for all and integrate people as it helps to accept and integrate in a better and quicker way.
- a: Regulation sometimes blocks initiatives from citizens to take care of refugees. Thus, less regulation.

3) Better knowledge exchange:

- c: instruments that allow cities share knowledge in an easier way. Erasmus+ knowledge alliances and their Regio Partnerships should be used better and more. The more partners you have the better the knowledge input and outcome will be. Research needed as to why cities do not make use of this Erasmus+ programme. One of the reasons might be that filling in applications takes lot of time and the rate of approval is preventing cities to apply.
- c: More sufficient online platforms to be created. Safeguard the Sustainability of projects/networks: good examples might get forgotten if not upgraded or sustained somewhere.
- c: International websites as a start entree (in English) so every refugee in the whole of the EU receives the same information and from there can be redirected to country specific information.
- c: more sharing between teachers, researchers and policy makers. There is little understanding between these actors. Training of teachers on diversity & different cultures so all teachers gain the expertise with regard to migrants.

Day 2 – workshop 4

Education: Facilitation of integrated service needs

1) Better funding:

- b: Private sector could intervene to support the funding offering help for refugees and immigrants.
- b: Offer the help to certain level of education e.g. Erasmus – create opportunities to help funding.
- b: Funding for integrated services with free access for migrants and entering families. Inform the migrants about the volunteer of kindergarten. Facilitate the creation of Mobile offices that inform the refugees on how to enter the labour market for example.
- b: Different mechanisms should be combined e.g. across EU Institutions programmes – could create a programme to incentivise these funding opportunities.
- b: Combining EIB financing for infrastructure investments (e.g. building, technical equipment) with an EU programme supporting at least at the beginning operational costs.

2) Better regulation:

- a: regulation needs to be more sensitive to the wide variation between the MS. EU needs to take into account the differences between Member States when it comes to education and healthcare.
- a: level of bureaucracy at EU level should decrease (less regulation)
- a: Restructure the educational systems so that it allows students (refugees) to be included.
- a: Some test investigation knowledge of migrants and refugees in order to place them in the correct level.

3) Better knowledge exchange:

- a: 'Welcome to work' office (mobile) also use for early childhood education – counselling.
- d: Linking schools in same areas for training and networking with external/community NGOs (QUIMS best practice from SIRIUS network).