

Evaluation Report

URBAN PARTNERSHIP ON THE INCLUSION OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES



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I. Executive Summary

Created in 2016 under the Urban Agenda for the EU, the Urban Partnership on the Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees enabled EU institutions, Member States, and local authorities to develop new forms of direct and proactive multi-level and multi-stakeholder cooperation. Structured peer-to-peer exchange, decentralised dialogue among different European cities and intensive deliberation between Partnership members helped to identify central integration bottlenecks regarding education, housing, labour market, reception and the cross-cutting topic of vulnerability. The Partnership elaborated a work program in the form of an Action Plan covering eight Actions. A special feature of the Urban Partnership on Inclusion is its determination to move beyond knowledge exchange and work on actual policy advice and implementation of pilot Actions.

True Multi-level Cooperation

Members highlighted that the Partnership on Inclusion provided a true multi-level work environment, bringing together not only cities, Member States and EU institutions but also migrants and refugees, think tanks and civil society actors. For representatives of EU institutions, the exchange with local level actors served as a highly valued reality check to reflect on challenges of implementing EU policies and calls for funding and to develop joint proposals for solutions. From the local perspective, city representatives underlined that, for the first time ever, they were not simply invited to participate in one-off conferences, but could work in a more coherent and stable collaboration and, most importantly, as equal partners with national and European representatives. The joint Partnership Coordination by the City of Amsterdam and DG HOME ensured a clear structuring and distribution of responsibilities, while establishing a participatory agenda setting that created a

high sense of ownership among many Partnership members.

Partnership Actions

Not only the working methods, but also the operational cooperation on the eight Partnership Actions contributed to mainstreaming the inclusion of local level integration expertise into EU policy debates.

The Partnership's recommendations on improving local authorities' access to integration funding proved to be an important contribution to the EU negotiations on the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF).

In the framework of the Actions on Financial Blending Facilities and on Microcredits, the European Investment Bank Group (EIB and EIF) collaborated with local authorities to develop concepts or present examples of innovative financing tools.

The Urban Academy provided a new strategic learning and experience-sharing environment for practitioners and policy-makers focusing on collegial advice and dilemma-based exchange, while the European Migrant Advisory Board (EMAB) brought the voice of refugees and migrants directly on to the EU level.

Moreover, cooperation between the Action on Urban Indicators and Eurostat inspired the EU data agency to focus more strongly on local level integration data thus supporting evidence-based policy-making.

Furthermore, the Partnership formulated concrete recommendations and requests to EU institutions and Member States to support cities in the protection of unaccompanied minors.

Finally, the Action on improving desegregation policies in European cities drew attention to an important issue that had so far been insufficiently addressed at EU, national and local levels alike.

Room for Growth

Future Partnership cooperation should pay particular attention to ensuring specific mandates for members from all levels and to broaden the Partnership's outreach and communication work.

While the Partnership itself was tailored to urban topics and launched by the EU within the Urban Agenda, the role of the Member States was less clear. An active participation of the national level appears, however, crucial since Member States hold central competences in the fields of migration and integration.

Despite its high level of activity, the Partnership on Inclusion still lacks visibility outside its circle of members and cooperation partners. With a more outreach-orientated communication and advocacy strategy, the Partnership could strengthen its potential to influence policy-making at EU, national and local levels.

Looking towards the Future

The second part of the evaluation offers recommendations organised in building blocks to guide the Partnerships' reflection on future cooperation. In order to strengthen the sense of ownership, this report does not present ready-made scenarios but rather focuses on offering different possibilities within each building block.

Strategic Orientation

As members expressed their wish to continue the close cooperation, the Partnership needs to clearly demonstrate its future purpose as well as added-value for the multi-level migration and integration governance within the European Union. Different strategic orientations may be envisaged.

In its role as a Political Agenda Setter, the Partnership could develop advocacy work, also on sensitive migration topics.

In its quality as a multi-level consulting body, the Partnership would provide a Reality Check for new EU legislation.

In its position as a Think and Do Cooperation, the Partnership could intensify its operational work.

These strategic orientations can but do not need to be considered as stand-alone options. The development of operational cooperation could go hand in hand with political advocacy or build on needs identified during the reality check of new policy proposals. In view of the fact that time and staff are two of the scarcest resources of Partnership members, focusing the Partnership's energy as strongly as possible and creating an effective division of work seem to be key issues here.

Structure and Composition

Decisions on the Partnership's strategic orientation will hugely influence both structure and composition when it comes to size, selection of members, continuity vs. rotation and representativeness. In any case, clear-cut mandates need to be developed for all (new) members.

Flexible cooperation with representatives from the civil society, the private sector and other local authorities by way of an expert pool could broaden the Partnerships' operational network without, however, adding complexity to the basic structure.

Finally, the Partnership would substantially benefit from a permanent secretariat staffed with specialists mirroring the Partnership's strategic orientation.

Funding and Resources

As the Partnership on Inclusion is a key delivery mechanism of the Urban Agenda for the EU, funding for a flexible working budget, covering meetings, workshops, the secretariat and travel expenses should be provided by the European Union.

In return, Partnership members commit appropriate human resources to the Partnership.

Regarding implementation, different forms of cooperation account for different



budgetary needs for outreach, expert days, workshops, studies and pilot projects. Ideally, there would be a combination of three strategies. A needs-oriented implementation budget, provided by the Urban Agenda and participating Member States could be combined with thematic links between the topics and Actions under the Urban Agenda and the respective lines within the AMF, ESF+ or ERDF. Finally, instruments such as financial blending facilities and block grants developed under the Urban Agenda could enable local Partnership members to apply for financial support.

Multi-level Topics

The Partnership's unique strength lies in its direct multi-level cooperation and exchange. Therefore, a future Partnership would add a particular value to integration and migration governance, if it focused on areas in which there are still gaps in cooperation and coherency between the EU, national and local levels regarding policy design and implementation.

The (further) implementation of first generation Actions such as the EMAB, the Urban Academy or the EU Integration Indicators, would enhance the Partnership's sustainability.

The strategic orientation of the future Partnership will strongly influence the selection of new topics addressed through advocacy, knowledge sharing or pilot projects.

Synergies with Institutions and Networks

While the pilot project brought together a high number of well-connected multipliers, the Partnership could nevertheless benefit from a more structured networking effort that might help to increase its coherency and impact on EU policy debates. In order to create an effective outreach strategy, the Partnership should define the respective added value of cooperating with each EU institution, different Member States as well as other networks and initiatives. Thereby, the Partnership could systematically identify channels to feed Partnership positions and findings into EU policy processes.

While there may be some risk of overlapping activities when it comes to the new initiative "Cities and Regions for Integration", a well-planned close cooperation could prove mutually beneficial and enable both the initiative and the Partnership to focus their energies.

Visibility and Outreach

To increase its visibility the Partnership may draw on a vast number of communication tools, which could be coordinated by a member of the permanent secretariat. Initially, the Partnership would need to define which target groups should be reached through the respective communication strategies.



II. Abbreviations

| | |
|----------|--|
| AER | Assembly of European Regions |
| AMF | Asylum and Migration Fund |
| AMIF | Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund |
| CEAS | Common European Asylum System |
| CEB | Council of Europe Development Bank |
| CEMR | Council of European Municipalities and Regions |
| CoR | European Committee of the Regions |
| CPMR | Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions |
| DG BUDG | Directorate-General for Budget |
| DG EMPL | Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion |
| DG HOME | Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs |
| DG JUST | Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers |
| DR REGIO | Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy |
| EaSI | EU Employment and Social Innovation Programme |
| ECRE | European Council on Refugees and Exiles |
| EIB | European Investment Bank |
| EIF | European Investment Fund |
| EIBG | European Investment Bank Group (= EIB and EIF) |
| EIN | European Integration Network |
| EMAB | European Migrant Advisory Board |
| EMF | European Migration Forum |
| EMN | European Migration Network |
| ERDF | European Regional Development Fund |
| ESF | European Social Fund |
| ESIF | European Structural and Investment Funds |



| | |
|--------|--|
| ICMC | International Catholic Migration Commission |
| IOM | International Organization for Migration |
| JRC | Joint Research Centre |
| MFF | Multiannual Financial Framework |
| MPI | Migration Policy Institute |
| MPG | Migration Policy Group |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development |
| OSF | Open Society Foundations |
| SME | Small and medium-sized enterprises |
| UIA | Urban Innovative Actions |
| URBACT | European exchange and learning programme promoting sustainable urban development |



III. About this Evaluation

This report presents an evaluation of the Urban Partnership on Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees. In its quality as a key delivery mechanism of the Urban Agenda for the EU, the Partnership has provided a framework for multi-level and multi-stakeholder cooperation on integration between 2016 and 2019. The evaluation identifies success factors and shortcomings of the working methods and agenda setting of the Partnership and offers a comprehensive range of recommendations to inspire the Partnership's reflection on future cooperation. The evaluation was conducted by Janina Stürner and Dr. Christiane Heimann from the Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen-Nürnberg and the University of Hildesheim between May and September 2019. Initial findings were drawn from a comprehensive desktop review of internal and public Partnership documents and ten expert interviews with the Partnership coordinators, Action leaders as well as city representatives. Based on this information, the researchers organised a focus group discussion with Partnership members taking part in the June 2019 meeting and handed out a questionnaire, which members filled in during the meeting. Sixteen members of the Partnership provided answers to the questionnaire. Subsequently, knowledge gaps were filled with seven additional expert interviews. Partnership members were not only requested to provide information about their cooperation experience within the Partnership but were also given ample space to voice their own ideas and recommendations for future collaboration.



IV. Voices from the Partnership

EU-level actors

“Through the partnership we established a direct contact with cities that we didn't have before. So that was for us the biggest benefit, in terms of really knowing what happens on the ground, to be in touch with cities. And it changed the way we work, because we really understood, also thanks to the Partnership, the importance of involving cities.”

“Through the Partnership we got some insights, for example on local challenges with funding for integration, and possible ideas how to improve that.”

“It has maybe reminded us of things that we already knew and practiced in a way but being part of the Partnership has made this knowledge more present.”

“And then we really saw the added value of investing more in the local level to make integration happen. So, for example, last year a call for proposals was launched to finance networks of cities and regions to work on integration. This is something that maybe before the Partnership would not have happened, because we had not realized how important the role of cities is and how essential it is to support them.”

“The Urban Academy was created thanks to the Partnership. And it works because this time we really started from the bottom-up instead of developing ideas top-down. From the level of the cities, what their concrete needs are, and we built the Academy on their needs. Without the Partnership, without the direct exchange, that would not have been possible. We would probably have organized a one-time conference, but this one is different. And I think it is different because it was built together with cities. We would not have had this idea, I think, without the city of Amsterdam.”

“The Migrant Advisory Board made us change the way we think. I mean we always say “it is important to involve migrants” but once we started to work with them we understood how we could do it, how important it is, so it also changed the way we work and now we want to see how we can go ahead with that.”

“We are very, very much convinced of the importance of the multi-stakeholder, multi-level governance approach.”

“Bringing these actors together is something that did not exist before. So, to create a platform for these actors to work together, I think this was an achievement in itself.”

“There were more people around the table during a limited but quite long time frame, so for two to three years, we had the same people around the table working really on actions. And secondly, the fact that migrants were present through the Migrant Advisory Board, this was one of the Actions, which is also quite unique compared to other networks.”

“The Partnership has demonstrated that the multi-level governance and actor approach is helpful. Now there is a common understanding that this way of working is the way to do so, I mean it works. Now the challenge is to see how to transform this in the normal way of working of all of our institutions.”

Cities

“The purpose of the Partnership is to find solutions on a common base among policy experts.”

“The Partnership brought something new and it took a bit of time to grow: the setting we were in was quite unusual in the sense that normally cities meet with the Commission, the Commission meets with Member States and cities meet with Member States, we all have our connections. But here we are together. Normally in a meeting there is something you want from the other party, but here we were equals around the table and we worked together towards a common goal, that was quite new, we developed the agenda together.”

“The perspective on the whole program was the city perspective, this was not disputed, and everyone sees that the big challenges of migration and integration are urban challenges.”

“It proved that working with and for refugees and migrants is working in an international setting. Especially the big cities have the responsibility to act and to help each other.”

“Having partners to develop well-built and credible arguments was very useful.”

“The fact that we wanted to take part in the Partnership in the first place, was driven by the fact that we wanted and had to do a set of things about migration, so for us it was a matter of using every kind of resources available. So, we were open to working in any kind of constellation possible for finding solutions, and with a Mayor being very pro-European, believing very much in the power of the European Union and in networking among cities, we found it a fantastic idea.”

“The mere fact that it has survived is an achievement in itself, there are not many channels by which cities and the EU administration and Member States cooperate on a permanent basis. It’s the first time that all these different stakeholders sit together at one table, and have regular meetings, not just a conference. It’s much more of a work in progress.”

“In terms of actually letting key deciders understand who is important, having the Partnership creates awareness in that cities are there and have a voice and have important things to say. Raising awareness on the role of cities is a key achievement of all the Urban Partnerships.”

“We now have a forum and we have a seat at the table, not a very stable seat or a very big one, but it’s a start.”

Other Actors

“It’s the right of the people affected by a policy to be at the table. It’s also logical because if you want a sustainable policy you need to include the people who will be affected by the policy in the making of that policy, so it was a smart and basic decision to establish the Migrant Advisory Board and include them in the Partnership.”

“Actions have been implemented, so the Partnership demonstrated the actual capacity to do what was discussed.”

“If you think about integration policies, you should really look at what cities are doing to understand what is innovative, what is necessary, what can be done.”



V. Goals, Structure and Composition

The European Commission seeks to tap into the resources of local actors for guidance on and the implementation and monitoring of EU provisions. For this reason, the Urban Agenda for the EU was adopted with the Pact of Amsterdam in 2016. The Urban Agenda for the EU facilitates new working methods, which support cooperation between Member States, cities, the European Commission and other stakeholders to face common challenges. Several multi-level Urban Partnerships were developed within the scope of the Urban Agenda, addressing specific policy fields. One of them is the Partnership on Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees. The Partnership brings together representatives of local authorities, transnational municipal networks, e.g. Eurocities and the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), Member States as well as EU Institutions such as the European Commission, the Committee of the Regions (CoR) and the European Investment Bank Group (EIB and EIF). Furthermore, representatives of NGOs, such as the European Council on refugees and Exiles (ECRE) and the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), take part (see further details in Chapter VI.1). In 2016, the Partnership developed an Action Plan addressing issues of accommodation, community building and reception, education and employment as well as cross-sectoral topics for groups in need of protection from third countries. Subsequently, in 2017 the Partnership started to analyse deficits and potentials to work on. In 2018, the Partnership identified stakeholders in order to implement the Action Plan, and carried out an evaluation of the results in 2019 (see further details in Chapter VI.3). Since 2016, the Partnership has organised and/or participated in more than 66 events on various topics related to migration, mobility, asylum and integration. Hence, it provides a platform for local actors, Member States and the European Commission to develop and assess common strategies on integration, address immigration proactively and work together with migrants and refugees to shape the future of cities in Europe.

VI. Partnership Achievements

1. Multilevel Cooperation among Equal Partners

The members of the Partnership on Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees highlight that, to their knowledge, this is the only platform implementing a multi-level governance cooperation where cities, Member States and EU institutions are involved as equals. The Partnership thus offers a cooperation platform for policy-makers and practitioners of different levels working on migration and integration policies and practices.

“The Partnership brought something new and it took a bit of time to grow: the setting we were in was quite unusual in the sense that normally cities meet with the Commission, the Commission meets with Member States and cities meet with Member States, we all have our connections. But here we are together. Normally, in a meeting there is something you want from the other party, but here we were equals around the table and we worked together towards a common goal, that was quite new, we developed the agenda together.” City



In the first place, the composition of the Partnership represents the levels and stakeholders relevant for migration and integration in the EU. Coordination is shared between a local government and the EU Commission with the City of Amsterdam and its co-coordinator, the Directorate General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME) of the European Commission, assuming joint responsibility of the Partnership. The city representatives of Athens, Berlin, Helsinki and Barcelona represent further local authorities in the Partnership. In addition, the Partnership involves the national level of the Member States represented by the countries of Denmark, Greece, Italy and Portugal. Furthermore, delegates of transnational municipal networks at EU-level are also members of the Partnership. EUROCITIES, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and the Committee of the Regions (CoR), which is at the same time an EU body, represent cities, municipalities and regions in the EU. At EU-level, the European Investment Bank Group (EIB and EIF) and two Directorates-General of the European Commission working on Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO) and Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion (DG EMPLO) are likewise members of the Partnership. Finally, NGOs and think tanks form part of the Partnership including the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) and the Migration Policy Group (MPG).

Multi-level approach reflected by the composition of the Partnership

| Type | Level | Members |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| Cities | Local | Amsterdam, Athens, Barcelona, Berlin, Helsinki |
| Member States | National | Denmark, Greece, Italy, Portugal |
| Transnational Municipal Networks | Connecting EU and local level | EUROCITIES, CEMR, CoR, URBACT |
| EU organisations | EU-level | DG HOME, DG EMPL, DG REGIO, CEB, CoR, EIB Group |
| NGOs | European/International | ECRE |
| Think tanks | European/International | MPG, JRC |

It is not only the Partnership's composition but also its mode of operation that reflects multilevel cooperation between equal partners. The members appreciate that the Partnership mainstreams the importance of the local level in EU policy development as it fosters a reciprocal exchange between the EU level and local authorities as well as other stakeholders such as NGOs. On the one hand, cities learn how to bring local realities to the EU level. On the other hand, city representatives and members of the Migrant Advisory Board offer insights into local realities.

“In terms of actually letting key deciders understand who is important, having the Partnership creates awareness on that cities are there and have a voice and have important things to say. Raising awareness on the role of cities is a key achievement of all the Urban Partnerships.” City

This exchange provides policy-makers at the EU level with the opportunity of a reality check. Representatives of EU institutions explained, for example, that the exchange with cities had



opened their eyes towards implementation problems with regard to AMIF funding that they had not been aware of before. However, the Partnership did not stop at identifying problems; instead, members cooperated to inspire each other to develop possible solutions. Against this background, representatives of EU institutions strongly emphasized that working in the Partnership had changed their views on the importance of the local level in migration and integration governance.

“Through the partnership we established a direct contact with cities that we didn't have before. So that was for us the biggest benefit in terms of really knowing what happens on the ground, to be in touch with cities. And it changed the way we work, because we really understood, also thanks to the Partnership, the importance of involving cities.” EU Actor

Cities were not the only local actors playing a key role in the unique multi-level governance of the Urban Partnership – the role of refugees and migrants was just as important. Having organised a conference for policy-makers, migrants and refugees, the Partnership recognised that integration policies sometimes lack the desired impact because they are made for the target groups rather than with them. Through the European Migrant Advisory Board (EMAB), the Partnership brought the voices of migrants and (former) refugees to the EU level in a structured way that goes beyond a one-off participation in conferences. Both Partnership participants and EMAB members describe a gradual change of mind occurring within the Partnership: while it had been clear from the start that the perspective of migrants and refugees should play a role, the actual expertise and experience the EMAB contributed to the Partnership exceeded most expectations.

“The Migrant Advisory Board made us change the way we think. I mean we always say “it is important to involve migrants” but once we started to work with them we understood how we could do it, how important it is, so it also changed the way we work and now we want to see how we can go ahead with that.” EU Actor

In its multi-level perspective, the Partnership moves beyond mere exchange. Members focus on operational cooperation through Partnership Actions to put migrant and refugee integration into practice on the ground. After thoroughly examining the main challenges with regard to migration and integration, specific needs and demands were translated into concrete projects on the local level and policy recommendations and advocacy were addressed to the local, national and EU levels. Thus, the Partnership focused both on the practical implementation of projects on the ground and on contributing to policy debates in the multi-level governance system.





Multilevel Cooperation among Equal Partners

- ✓ Bringing together policy-makers from different levels, practitioners, migrants and refugees as **equal partners**
 - Mainstreaming the importance of the local level in EU policy development
 - Offering cities a platform to bring local realities to the EU level
 - Providing a reality check for EU organisations based on insights of local authorities, migrants and refugees
- ✓ Focusing on **operational cooperation beyond exchange**, demonstrating the potential of multi-level cooperation
- ✓ Creating a **framework for a stable network** based on trust and continuous participation

In this way, the Partnership created a framework for a solid platform, on which the different members are able to cooperate fruitfully based on trust and continuous participation.

“The Partnership has demonstrated that the multi-level governance and actor approach is helpful. Now there is a common understanding that this way of working is the way to do so, I mean it works. Now the challenge is to see how to transform this in the normal way of working of all of our institutions.” EU Actor


2. Stringent Organisation, Complementary Linkages and Multipliers

There are two main reasons for the excellent cooperation between the members of the Partnership on Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees. Firstly, the topic is a highly relevant issue for policy-makers and practitioners on local, national and EU-level. Secondly, direction and organisation are in the hands of very committed co-coordinators, namely DG HOME and the City of Amsterdam. The members of the Partnership praised the initiative of the City of Amsterdam and its dedication of human and financial resources as being essential for the Partnership’s success. Furthermore, DG HOME is perceived as an important node in the EU policy process. The clarity of its organisation and structure and the distribution of responsibilities provided the basis for cooperation and created a sense of belonging. In this way, agenda setting in the Partnership worked as a consensual and participative strategy, which was highly appreciated by the members. Partnership members also highlighted the

work of ECORYS, an organization acting as secretariat to provide technical support to the Partnership and its members.

DG Home played a crucial role in connecting the Partnership members with the EU institutions and networks in Brussels. Furthermore, the members themselves worked as multipliers, as they are part of and have access to different networks, e.g. the MPG presented the Urban Indicators to facilitate evidence-based integration policies in cities to the European Migration Network (EMN). In addition, the CoR as an EU body included Partnership outcomes in its opinions and EUROCITIES worked as a multiplier establishing contacts with external cities regarding their possible participation in Partnership Actions.

Hence, the cooperation between members established growing interconnectedness and offered new perspectives for all participants regarding policy-making at different levels as well as practical implementation, which the members perceived as very inspirational.



Stringent Organisation, Complementary Linkages and Multiplier Effects

- ✓ **Lead and organisation** in one hand
 - Co-coordination of Amsterdam and DG HOME
 - Clarity of organization and structure
 - Technical support from ECORYS
 - Agenda setting as a consensual and participatory strategy
 - Sense of belonging and **ownership**
- ✓ Members make use of their **multiplier roles** to spread Partnership positions
- ✓ Cooperation creates **interconnectedness** and **new perspectives**

3. Operational Cooperation in Actions

The work of each Urban Partnership was structured by an Action Plan. Within the Partnership on Inclusion there was a joint understanding that members should not simply organise an exchange between the local, national or EU levels but actually implement Actions that had been agreed upon through policy advice and local pilot projects. This operational cooperation was highly appreciated by all Partnership members.

Following the establishment of the Partnership in 2016, the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) was tasked with research to develop scoping papers on five focal integration issues identified by Partnership members: education, housing, labour market, reception and vulnerable



groups. These scoping papers served as bases for two working conferences open to practitioners, policy makers, academia and the public. In November 2016, the Partnership held a first working conference on “Reception and Housing of Migrants and Refugees” in Amsterdam and a second one addressing “Work and Education of Migrants and Refugees” in Berlin in February 2017. The focus of both conferences was to identify bottlenecks of the four topics and develop concrete solutions by way of a participatory approach.

Rather than identifying solutions to the challenges related to migration and integration in a top-down manner, the Partnership aimed at joint problem solving. Therefore, in cooperation with the Open Society Foundations (OSF) the Urban Partnership reached out to migrants and refugees and organised four meetings in Athens, Amsterdam, Barcelona and Berlin. Having established that more comprehensive sharing of knowledge between refugees and migrants on the one side and policy-makers on the other side would greatly benefit the development of the Action Plan, the Partnership organized a third conference on “Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees” in Amsterdam in May 2017. The draft Action Plan was thus designed through an open and multi-faceted approach including peer-to-peer interaction, decentralized dialogue in different European cities and intensive deliberation between Partnership members.

Based on input from local authorities, NGOs, civil society as well as migrants and refugees, the Partnership adopted eight Actions. Each Action was developed by a multi-stakeholder Working Group chaired by one or two Action Leaders. When choosing Action Leaders the Partnership paid attention, above all, to the leaders’ enthusiasm for and expertise in the topic of the respective Action.



Hands-on Approach

- ✓ **Extensive outreach** to define Partnership Actions
 - Decentralised multi-stakeholder deliberations in various cities
 - Special focus on local policy-makers, migrants and refugees
 - Target oriented approach to identify central bottlenecks and propose solutions
- ✓ **Operational cooperation** to implement Actions
 - Decision to move beyond exchange by developing concrete multi-level instruments, recommendations and pilot projects
- ✓ **Proactive collaboration** with municipalities, EU actors, research institutes and NGOs outside the Partnership



“The mere fact that it has survived is an achievement in itself, there are not many channels by which cities and the EU administration and Member States cooperate on a permanent basis. It’s the first time that all these different stakeholders sit together at one table and have regular meetings, not just a conference. It’s much more of a work in progress.” City

The CEMR and the City of Amsterdam were responsible for organising Action No. 1 that worked out recommendations on the protection of unaccompanied minors. Actions No. 2 and No. 3 were under the leadership of the European Investment Bank Group (EIB and EIF), as they elaborated recommendations on the reform of financial blending facilities for cities and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) for integration measures and described examples of existing pilot projects, in particular in the microfinance context, to support entrepreneurial activities. EUROCITIES spearheaded Action No. 4 to develop recommendations for improved access for cities to EU integration funding. DG Home and the City of Amsterdam established the Urban Academy on integration as Action No. 5. In the framework of Action No. 6, the City of Amsterdam coordinated the creation of the European Migrant Advisory Board (EMAB). Led by the Migration Policy Group (MPG), Action No. 7 focused on urban indicators to facilitate evidence-based integration policies in cities. DG REGIO was the leader of Action No. 8, which aimed at improving desegregation policies in European cities. Several Actions approached cities, NGOs, research institutes or EU agencies outside the Partnership to enable them to contribute to development and implementation.

The Partnership Actions have developed various impacts on a wide range of integration topics.

| Action | Responsible organization |
|--|-------------------------------|
| Action n° 1: Recommendations on the Protection of Unaccompanied Minors | CEMR and city of Amsterdam |
| Action n° 2: Establishment of Financial Blending Facilities for cities and SMEs | EIB Group |
| Action n° 3: Establishment of Financial Blending Facilities for Microfinance | EIB Group |
| Action n° 4: Improving access for cities to EU Integration Funding | EUROCITIES |
| Action n° 5: Establishment of an Urban Academy on Integration Strategies | DG HOME and city of Amsterdam |
| Action n° 6: Establishment of a European Migrant Advisory Board | city of Amsterdam |
| Action n° 7: Urban Indicators – Facilitating evidence-based integration policies in cities | MPG |
| Action n° 8: Improving Desegregation Policies in European cities | DG REGIO |



The **Action on Unaccompanied Minors** addresses a topic deemed particularly urgent by municipal representatives. This may be illustrated by the fact that 14 cities (members and non-members) participated in case studies focusing on good practices in the areas of guardianship, access to education, health services and housing. These case studies were analysed in cooperation with the University of Leiden and laid the foundation for the Action's advocacy work. The Working Group formulated concrete recommendations and requests to EU institutions and Member States to support cities in the protection of unaccompanied minors. The Working Group is currently planning a European pilot project based on the information gathered on the ground: In cooperation with the NGOs Nidos and Missing Children Europe, the Action Leaders envisage to implement a project addressing the challenges arising from the age structure of unaccompanied minors.

The **Action to Improve Access to EU Funding** for cities brought together a very wide range of actors including cities, city networks and EU institutions with the right of initiative and the right of decision-making. Partnership members highlighted the Funding Action's contribution to the debate on the Union's Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). This Action benefited, in particular, from an open exchange between those actors developing funding structures and calls at the EU and the national level and those applying for funding to implement integration on the ground. Bottlenecks were identified and suggestions developed to improve the flexibility and accuracy of fit of funding. The Partnership elaborated recommendations for the new AMF, ESF+ and ERDF regulations after 2020 to propose that a certain portion of funding would be allocated to migration and refugee integration at city level or to creating a single fund for EU migrant integration measures.

The **Action for the Establishment of Financial Blending Facilities for Cities and SMEs** to create better funding opportunities for local integration is a multi-level cooperation led by the EIB Group. Due to the large number of new arrivals over the past few years, cities need to invest in different forms of social infrastructure in order to be able to face the medium to long-term challenges of integration. Therefore, its aim is the development of financing facilities which allow AMIF, ESF and other EU funds to be blended with EIB loans, which is legally not possible at the moment – at least for AMIF. Cities and specified areas would benefit from financial blending facilities for comprehensive local programs for the inclusion of migrants and refugees. In order to encourage the creation of such financial blending facilities during the next MFF (= from 2021 on), the Partnership supplied recommendations and conceptual ideas for the successor program of AMIF to the European Commission (esp. DG Home), Member States and the European Parliament.

The **Action for the Establishment of Financial Blending Facilities for Microfinance** aimed at reinforcing the role of microfinance backed up by blending and partial risk protection offered by the European Investment Fund (EIF) on behalf of the EC under the EaSI programme. The Action strives to promote migrant entrepreneurship with microcredits supported by the stakeholders on the local level as well as the EIB Group. Newly arrived as well as settled migrants face particular barriers, such as the lack of professional networks and familiarity with administrative and legal requirements to start a business. It is especially difficult for them to secure funding as they have no credit history or secure legal status. The EIF manages the EaSI



guarantee instrument with the objective of increasing access to financing for vulnerable groups amongst others. The EIF offers guarantees and counter-guarantees to financial intermediaries providing them with a partial credit risk protection that reduces risk exposure and incentivises financial intermediaries to increase access to financing for certain groups perceived as higher risk, as it tends to be the case for migrants and refugees. So far, a workshop on microfinance was already held in Barcelona, and others are planned to follow.

The **Urban Academy** presents an innovative approach to connecting EU and local level integration governance. Designed as a strategic learning and experience-sharing environment for practitioners and policy-makers, the Urban Academy focuses on collegial advice and dilemma-based exchange. Next to local authorities from all over the EU, representatives of different DGs and national members of the EIN participated in the Academy to share policy experience and learn from the local level. Furthermore, inputs were provided by think tanks such as the Migration Policy Group and the Migration Policy Institute. The evaluation of the first edition in 2018 revealed that 97% of respondents recommended a transformation of the Academy into an annual event.

“The Urban Academy was created thanks to the Partnership. And it works because this time we really started from the bottom-up instead of developing ideas top-down. From the level of the cities, we established what their concrete needs are and we built the Academy on their needs. And without the Partnership, without the direct exchange, that would not have been possible. We would probably have organised a one-time conference, but this one is different. And I think it is different because it was built together with cities. We would not have had this idea, I think, without the city of Amsterdam.” EU Actor


The establishment of the **European Migrant Advisory Board** (EMAB) is a unique feature of the Urban Partnership. The EMAB ensures direct exchange with the target group of integration policy-making and brings the voice of refugees and migrants to the EU level. Being a self-led advisory group, the EMAB unites nine first-generation migrants and (former) refugees living in Amsterdam, Athens, Bamberg, Barcelona, Berlin, Helsinki, Italy, Lisbon and Stockholm. Part of the group was financially supported by the OSF. Having overcome an initial uncertainty regarding the group’s mandate within the Partnership, the EMAB provided advice to two Partnership Actions and engaged in designing and implementing a large-scale consultation with migrants and refugees provided by migrants and refugees in the EU. Based on the results, the EMAB presented a report calling for the inclusion of migrant and refugee leaders in consultation processes for updating the EU Integration Action Plan, reforming the Common European Asylum System, developing EU funding and strengthening integration networks.

“It’s the right of the people affected by a policy to be at the table. It’s also logical because if you want a sustainable policy you need to include the people who will be affected by the policy in the making of that policy, so it was a smart and basic decision to establish the Migrant Advisory Board and include them in the Partnership.” Civil Society Actor



The **Action on Urban Indicators** promoted dialogue between local, national and EU level data experts. Local level actors made active use of this exchange to introduce their perspectives into EU debates on infra-national integration data. Good practice for evidence-based integration policy-making as well as better know-how transfer and support for mutual learning were important aspects of the Working Group's recommendations to the European Commission, Eurostat, as well as national and municipal policy-makers. Moreover, the cooperation between the Action on Integration Data and Eurostat inspired the EU data agency to focus more strongly on the local level when publishing integration data to support local level evidence-based policy-making. The Action is currently developing the idea for a pilot project to test this new data set.

The **Action on Improving Desegregation Policies in European Cities** aims to improve the educational attainment and labour market integration of children with a migrant background. To this end, it is necessary to develop and support actions contributing to desegregating segregated educational facilities. In order to achieve this objective, measures aimed at developing good quality early childhood education and care should complementarily be fostered. The Action consists of two components that should contribute to meeting the aim of desegregation. On the one hand, the development of Sustainable Urban Development Strategies addresses local and national challenges; on the other hand, a pilot action in two cities has been proposed to test desegregation policies, which may lead to relevant local legal amendments.



Impact of Actions

- ✓ **Protection of Unaccompanied Minors** – advocating to support cities in the protection of unaccompanied minors
- ✓ **Access to Funding** – contributing to MFF debate
- ✓ **Financial Blending Facilities Action and Microcredit Action** – developing concepts for innovative financing tools
- ✓ **Urban Academy** – building a new strategic learning and experience-sharing environment for practitioners and policy-makers
- ✓ **European Migrant Advisory Board** – introducing the voice of migrants and refugees into integration policy debates at EU level
- ✓ **Urban Indicators** – inspiring local level Eurostat integration data for evidence-based policy making
- ✓ **Improving Desegregation Policies** – raising awareness for insufficiently addressed challenges

Last but not least, the regular meetings of Action Leaders and the quarterly Partnership meetings helped to create synergies and cooperation among the participants.



VII. Room for Growth

While members overall commended the organisation, cooperation and outcomes of the Partnership, they also made constructive suggestions for further improvement. These are mostly related to the role of EU Member States within the Partnership as well as the Partnership's visibility and communication strategy.

1. National Level Involvement

On the national level, Denmark, Greece, Portugal and Italy took part in the Partnership. However, none of the Actions was led by national representatives. This may be explained by the fact that the national ministries asked to participate in the Urban Partnerships under the Urban Agenda were those responsible for urban affairs, though not necessarily those working on policy fields related to the different topics of the various Partnerships. Therefore, some national representatives participating in the Partnership on Inclusion were highly specialised in urban affairs but possessed less experience with regard to migration and integration topics.

Furthermore, Partnership members indicated that the national representatives did not have a clear mandate within the Urban Partnership. While the Partnership itself was tailored to urban topics and launched by the EU within the Urban Agenda, the role of Member States was less clear.

An active participation of the national level appears, however, essential, since important competences are concentrated at this level and local authorities expressed the wish to discuss solutions for policy incoherence between local and national levels in the framework of the Urban Partnership.

2. Visibility and Communication Strategy

A second element that Partnership participants wish to develop further is the Partnership's visibility and communication strategy. During the three-year pilot project, Partnership activities were mainly documented on the Commission's website Futurium. However, individual Partnership members made little use of the Futurium site and it was presumed that the site may be rather difficult to navigate for external users. On the one hand, it can be useful to have a website where all the relevant information on the different Partnerships under the Urban Agenda for the EU is gathered. On the other hand, a website is not an outreach tool, which means that local authorities, civil society or EU institutions need to know about its existence and also the existence of the Urban Agenda to be able to access information on the Futurium website.

However, interviews with representatives of relevant EU institutions, such as the European Parliament or NGOs working in the field of migration and integration, revealed that the Partnership is little known by relevant organizations outside the Partnership. It could thus increase its range of potential cooperation partners and its impact by raising its visibility. So far, the members and member organisations are more visible than the Partnership as a whole. One reason for this is that the Partnership on Inclusion is still young, as it has only existed since 2016. The other reason is that the members usually represent their own organisations

and interests when participating in meetings and conferences. Several suggestions for expanding the Partnership's communication strategy and raising its visibility will be presented in the following part of this report.



Room for Growth

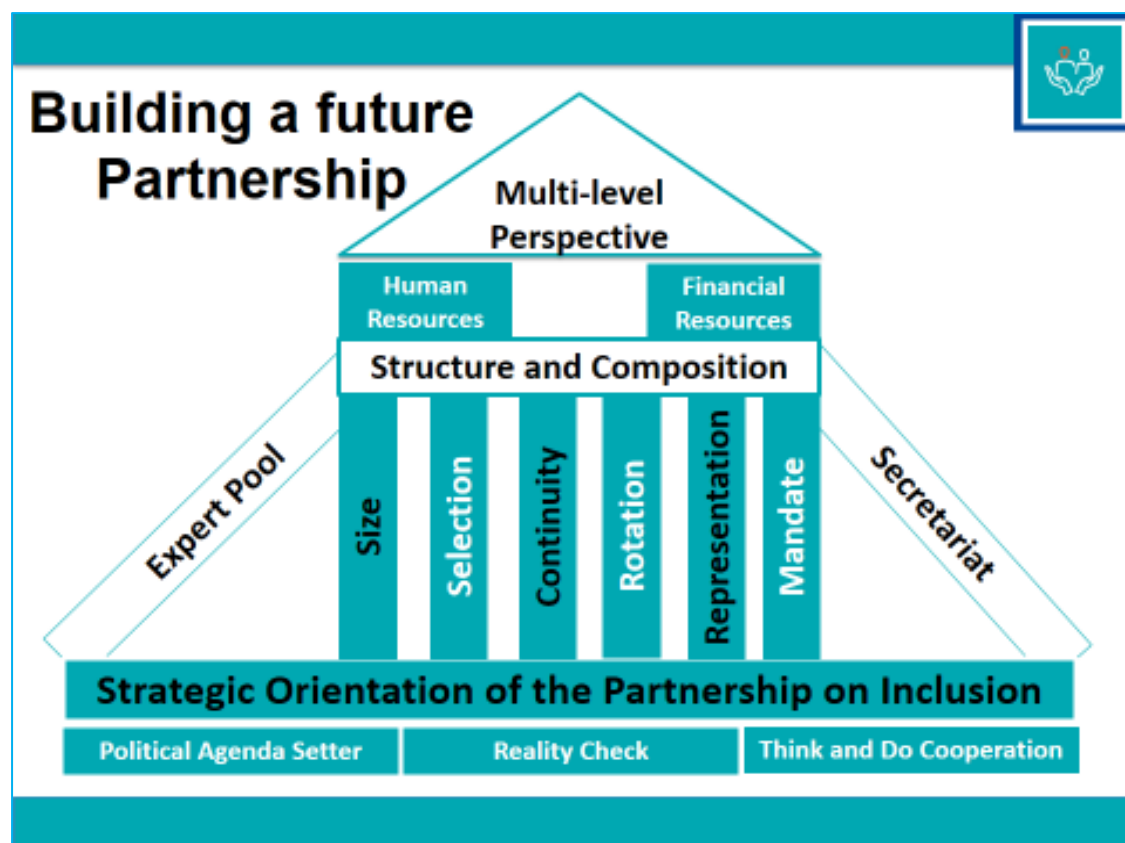
- Define and strengthen the **mandate of the national level**
- Promote **outreach** and **visibility** of the Partnership



VIII. Looking towards the Future of the Urban Partnership on Inclusion

The Urban Partnership on Inclusion is perceived as one of the most successful of the twelve Urban Partnerships represented within the Urban Agenda and was obviously considered a model, at least judging from a look at Partnerships developed after 2016. Within a project-based framework, the Partnership has demonstrated that intense multi-level cooperation with strong links between the local and the EU level fosters innovative ideas for policy development and implementation. With the three-year project cycle drawing to an end, the Partnership on Inclusion is engaging in a reflection on how to embed future cooperation into a more structural framework.

Therefore, the second part of this evaluation will highlight central building blocks to be discussed by Partnership members. Each of these blocks is crucial for constructing a coherent and sustainable Partnership. In order to enable members to shape the future of the Partnership on Inclusion and to strengthen the sense of ownership, this report does not present ready-made scenarios but rather focuses on proposing a wide range of options within each building block. Partnership members can thus combine different options to build their own vision of a future Partnership.



When doing so, members should keep in mind that the central building blocks are interdependent and that taking decisions on the strategic orientation of the Partnership will influence the choice of options considered most suitable, e.g. regarding composition or



outreach. The report presents the building blocks in a “chronological” order, starting with the most fundamental element of strategic orientation, followed by structure and composition, based on which funding, working methods and future topics can be defined, and concludes with reflections on synergies with other initiatives as well as on outreach and communication strategies.

1. Choosing a Strategic Orientation

Interviews with Action leaders, coordinators and Partnership Cities as well as the June 2019 focus group discussion clearly show that the members wish the Partnership to continue and to transform into a more structural and non-project-based cooperation. Twelve out of sixteen respondents to the evaluation questionnaire declared the intention of their organisation to continue their active participation in a future Partnership. At this point, the Partnership thus needs to clearly demonstrate its future objectives as well as its added value for the multi-level migration and integration governance within the European Union. In this context, Partnership members highlighted the importance of feeding Partnership positions more systematically into EU decision-making processes and policy-making. Several options for strategic orientation can be envisaged, which could be pursued separately or in combination.



Building a future Partnership

| Strategic Orientation of the Partnership on Inclusion | | |
|--|---|--|
| Political Agenda Setter | Reality Check | Think and Do Cooperation |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy for (sensitive) topics of multi-level governance • Connecting integration policies and practice with migration management, relocation, resettlement and return | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisor with a multi-level governance perspective • Space for constructive discussions on new policy proposals and recommendations to the European Commission, MEPs, the JRC and other think tanks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational multi-level and multi-stakeholder cooperation • Developing pilot projects for integration of migrants and refugees, social cohesion, etc. |



1.1 The Political Agenda Setter

In the initial phase of the Urban Partnership, a wide range of topics were discussed including politically sensitive issues such as relocation, resettlement and the interaction with *sans papiers* in European cities. However, the focus of the Partnership on operational cooperation led to a stronger concentration on integration topics, which were perceived as more feasible as local authorities already possess competences in many areas related to integration. Outside the Partnership, some members continued to work on concrete proposals for transnational relocation (Athens and Barcelona), provided access to basic services independent of people's legal status (Amsterdam) and called for a stronger role of cities in the design and implementation of resettlement programmes (EUROCITIES). With Actions such as that on access to funding, the Partnership has shown that it is capable of contributing to the agenda setting surrounding the MFF. Several members voiced the wish to develop and strengthen the advocacy role of the Partnership at EU level. As a true multi-level governance actor, the Partnership could play the part of an agenda setter, coherently connecting integration policies and practice with questions of transnational migration management, relocation, resettlement and return.

1.2 The Reality Check

Members of DG HOME and DG REGIO, the JRC and European think tanks have extensively highlighted the importance of being able to establish connections with local authorities as well as migrants and refugees thanks to the Partnership. For the Brussels-based actors, these formal and informal exchanges provided unique opportunities to learn about the practical fit of European policies on the ground, which enabled them to (re)focus their actions at EU level. One striking example is the exchange between data analysts of different levels organised by the MPG, which encouraged Eurostat to think about breaking down data to the local level in order to address the informational need of local authorities for evidence-based policy development. Another example is the European Migrant Advisory Board (EMAB). Members of the EMAB observed a change of mind on the part of Partnership actors, becoming increasingly aware that migrants and refugees should not just be selectively engaged, e.g. as speakers at conferences, but need to be integral partners in shaping integration policies. The Partnership could thus play the role of an advisor with a multi-level governance perspective, providing a space for constructive discussions on policy proposals and recommendations for the European Commission, MEPs, the JRC and other think tanks, which offer policy advice at EU level.

1.3 The Think and Do Cooperation

A core element that distinguished the pilot Partnership on Inclusion from other Partnerships of the Urban Agenda was its operational cooperation. Interview partners often emphasized that the added value of the Partnership was that the cooperation went beyond joint conferences and knowledge exchange. Not only did the Partnership develop an Action Plan, but it also assumed responsibility for implementing the adopted Actions. This was, for example, the case with the creation of the EMAB and the Urban Academy. Some Actions used the additional fourth year of the Partnership to develop proposals for pilot projects such as



the Action on Unaccompanied Minors and the one on Urban Indicators. However, these proposals met with budget constraints. But even with limited funding, the Partnership demonstrated an enormous potential for multi-level and multi-stakeholder cooperation through its core group as well as its collaboration with external networks and actors. Making full use of this potential the Partnership could further develop its role as a think and do cooperation bringing together different levels of governance for the inclusion of migrants and refugees.



Building a future Partnership

Strategic Orientation of the Partnership on Inclusion

| Political Agenda Setter | Reality Check | Think and Do Cooperation |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity to develop joint positions even on sensitive topics • Small core group, dedicated WGs • Secretariat for outreach • Communication work • Budget for outreach, communication, secretariat and meetings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity to review policy proposals & formulate recommendations • Interest from EU • Representativeness • Secretariat to inform members and support drafting • Budget for meetings and secretariat | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity to implement selected existing Actions and design new ones • Secretariat for project management • Cooperation with national level for coherence • Strong budget for implementation, meetings, secretariat |

1.4 Focusing Energy does not necessarily mean Doing One Thing and Leaving the Other

These three strategic orientations can, but do not need to be considered as stand-alone options. The development of operational cooperation could go hand in hand with political advocacy or build on needs identified during the reality check of new policy proposals. Seeing that time and staff are among the scarcest resources of Partnership members, focusing the Partnership's energy as strongly as possible and creating an effective division of work seem to be key issues in this context.

- **A think and do Partnership** with different working groups could decide to create a specific working group to develop **advocacy** for the other Actions, receiving financial resources for outreach and support through a communication officer of a permanent Partnership secretariat. Working groups focusing on specific topics could open their meetings once or twice a year to representatives of EU institutions who are interested in **discussing new policy proposals** or implementation challenges.



- **An agenda-setting Partnership** focusing mainly on political advocacy could decide on one or two **flagship initiatives** for which pilot projects would be developed. The Partnership could thus make use of one of the key strengths of local authorities in supranational discussions – having actual proof that their proposals can work on the ground.
- Finally, a **Partnership concentrating on providing a reality check** for EU level decision-makers could strengthen the **implementation of the EMAB** in its second round and use exchange with representatives of the Commission or MEPs for **advocacy** and outreach.

| Building a future Partnership | | |
|---|--|---|
| Focusing energy in mixed strategies | | |
| Political Agenda Setter | Reality Check | Think and Do Cooperation |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on political advocacy • Develop one/two flagship initiatives with pilot projects • Base advice on evidence drawn from pilot projects | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on advisory role • Strengthen role of EMAB • Advocate Partnership positions through exchange with Commission and EP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on operational cooperation • Establish Working Group on Advocacy • Hold thematic Working Group sessions with EU representatives wishing to discuss new policy proposals or precise matching of existing ones |

2. Defining Structure and Composition

2.1 Membership and Participation

Size

Taking a decision on the strategic orientation of the Partnership will already prepare certain paths to follow regarding structure and composition. A Partnership focusing mainly on either agenda setting or operational cooperation would benefit from a strongly committed and rather small core group, which engages with external actors and networks through different channels. A Partnership offering expertise to the EU level through consultation could, however, work with a broader circle of members and should pay attention to questions of representativeness.



Selection

In order to strengthen its standing within the EU multi-level system, the future Partnership could establish a formal application and selection procedure for members representing local authorities, national governments, civil society, the private sector or research institutions. In view of the strong wish of Partnership members to keep DG HOME as one of the co-coordinators and the fact that DG REGIO holds responsibility for the entire Urban Agenda, a selection procedure for institutional actors at EU level seems less opportune. For all other actors, transparent selection criteria need to be developed and published with the calls for application. When it comes to local authorities, geographic distribution, size and integration experience may play a particular role. Regarding civil society actors, the private sector or research institutions, the added value of full membership in contrast to, e.g., temporary cooperation on specific topics needs to be reviewed individually. A selection could be conducted by current members of the Partnership's core group.

Continuity

When asked about distinguishing features of the Partnership on Inclusion with a view to other networks and initiatives, members often highlighted the fact that representatives of EU, national and local levels worked together in a stable composition over a timeframe of several years. Partnership meetings provided a very open atmosphere in which members did not feel the need to distinguish themselves but rather shared success stories and failures and worked together to develop joint Actions. Bringing such a diverse group together to tackle topics of common interest is not an easy task. It takes time for people from different backgrounds to develop a common language and build up trust. Continuity is therefore an important element especially for the Coordination and the core group of the Partnership. Continuity does, however, not mean exclusivity. Even when thinking about a stable participation without any rotation of members, additional expertise could be introduced on a needs-oriented basis. The Partnership has already demonstrated the benefits of engaging NGOs, local authorities and other actors into specific Actions. This strategy could be developed further, as will be demonstrated in the following sections using the idea of an expert pool.

Rotation

Rotational membership may be a useful element for some members but not for all. Members clearly expressed the wish for DG HOME to stay an active and, if possible, coordinating member of the Partnership over time. For local authorities, however, rotation could offer certain benefits. The decision to have a fix number of cities participating in the Partnership pilot project meant that it was not possible for other cities to become Partnership members. Moreover, with the exception of the city of Amsterdam, city members did not lead any Actions of the Partnership, often mentioning the difficulty of being based abroad as well as limited financial and human resources as their main reasons. Rotating membership may be an option to address both the limited openness of the Partnership as well as the additional workload that participation involves for members. Cities committing to the Partnership in 2016 could not foresee what this commitment would actually entail since the pilot project was still work in progress then. However, following a decision on the strategic orientation for the future



Partnership, cities can prepare for their commitment and ensure that they are able (and receive the adequate support) to participate.

Time-delayed rotation: While a membership of two years may be adequate for a focus on advocacy or consultation, the period of membership in a more operational Partnership would depend strongly on the timeframe required for the implementation of the Actions. In the interest of continuity, not all members should rotate at the same time.

Partial rotation: Another option would be to keep a small core group of cities able to commit human resources to the Partnership for a longer period of time and arrange a rotational participation around this core, targeting especially medium and smaller cities with fewer resources.

Coordinator rotation: In addition, one could think about a co-coordination with a stable representation of DG HOME and a rotating member city. This timeframe should, however, cover more than two years.

Representativeness

The topic of representativeness has been repeatedly raised during the evaluation interviews. In this context, the question has to be asked – does the Partnership need to be representative? And if so, representative of what? The pilot project found a compromise by engaging a wide range of actors from a limited geographical area in the development of the Action Plan through the organisation of public conferences. Regarding the implementation of the Action Plan, the pilot project's strength was an operational multi-level cooperation through a coalition of those willing to participate, engaging those actors that were actually committed to the topics of the Working Groups. Again, the answer to the question depends on the main strategic orientation of the future Partnership.

Introducing representativeness: A Partnership that sees its core mandate in engaging in EU level decision-making and policy development through consultation and multi-level governance expertise needs to legitimise its advice and positions. There are several ways to do so and representativeness is one of them. For the EMAB, discussions are currently underway to compose the new board of members in such a way that participants would collect and represent positions of local and national organisations of migrants and refugees. Regarding local authorities, representatives of national municipal associations could become members of the Partnership. However, one might, of course, argue that these are already represented through the participation of CEMR and CoR. Another option would be to raise the number of participating cities according to geographical distribution and/or introduce rotational membership. Models for this type of composition can be found at the UN level where trade-offs between representativeness and the capacity to act also play an important role (Human Rights Council, Security Council, etc.). However, a biased mindset, which seems hard to overcome, would represent a major challenge for a Partnership basing its work and legitimacy on representativeness. – Local authorities critical of (multi-



level governance for) integration may most likely not be willing to dedicate resources to cooperate in such a Partnership.

Valuing commitment over representativeness: In contrast, a Partnership concentrating on political agenda setting and/or operational cooperation would probably value the active engagement of a committed core group over representativeness. A focus on representativeness for the sake of being representative may even hamper hands-on cooperation and decision-making within an appropriate timeframe. In such a scenario, the legitimacy of the Partnership would rather be based on the expert knowledge of its individual members as well as the Partnership's overall multi-level perspective.

Mandate

Multi-stakeholder cooperation: When discussing the possibility to open the Partnership to new actors from various areas (civil society, private sector, etc.), it is essential to provide clear mandates for each member. New actors should not be added to the Partnership just for the sake of having them at the table. Therefore, the issue of broadening membership and/or temporary cooperation not only depends on the strategic orientation of the Partnership but also on future topics to be addressed.

Multi-level cooperation: The importance of clear mandates was also revealed in the multi-level cooperation. Even though the feeble engagement of the national level was at times deplored, both EU and local actors acknowledged that the pilot project had not created a specific role for national representatives. While the Partnership was part of an EU level initiative – the Urban Agenda – and unambiguously stated the importance of the urban dimension, the mandate for national representatives lacked clarity. The issue that participating national representatives were not necessarily specialised in the areas of migration or integration may have contributed to the fact that in contrast to the members of the EMAB, a clear mandate did not emerge in the course of the pilot project. In view of the fact that EU Member States hold strong competencies in migration and asylum policy, the active engagement of national representatives is considered essential whatever strategic orientation the Partnership will choose. National representatives should bring expert knowledge on their countries' integration and migration strategies and thus be members of the respective ministries. Another option would be to include some national contact points of the European Integration Network (EIN) or the European Migration Network (EMN). This approach might further strengthen synergies with existing EU networks.

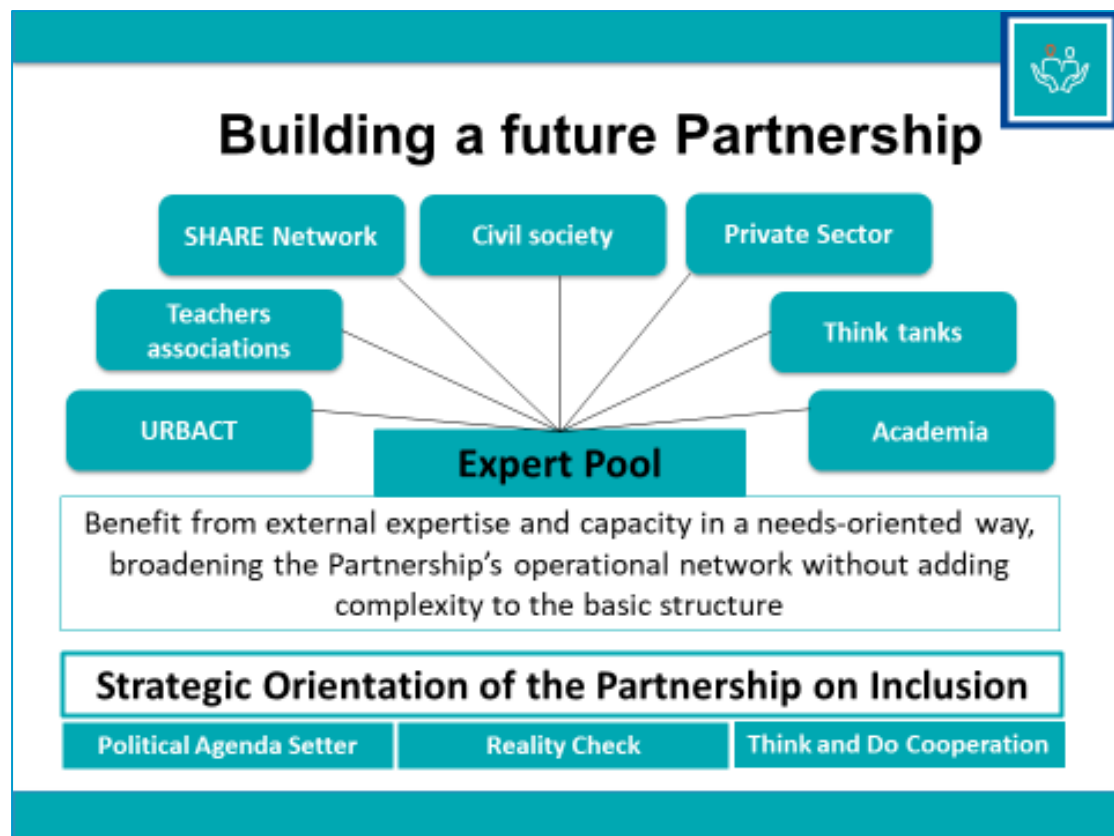
2.2 Expert Pool for Flexible Cooperation

An interesting strategy employed by several Working Groups was reaching out to external actors in the development and implementation of Partnership Actions. This was, for example, the case for the Action on Unaccompanied Minors cooperating with the civil society organizations Nidos and Missing Children Europe. The Action on Urban Indicators made use of the EUROCITIES network to involve the cities of Ghent and Vienna in the development of recommendations. Both Actions therefore benefitted from external expertise and capacity in



a needs-oriented way, thus broadening the Partnership’s operational network without adding any further complexity to the basic structure.

A particular strength of the Partnership is the membership of strong multipliers such as EUROCITIES, CEMR and ECRE as well as actors representing central nodes in the EU migration governance such as DG HOME. Thanks to their high level of connectivity and reach, these actors could contribute to creating an expert pool. Actors associated with the Partnership rather loosely so far, e.g. URBACT or the SHARE Network (ICMC), could equally engage in building such a structure. The expert pool would offer an opportunity to local authorities, NGOs, research institutes, migrant and refugee organizations, representatives of the private sector, teacher associations etc. to contribute to the work of the Partnership temporarily and on specific topics. Members could launch targeted calls for cooperation and benefit from focused thematic expertise. Moreover, it would be possible to add a section on capacity support through civil society or private sector actors when it comes to advocacy, communication and outreach.



In the evaluation questionnaire, all respondents whose organisations will not form part of a future Partnership expressed their interest in joining such an expert pool.

2.3 Permanent Secretariat

Irrespective of the Partnership’s future strategic orientation, a permanent secretariat will be necessary to support the Partnership in establishing itself as a permanent structure. Throughout the pilot phase, Ecorys has assumed the role of an administrative secretariat and has also supported the substantive work of several Working Groups. This support was highly



appreciated. Indeed, Partnership members stated that, in principle, all Actions could have benefited from additional assistance, however, this was not feasible within the pilot project's budget.

Depending on the strategic orientation of the future Partnership, the Brussels-based secretariat would need to have staff providing different kinds of support in addition to administrative tasks such as the coordination and documentation of Partnership meetings.

The networker: A particular focus on political advocacy could mean that the Partnership would be in need of a communications expert experienced in interacting with the different EU institutions and having available a broad network within the “Brussels bubble” and beyond. His/her main tasks would be to support the members in feeding Partnership positions systematically into EU policy-making processes, keep members updated on Brussels-based events and prepare print as well as online communication material. He/she could also give specific support to Partnership Actions to strengthen the impact of findings and recommendations.

The policy expert: In order to provide valuable feedback to policy-makers on new or existing integration, asylum and migration policies, the Partnership could benefit from the support of a policy expert being up to date regarding policy discussions and negotiations at EU level. Furthermore, the expert should be able to draw the attention of Partnership members to relevant debates at national level in the EU Member States. His/her main tasks would be to inform members about policy developments at EU and national level, to facilitate thematic Partnership exchanges and support the draft of recommendations.

The project manager: With the exception of the city of Amsterdam, all Action Leaders were based in Brussels, which simplified the holding of regular meetings. In order to encourage more city members to become Action Leaders, stronger operational support may be favourable. Actions could, for example, be led in tandem by a Partnership actor and a member of the secretariat specialized in project management. Depending on the number of Actions to be continued or newly planned, the Partnership could create several positions in the framework of the secretariat with every project manager being responsible for two or three Actions.

3. Acquiring Funding and Resources

During the pilot phase, funding for the work of the Partnership on Inclusion came from different sources, among them the European Union, the city of Amsterdam and OSF. In addition, Partnership members contributed generously by providing time and human resources, goods that are scarce for all actors, but especially so for local authorities. Actions were developed depending on the available budget with Partnership members stating that they could have done more operational work, in particular when it comes to implementation and piloting, if a higher budget had been available for Partnership Actions.



3.1 Working Budget

A future Partnership would need a flexible budget to finance the work of the secretariat, organise Partnership and Working Group meetings as well as conferences or workshops with external actors, cover travel costs of non-Brussels-based members and prepare communication material. In view of the fact that the Partnership on Inclusion is a key delivery mechanism of the EU Urban Agenda, funding for this working budget should come from the European Union.

3.2 Human Resources

In exchange, Partnership members commit appropriate human resources to the Partnership. This might mean that each member designates a representative from the respective organization/city/institution who will be released from part of his/her former duties to dedicate a specific amount of time to working on the Partnership.

Partnership members indicated that as one of the co-coordinators of the Partnership, a representative of the city of Amsterdam has at times been working almost full-time on the Partnership. Not every city has the human resources to do so. At the same time, having a city as one of the co-coordinators of an Urban Partnership is highly advisable. Therefore, the Commission could consider the possibility to remunerate a city for taking up the role of co-coordinator so that the tasks a representative would otherwise have fulfilled at the local level are not neglected.

3.3 Action Implementation Budget


The first Partnership phase has demonstrated that each Action developed different options for piloting and implementation. While some started planning to carry out pilot projects themselves and in cooperation with external actors, others called upon EU institutions or Member States to implement recommendations. It is to be expected that different Actions will have different budgetary needs for expert days, workshops, studies and pilot implementation in a future Partnership. Ideally, there would be a combination of three strategies to meet these needs:

- Firstly, the Partnership could benefit from a flexible Action implementation budget, which would be distributed and could be redistributed between the Actions on a needs-oriented basis. Funding could come from the Urban Agenda as well as national contributions of participating Member States. In order to involve the national level more closely in the Partnership, Member States could decide to provide part of the funding for general Action implementation and earmark a certain amount for Actions of particular interest to them.
- Secondly, the Urban Agenda as a whole could be mainstreamed more strongly into the implementation of EU policies and programmes by creating thematic links between the topics and Actions of different Urban Partnerships and the respective lines within the AMF, ESF+ or ERDF. A Union Action call could, for example, be geared towards the Urban Agenda, which would enable Partnerships to participate in



application processes. In parallel, the responsible DGs should enter into an exchange with national managing authorities to discuss options to include issues identified by the Partnerships into the development of national calls. In particular, the managing authorities of Member States participating in different Urban Partnerships should have an interest in mainstreaming and coherence. In addition, EU programmes specifically targeting local authorities such as URBACT or Urban Innovative Actions (UIA) could support the implementation of local pilot projects and city networks.

- Thirdly, tools such as financial blending facilities and block grants developed by the Partnership on Inclusion and the Partnership on Urban Poverty could enable local Partnership members to apply for financial support in implementing pilot Actions.



Building a future Partnership

Partnership Funding

| Working Budget | Human Resources | Implementing Budget |
|--|---|---|
| <p>What</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secretariat Internal Partnership meetings Conferences/workshops Travel costs <p>How</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fix amount, flexible use <p>Who</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> European Union | <p>What</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership representatives Action leaders Coordinators <p>How</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dedicate specific amount of work time to Partnership <p>Who</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All members | <p>What</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expert days, studies Pilot projects Advocacy, communication <p>How</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementing budget (EU and participating MS) Thematic alignment with EU Funds (AMF, ESF+, etc.) UIA, URBACT Blending, block grants <p>Who</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different sources |



4. Valuing the Multi-level Perspective

The Partnership's unique strength lies in its direct multi-level cooperation and exchange. Therefore, a future Partnership would introduce a particular value into integration and migration governance, if it focused on areas in which gaps still exist in terms of cooperation and coherence regarding policy design and implementation between the EU, national and local levels.

4.1 Potential of Existing Actions

Highlighting the importance of sustainability, Partnership members have expressed a strong interest in developing certain Actions created during the pilot phase further and implementing them:

Following two successful editions of the **Urban Academy on Integration**, DG HOME will provide funding to transform the Academy into a regular platform for peer-to-peer learning. Local level interest was high from the beginning with applications strongly exceeding available spots for participation. An evaluation of the first edition in 2018 reveals that 97% of all participants recommended to hold the Academy annually and stated that they would be interested in participating in future editions.

Partnership members often commended the **European Migrant Advisory Board** as a unique opportunity to learn from the expertise and experience of target groups of integration policies. Negotiations are currently underway at EU level to establish the EMAB as a permanent format, representing the interests of migrants and refugees and providing first-hand insights and expertise to EU-level actors.

The Action leaders of the Working Group on the **Protection of Unaccompanied Minors**, CEMR and the city of Amsterdam, have entered into an exchange with the NGOs Missing Children Europe and Nidos. Together they plan to implement a project addressing the challenges of the age gap of unaccompanied minors. The currently five Partnership cities envisage pilot projects that would allow young migrants turning eighteen to continue benefitting from guidance by their legal guardians. According to Partnership members, funding could, for example, be secured by applying to future calls under the AMF or the ESF+.

The Action realised by the Working Group on **Urban Indicators** inspired Eurostat to publish new data on integration outcomes at infra-national levels. With this in mind, the Action leader - MPG - has been designing plans for a pilot project, which would make it possible to exploit the new data in an exemplary way, explore what is feasible in terms of directly comparing city profiles and what can be learned from comparing the infra-national outcome data with national-level data.

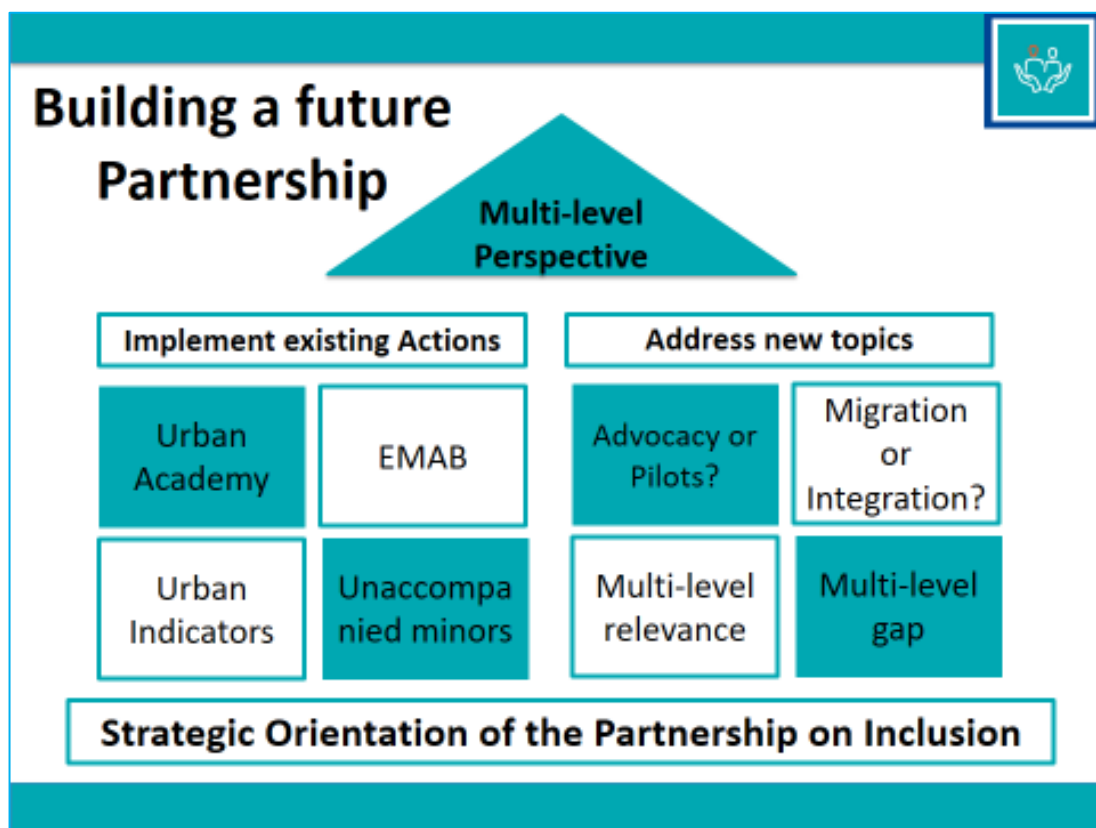
4.2 New Topics for Multi-level Cooperation

The strategic orientation of the future Partnership will strongly influence the selection of new topics to be addressed through advocacy, knowledge sharing or pilot projects. Regarding the former, Partnership members could raise controversial topics of high relevance to multi-level



migration and integration governance onto the European Agenda such as resettlement, sea rescue in the Mediterranean or access to basic services independently of the legal status. In this context, the fact that cities do not possess any competences for many of these issues would be less relevant than when it comes to developing Actions for pilot projects to be implemented on the ground.

Ever since the Urban Agenda has been adopted in 2016, the political context for migration and integration has changed at EU and national levels. A wide range of topics has been mentioned by Partnership members that could potentially be addressed in the future, ranging from employment, entrepreneurship and welfare rights through to physical and psychological health, gender issues, irregularity, relocation, the fight against discrimination and hate speech, public communication and the role of smaller cities in integration. Other Urban Partnerships have worked on some of these topics, though not necessarily with a specific focus on migrants and refugees. In order to guarantee the added value of the Partnership’s activities, the future coordinators should ensure that a broad mapping is conducted of both relevant topics in the area of migration and integration and actors addressing these with a multi-level governance perspective. Only if both criteria come together – i.e. when an issue is considered relevant AND insufficiently addressed from a multi-level governance perspective – should the Partnership consider taking action.



5. Strengthening Synergies with EU Institutions, Initiatives and Networks

Exchange and links with EU institutions, initiatives and networks working on integration and migration have mostly been created through the professional networks of Partnership members. While it is very positive to note that the pilot project brought together a high number of well-connected multipliers, the Partnership could nevertheless benefit from a more structured networking effort to increase its coherence of outreach and its impact on EU policy debates.

5.1 Targeted Cooperation with EU Institutions for Policy Development

By drafting recommendations to improve local level access to EU funding in the next MFF, the Partnership has demonstrated both the will and the capacity to contribute to structural processes and policy development at EU level. In this context, the Partnership could benefit considerably from more targeted cooperation with specific actors. In order to create a systematic outreach strategy, the Partnership should define the added value of each cooperation as well as channels to feed Partnership positions and findings into EU policy processes.

Continuing cooperation with the Commission: Holding the right of initiative in the EU policy development process, the European Commission is a central partner for the Urban Partnership. Good cooperation has already been established and can be built on in the future seeing that DG HOME served as co-coordinator and DG REGIO is in charge of the entire Urban Agenda. Throughout the pilot process, representatives of DG HOME have selectively engaged colleagues working on topics such as data for integration and financing. In the future, DG HOME might consider strengthening the involvement of Commission staff as experts in specific Working Groups. While the Partnership could benefit from expertise on current policy debates, the Commission could gain further inspiration for policy development and use the exchanges as local reality checks for ideas under development.

In its quality as the Commission's science and knowledge service, the **Joint Research Centre (JRC)** has also played an active role, in particular when it comes to providing knowledge support for the Urban Academy. Local level expertise shared throughout the Partnership strengthened the JRC's conviction that the role of cities in the EU should receive more attention, which resulted in new JRC projects and the publication of the Future of Cities Report. The JRC should continue to support selected Partnership Actions. Furthermore, the Partnership could make use of the CoP-Cities network (a joint initiative of JRC and DG REGIO) to gain new partners for its expert pool.

Tightening links with the European Parliament: Targeted cooperation could also be an interesting option when it comes to strengthening links with one of the Union's co-legislators – the European Parliament. The Partnership could invite members of the URBAN Intergroup, representatives of the secretariat of the LIBE committee or rapporteurs working on specific topics to selected sessions to discuss Partnership standpoints and recommendations. Through



focused thematic exchanges, the Partnership could thus introduce its positions into the European Parliament's policy-making process.

Reaching the Council through the national level: The Union's second co-legislator, the Council, may be less accessible for direct outreach. However, there is a potential option to achieve two goals with one strategy: The Partnership has clearly recognized that the national level needs a clear-cut mandate to become more strongly involved in future cooperation. Members of national integration/migration ministries or national contact points of the EMN and the EIN could thus be responsible for sensitising their respective governments for Partnership topics, informing them about positions and working on building links with national contributions to the respective configurations of the Council of the European Union.

Joining forces with the Committee of the Regions (CoR) and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC): As EU institutions consulted in the policy-making process, the CoR and the EESC also offer a special potential for the outreach of the Urban Partnership.

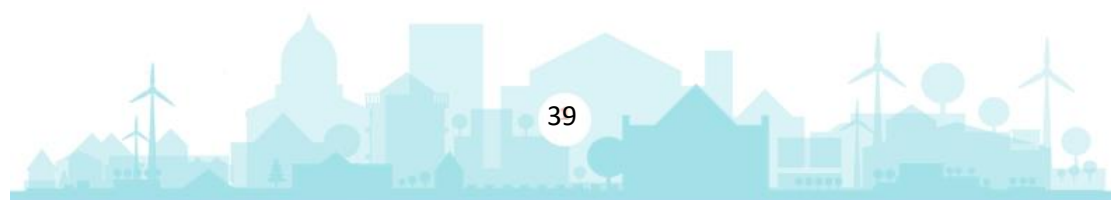
So far, **CoR** representatives participating in the Partnership have informed CoR rapporteurs about Partnership positions. Thus, the CoR rapporteur working on the next MFF referred to the recommendations of the Action on Funding when meeting with the respective EP rapporteur and other stakeholders. The Partnership could systematically invite CoR rapporteurs working on topics relevant to the Partnership's operational cooperation or advocacy to targeted exchanges with the goal of contributing to CoR opinions.

In 2019, the Partnership has made use of the European Migration Forum co-organized by the Commission and the **EESC** to inform a wide range of stakeholders about the pilot project's Actions and achievements. Since central topics of the EESC such as social inclusion and labour market access will play an increasingly important role in local integration in the years to come, the Partnership could benefit from an annual joint workshop with the EESC Temporary study group on immigration and integration.

5.2 Rolling Agenda to Focus Work and Avoid Duplication

Throughout the pilot phase, ad hoc exchanges have been conducted with different EU-level networks and actors as well as international organisations. The Partnership invited representatives of the OECD or ICMC to various meetings. The Amsterdam co-coordinator participated in meetings of the EUROCITIES Working Group on Migration and Integration several times. Similarly, CEMR asked the coordinators to inform the CEMR Working Group on Migration about the work of the Partnership. Furthermore, MPG presented the results and recommendations of the Working Group on Integration Data to the European Integration Network during an EIN meeting dedicated to data and monitoring.

These activities can assist both the Partnership and its external network partners in focusing their work and avoiding duplication or overlaps. Such exchanges should therefore be undertaken in a more systematic way. This does not mean the creation of a rigid structure, but should rather provide members with a transparent overview of the Partnership's current connections as well as work developed by other initiatives and networks. One way to do so would be a sort of rolling agenda, as originally envisaged by the Partnership coordinators.



Such an agenda could be developed as an interactive online platform managed by the secretariat, which would inform members about upcoming events offering them the option to register their participation and subsequently fill in a quick form highlighting focal new developments of interest to the Urban Partnership. In parallel, the secretariat could request members to provide similar information about closed meetings and workshops they attended on a regular basis. The information gathered in this way would then be reviewed by the secretariat and presented at Partnership plenary meetings. Not only would this allow the Partnership to remain up to date on decentralized networking, but the approach could also help identify gaps in the Partnership's outreach.

5.3 Fruitful Cooperation with “Cities and Regions for Integration”

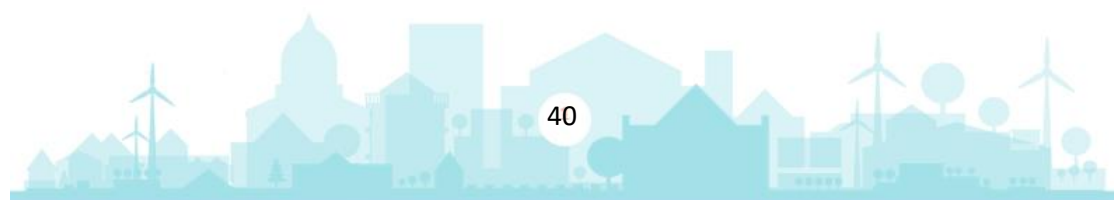
In April 2019, the CoR launched the initiative “Cities and Regions for Integration” in cooperation with the Assembly of European Regions (AER), the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR), the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), and EUROCITIES. While there may be some risk of overlapping activities, the cooperation between the new initiative and the Urban Partnership can, if well planned, become mutually beneficial and enable both actors to focus their energies.

Firstly, the initiative strives to create a **political platform** for the voices of local and regional authorities in negotiations on the future of EU policies and funding for integration. Around 100 cities have joined the initiative at the time of writing. By adding Partnership positions and recommendations to this circle and receiving support from participating cities, the Urban Partnership could address challenges of representativeness mentioned earlier in this report. The Partnership could contribute its expertise to the political platform and make use of the political capital, in particular of participating mayors, in order to strengthen its advocacy strategy.

Secondly, the initiative plans to support **peer learning and sharing of good practice** of local integration. A strong cooperation with the Urban Academy therefore seems highly advisable. An exchange between Academy participants, coming mostly from big and medium-sized cities and members of the initiative, which focuses more on smaller cities and rural administrations, may be of particular interest.

Thirdly, the initiative aims to share information on **EU funding for integration support**. Since EUROCITIES is both the Action leader of the Partnership's Working Group on Funding and a founding member of the initiative, it is to be expected that the initiative's activities will build on findings and recommendations of the Partnership's Working Group.

Finally, yet most importantly, the initiative envisages to contribute to a **positive narrative on migration** by sharing good examples and solutions for integration. All of the Partnership's current municipal members are cities actively involved in developing innovative strategies for integration both within and outside the Partnership. Contributing to the initiative's efforts of shaping a positive integration narrative might be an effective first step towards adopting a more proactive Partnership communication strategy.



6. Increasing the Partnership's Visibility

The report has already highlighted that Partnership members considered global communication via the Futurium website as being not ideal when it comes to ensuring the visibility of the broad variety of Partnership Actions. In order to increase this visibility, the Partnership could refer to a number of communication tools, which could be coordinated by a member of the permanent secretariat. Firstly, however, the Partnership would need to define which target groups should be addressed by the respective communication strategies. Is the general public really an appropriate audience? And if not, what could targeted communication for different actors look like? One could think of local authorities, city networks, NGOs working in urban areas, migrants and refugee organisations active in cities, research institutions focusing on migration and urban integration, national integration/migration ministries as well as a wide range of EU level actors, many of them already mentioned in this report.

6.1 Effective Outreach

To begin with, the Partnership on Inclusion could create its own twitter account to offer information about ongoing events, new publications as well as news from Partnership members.

Instead of contributing a separate newsletter to the increasing flood of newsletters sent out every day, the Partnership could benefit from the high number of multipliers it counts among its members. Thus, information could be tailored to local authorities via EUROCITIES, CEMR, URBACT and SHARE, to NGOs via ECRE or to national representatives via the EIN or the EMN.


Furthermore, the Partnership could invest in attractive and informational print material to be distributed during its own conferences or events organised by Partnership members. Rather than using flyers, the Partnership could prepare concise and up-to-date one-pagers to present its achievements and the work of its Actions.

Partnership members, in particular local authorities, should also make use of their local outreach strategies to contribute to the visibility of the Partnership in a decentralised way.


6.2 Attractive Presentation

In view of the advantages offered by featuring all information on the Urban Agenda for the EU on one platform, the Futurium Website should continue to play this role. However, DG REGIO might give some thought to a general restructuring, since Partnership members stated that they rarely used the website. If restructuring proved difficult or lengthy, the Partnership could consider creating a parallel blog-based website linked to the Futurium website where information may be presented in a way easier to navigate. Another benefit of such an additional platform would be the chance for Working Groups to enter into exchange on a private forum. This was recommended by several Partnership members as an opportunity to facilitate internal communication. Another option promising public feedback and interaction would be the creation of a public page on facebook or LinkedIn. In this case, however, questions of data security would have to be discussed. A generally accessible facebook or

LinkedIn page could also respond to one of the suggestions made by participants in the Urban Academy who expressed their wish to stay in touch through an easy form of interaction and networking.



Increasing the Partnership's Visibility



Effective outreach

- Clear representation
- Twitter account
- Members' multiplier roles
- One-pagers
- Local outreach strategies

Attractive presentation

- Partnership website
- Linked to Futurium
- Private forum for communication
- Public facebook/LinkedIn page



7. Conclusion

“We now have a forum and we have a seat at the table; it’s not a very stable seat or a very big one, but it’s a start.” City

The Urban Partnership on the Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees enabled local-level actors to work with EU institutions and Member States on questions of integration as equal partners. As a city representative puts it – a new seat was pulled up to the table of multi-level governance. When asked about the added value the Partnership brought to their work in comparison with other multi-level networks and initiatives, members referred to the equality in status, the operational cooperation as well as the importance attached to the voice of migrants and refugees. This evaluation report is designed to help Partnership members to consider how these elements can be linked with others such as advocacy and strategic cooperation, in order to introduce the Partnership’s special multi-level perspective into EU policy-making for rights-based and sustainable migration and integration policies.

