

Urban Academy on Integration Brussels, 16 – 18 April 2018 Report



European Commission, Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs

City of Amsterdam



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Content

Introduction to the Urban Agenda and the Partnership for the Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees	3
Introduction to the Urban Academy on Integration	5
Thematic sessions of the module Education in Relation to Integration	6
Thematic sessions of the module Integration and Working Effectively with Civil Society	15
Wrap-Up Session	26



Introduction to the Urban Agenda for the EU and the Partnership on the Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees

In 2016, during the Dutch Presidency of the EU, the **Pact of Amsterdam** was adopted by the EU Interior ministers. The Pact declares that European cities will be more involved in the creation of EU legislation, EU funding and knowledge sharing. Statistics show that 70 percent of EU citizens live in cities, and therefore cities should have more influence in EU policies.

Cities have become the drivers of innovation and the European economy but are simultaneously the battleground for many of the societal struggles of the twenty-first century. In order to ensure that this is reflected by EU legislation, funding and knowledge sharing, the **Urban Agenda for the EU** was created. The Urban Agenda is composed of **12 priority themes** essential to the development of urban areas. Each theme is organized by a **Partnership**. These partnerships bring together different actors, such as cities, Member States and European institutions. Together, they aim to implement the Urban Agenda by finding workable ideas focused on the topics of EU legislation, funding and knowledge sharing. One of the partnerships is the **Partnership on Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees**.

Over 60 percent of refugees worldwide live in urban areas, something that will only increase during the coming years. Migration is a local reality and cities are places where migrants and non-migrants interact. This can be through work, studies or daily life. Cities offer great opportunities for migrants and refugees, but they are also faced with challenges regarding integration and inclusion.

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

OBJECTIVES OF THE PARTNERSHIP

Since the percentage of migrants and refugees living in cities is on the rise, there is also the need for cities to deal with the reception and integration of their new inhabitants in a proper and successful way. European cities find themselves in different stages of development regarding migration and integration of migrants and refugees. This is often reflected in the number of players involved in migration issues as well as the resources a city has or is willing to allocate to address such issues.

Cities have shown to play an important role in promoting positive **public perception** of migrants and refugees and an understanding among the public of the need and obligation to grant them protection. In order to encourage a positive reception

work is being done by local governments and NGOs to help people understand migrant and refugee experiences. When considering the urban responses to the reception of migrants and refugees, the important role that civil society initiatives such as ‘Refugees Welcome’ has played so far should also be taken into account. Cities pay particular attention to the promotion and protection of human rights and vulnerable groups such as unaccompanied minors. Effective inclusion policies are put into place at the urban level to ensure that potential local and regional benefits are unleashed, including support in finding jobs, housing, social services and education.

Migration and integration challenges have clear urban dimensions. Achieving an inclusive and integrated approach tackling these challenges requires multi-level governance. The goal of the Partnership is for cities to be able to **influence European legislation, funding and knowledge sharing**. With more influence on these three themes cities would be able to deal much more efficiently with challenges concerning integration and inclusion of migrants and refugees.

As stated in the Pact of Amsterdam the objective of the Partnership is to “Manage the integration of incoming migrants and refugees (extra-EU) and to provide a framework for their inclusion”.

Introduction to the Urban Academy on Integration

The Urban Academy on Integration is an initiative developed under the Partnership on the Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees. It has the objective to support learning and sharing of experiences between practitioners and policy makers working on integration at the local, regional and national level. It also provides the opportunity to create networks of peers working on similar integration issues across Europe, which can provide advice and support beyond the Academy itself. The Academy has been conceived as a European strategic learning environment for policy professionals, facilitated by a mix of experts as well as peer exchanges on individual policy dilemmas and professional challenges between the participants. The two thematic sessions of the first edition of the Academy were 'Education in Relation to Integration' and 'Integration and Working Effectively with Civil Society'.

The sessions were designed and facilitated by experts from MigrationWork, a London-based migration consultancy with years of experience in advising policy makers and practitioners on how to respond to migration challenges. These thematic sessions were based on an open question format. Participants presented their particular policy dilemma, after which the facilitators and other participants asked the presenter open questions. This gave every participant the opportunity to get an in-depth analysis of his or her specific context and question. After the reflection, participants could share ideas and best practices that could benefit the presenter with his or her policy dilemma.

Thematic sessions of the module Education in Relation to Integration

- Facilitator:** Ceri Hutton, MigrationWork
- Experts:** Aliyyah Ahad, Migration Policy Institute Europe
Ana-Maria Stan, European Commission, DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture
- Rapporteur:** Laurent Bontoux, European Commission, Joint Research Centre

INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC BY ALIYYAH AHAD OF MIGRATION POLICY INSTITUTE EUROPE

Aliyyah Ahad introduced the topic: *How can Europe's educational systems boost migrant inclusion?*

There are many barriers to education for migrants and refugees, such as language and the understanding of the organisational framework of the education system. More and more children have a migrant background, and it is therefore no longer a niche part of the European population. With it comes a growing diversity of academic needs. There is a growing number of unaccompanied minors and an increase of Muslims. There are gaps in literacy levels and growing inequalities outside of the classroom, resulting in higher drop-out rates and lower school achievements in comparison with 'native' children.

The rising anxiety, political fragmentation and tensions over the role of religion with society put pressure on the developments of the educational system, since schools are often seen as the place to overcome these problems. But the existing school systems were not designed for the needs of migrant pupils. Barriers arise from the legal status and residence of migrants, the choice of school and the parental responsibility. Therefore, there is the need to strengthen the relationship between actors. The governance of the educational system is complex, and educational policy often does not meet the needs of reality. This puts pressure on teachers and the existing framework.

There is a need to address these needs and improve the educational system by equipping the teachers to support the different academic needs of all students. Within the entire education trajectory (e.g. primary and secondary education, creation of systems for late arriving teens, linguistic support in a student's native language) the diversity of educational, health and socio-emotional needs should be addressed. The content and pedagogy of the educational system should be adapted to these new needs and skills (e.g. more teamwork, technological innovation of language teaching, e-learning and personalised learning) Moreover, one should acknowledge the broader role of schools as integration actors and use them as hubs for communities and teach about citizenship. Parents should be involved more, and be taught about language and citizenship during school hours. There is a need to improve the coordination between the national and local levels.

Question 1: How can we attract refugees to seek employment as teachers and what is essential in this process? – Eveline Hamers, City of Amsterdam (NL)

Information on the dilemma:

In Amsterdam many teachers are leaving because of the pressure and the difficulty to find housing within the city. So there is a demand for teachers, and the city wants to attract more teachers with a refugee background. There is a language standard of level B1 in order to qualify for a teacher's position and there are efforts being made to get fast track recognition of qualification. But even when refugees are qualified, it takes a lot of courage to take up a teaching job.

Result of the discussion:

Since education is mostly a national affair, there are very different requirements for a teaching position within the different member states. In some countries the minimum language level for teachers is C1. In Helsinki, the HR department organises language courses for those wanting to work as nurses. In Potsdam, refugees aspiring to become teachers have to achieve level C2 and be able to teach two different subjects, but even then it isn't possible to work as fully qualified teachers, just as assistants. The possibility of a European Qualification passport was discussed.

Question 2: How can language courses help persuade employers to allow their employees from third countries to attend and understand that language skills could be appropriate both for the employers and employees? – Andros Karayiannis, Mayor of Deryneia (CY)

Information on the dilemma:

The challenge Cyprus is facing is that foreign workers are dealing with different situations. Many of them work illegally, and many of them are married to EU citizens. There are language courses for adults in Deryneia, which are funded by the EU (two Greek courses, one English course). There is place for thirty people, but only twenty people enrolled. Employers do not want their employees to attend because they are afraid to lose them, the costs or because they prefer their employees 'dumb'. There need to be incentives to both the employers and migrants. There is no difference in attendance when scheduling afternoon or evening classes.

Result of the discussion:

One solution would be to make a language course an obligation or set a minimum language requirement for people to be employed. Another suggestion is to give employers a quality label if they allow or even stimulate their employees to take a

language course. A competition with a prize for employers who support integration efforts could be a possible practice. The municipality could also consider hosting language courses at the employers' businesses instead of a school or other public building. Convincing employers that in the long run, it is in their best interest to have integrated employees could also be a possibility.

Question 3: What are participants' experiences of working with national government agencies to improve the assessment of foreign qualification (including receiving feedback, setting up an appeals process) and what did they do to achieve this? – Alba Ortega, Student Refugees, Copenhagen (DK)

Information on the dilemma:

The Danish Agency of Science and Higher Education provides assessments of foreign qualifications to refugees. The process of assessment lacks transparency and there is no possibility for the assessed to receive feedback on the conclusions of the assessment or the possibility to appeal in case of disagreement. The question is how to improve the assessment (including receiving feedback, and getting an appeal) of foreign qualifications.

Result of the discussion:

There is a shared problem across European countries when it comes to assessing documents (especially when dealing with lack of documents). The pilot project European Qualification Passport (<https://www.coe.int/en/web/education/recognition-of-refugees-qualifications>) was brought up as a tool to try and tackle this problem.

Furthermore, it was mentioned that in Sweden recently a system was implemented of one-year personal assessment to refugees who do not have documents to prove their educational background. It consists of a year of training and education mixed with interviews and exams in different subjects. The aim is to assess their skills as well as train them to enter into the Swedish education system. This practice could be transferable into other European countries in order to facilitate the access of refugees into higher education.

Question 4: In Germany, schools are at a critical moment of transition, as more and more newcomer students are moving on from separated groups to mainstream classrooms. As school personnel, who built up experience and knowledge in supporting refugee students, are leaving the school system, how can we hold onto this expertise for the future and transfer it to other educators? – Lisa Küchenhoff, International Rescue Committee, Berlin (DE)

Information on the dilemma:

Teachers who are new to teaching refugee children are often unprepared to support them adequately while also teaching a class of about 25 other children. What is missing

is a knowledge exchange between the specialised teachers from refugee classes and mainstream teachers; as well as a knowledge management system that helps schools (and school systems) to hold on to the information and expertise built up over the last couple of years. Without that, schools will be ill-prepared for the next cohort of newcomer children that is bound to arrive in the future and have to start all over again.

THEMATIC SESSION 2: COMBATING SEGREGATION AND ENCOURAGING INTEGRATION

Question 1: How can local authorities combat the phenomenon of scholastic segregation? Luisa Maria Cameroni, City of Milan (IT)

Information on the dilemma:

In Milan, twenty-five percent of the population are migrants or refugees. The migrant population is concentrated in certain areas but live all throughout the city. Yet there is segregation in schools since native children attend private schools or a select few good public schools. Some schools have a student population where eighty percent has a migrant background, some schools are all Italian. The school specialisation is great for dealing with students with special needs, but makes other, often native students, leave. The problem occurs when more than thirty percent of the students have a migrant background; that is when the academic achievements start to drop in comparison to 'native schools'.

Results of the discussion:

The group's suggestion was to create welcome classrooms, divide children with special needs and those who do not, but keep them within one school. This can however create more segregation. Another option is to change it with housing policy to mix different socio-economic groups. An important lesson is to change it with positive discrimination; focus school funding on schools with a high percentage of migrant students. These schools can then also offer more services or extra curricula activities to attract middle- and higher class families.

Question 2: How can we reach children and young people and convince them and their parents that attending school is necessary in spite of the fact that they do not wish to stay in Greece and regard it as a 'transit country'? How do we tackle this type of self-imposed segregation? – Dorothea Kokozidou, UNHCR/Thessaloniki Municipality (EL)

Information on the dilemma:

Since the EU deal with Turkey, refugees and migrants end up in Greece. Most of those people want to continue their journey and do not want to invest locally, or put their children in school. Therefore, the unemployment levels of Thessaloniki are thirty percent. School is compulsory for children between six and fifteen but most migrant children do not comply with these rules. Language learning is not mandatory, which

creates more problems. There are national programmes but they lack funding. Besides those national programmes, NGO-led programmes exist and can provide solutions.

Result of the discussion:

An important lesson is to look at governments with a Roma population. One can learn from the best practices of the teachers dealing with the enrolment of Roma children. Another possible solution is a proactive attitude from teachers to reach out to migrants and refugees instead of waiting for them to come to school. One can also try to use the school as a hub for more social interaction by providing other social services (or set up activities) at schools as well. This way, a community centre within the school can be created. It is just very difficult to change the mentality of the people and convince them that getting a job or going to school is not a waste of time.

Question 3: How might Edinburgh better understand and encourage refugees to seek work who currently seem reluctant to do so and avoid self-imposed segregation? – Paul McCaskey, City of Edinburgh (UK)

Information on the dilemma:

The main issue is the reluctance of some refugees to seek employment and engage with the wider the community. There is a marked difference between those refugees who arrive in Edinburgh under the Syrian Relocation Scheme and receive extensive financial and personal support and those who arrive independently.

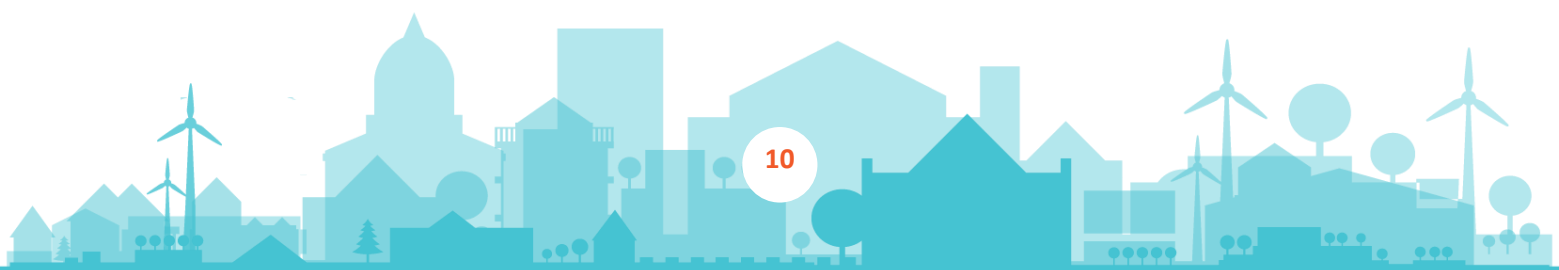
Results of the discussion:

It was suggested to encourage refugees to participate in mentoring and befriending partnerships so they can meet with and learn from local people. Work more closely with local Job Centres to encourage refugees to undertake work experience placements and voluntary positions so that they can improve their English and employability. Continue to explain the benefits of voluntary or paid employment in relation to successful integration into local communities. The group underlined the need to be patient, and reduce the fear that people have. For example, Disabled Syrian refugees are reluctant to seek employment out of fear of losing their financial and social support.

THEMATIC SESSION 3: CREATING PLANS AND STRATEGIES TO ENGAGE MULTIPLE PLAYERS IN PROVIDING EFFECTIVE EDUCATION

Question 1: What are the best practices in motivating and involving all stakeholders (especially in grass root-level organisations) in cross-sectoral implementation of immigrant education plans and strategies? – Matleena Sierla, City of Helsinki (FI)

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Question 2: Do participants from urban, segregated areas in cities have ideas about how to help a range of actors (Civil society, schools, colleges, educational institutions and local education administrations) to develop a set of shared impact objectives which they all agree to work towards? – Anja Jungermann, Stiftung Mercator, Essen (DE)

(Questions were discussed together as they are similar)

Information on the dilemma (Helsinki):

The educational system of Helsinki is extensive; it employs thirty-eight thousand people. This covers everything from primary school education to adult education. Day care centres are not part of the educational system, even if they offer language courses. There are twenty-seven actions defined in a broad programme concerning immigrant education. One of them is the plan to train half of the teaching staff on language awareness. How can you implement these policies and strategies when schools and day care centres have a lot of competence when it comes to educational policy?

Information on the dilemma (Essen):

A specific challenge we are facing with our school development projects is how to scale up results and insights that we achieve in flagship projects, in order to initiate long-term sustainable system change. We do have a lot of expertise, insights and lessons learned from our projects, for instance on how to improve learning conditions for migrant student and students from at-risk neighbourhoods through extended education, language support or managing heterogeneous classrooms, or smoothening transition processes. However, we are constantly addressing the question, how to transfer these insights into strategies that allow for systemic changes. What is the role of local governing bodies, schools supervising authorities, and school administration? How to include all stakeholders, especially in segregated areas, to create collective impact partnerships improving the learning conditions of students?

Result of the discussion:

A possible solution is to look at European funding coordinators, who work on programmes like Horizons 2020. The project management of such a programme is very similar. Another suggestion is to develop a chain approach and roadmap. It is also essential to distribute tasks, set deadlines and make people work together (e.g. try to create platforms to facilitate them in sharing information and best practices). Giving them the responsibility and show the different actors that this will be beneficial for them as well. Moreover, it is important to set out clear goals but leave enough wiggle room for changes: Testing plans on a regular basis, changing them when they do not work are also crucial in the process. Therefore, it is essential to create a step-by-step evaluation for your plan with clear indicators. Another suggestion is a change of mindset. Teachers should not feel that it is an additional burden, but part of their duties.

THEMATIC SESSION 4: ENABLING RAPID INTEGRATION AND LEARNING FOR YOUNG, NON-NATIVE SPEAKING REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

Question 1: How to enable rapid language learning for non-Lithuanian speaking migrant children in schools to enable quicker integration into school curriculum? – Ona Cepulėnienė, Ministry of Education and Science, Vilnius (LT)

Information on the dilemma:

There are about a hundred migrants who live near a NATO base. Adults need to learn Lithuanian level A1 within three months in the refugee centre and level A2 later in their place of residence. Children learn the language in school and those with language skills act as mediators. There is very little contact with the native population. Ukrainians are very motivated to stay, and tend to be more integrated. Moreover, some schools teach in Polish or Russian which makes it easy for them to include migrants since they have experience with teaching Lithuanian as a second language. Lithuanian teachers, however, have little experience with multi-lingual education. An additional challenge is the return of Lithuanian citizens with kids that have no Lithuanian language skills. In conclusion: most refugees do not want to stay and will leave as soon as possible. Refugees and migrants that do want to stay integrate quite well. (but they mostly have a European background anyway). How to retain the migrant population that is prone to leave the country?

Result of the discussion:

The Finnish situation resembles that of Lithuania, so a solution could be to send teachers and policy makers to learn from the situation in Finland. One could then develop a programme and implement them at model schools. Teachers are then rotated so everyone can learn and knowledge is exchanged. It is important to note that language awareness should be known to all teachers, this is not a specific problem for refugees and migrants.

Question 2: How can informal learning (e.g. internships, extracurricular activities) be used to facilitate integration between newly arrived young people and Swedish youth? – Stina Spethz, City of Solna (SE)

Information on the dilemma:

Input needed on a new project that targets newly arrived youths, aged 15-21, who are currently living in Solna, Sweden. The aim of the project is that a higher percentage from the target group will proceed from being enrolled in language introduction courses to mainstream education like upper secondary school, adult education, higher education or find work.

Result of the discussion:

It was discussed how the Swedish culture can make a great impact on the fact that it is hard to make Swedish youth interact with newly arrived youth -because of “the Swedish way of being”. The conclusion seems to be not to focus on the youths but on their surroundings, so that they get to interact with each other in a non-forced way that feels natural through sport classes and other sessions during school time.

Question 3: How to enable non-Finnish speaking young people who arrive late in their education (age 16/17) to ‘fast-track’ in the school system so that they get an education which helps them to integrate? – Pia Hakkari, City of Vantaa (FI)

Information on the dilemma:

In Vantaa there are welcome classes for new arrivals between the ages of eight and sixteen. Teenagers are a concern because they have trouble integrating in school. They become frustrated because they do not want to be taught primary education when they have already completed primary school elsewhere. Is one year enough to fast-track them into normal education? It is important to work on motivation.

Question 4: How to support successful transitions between educational phases for the group of young refugees with little learning experience? – Maren Putensen, Berlin Senate (DE)

Information on the dilemma:

One group of migrants that face special challenges in the process of integration are new immigrants with few learning experience and literacy needs. Even though institutions dispose of experience in this field, the challenge is to integrate a high number of persons with few learning experience.

Result of the discussion:

An important outcome is that even though services are offered, people do not always make use of those services. Moreover, it might not be clear to people what steps are available for them after they have completed a certain phase of education. So, informing them of the possibilities and the structure of the educational system seems an important solution to the problem.

Question 5: Do participants have experience in offering an alternative programme for young migrants (age 15-18) who do not speak the ‘host’ language to improve skills and competences by offering them lessons in their native language? – Krista van der Heijden-Brugman, City of Tilburg (NL)

Information on the dilemma:

The challenge in Tilburg is to teach young migrants (teenagers and unaccompanied minors) soft skills (e.g. Dutch culture and governmental structure) in their native language when they do not speak the host language. Being addressed in their native language makes the youngsters feel safe, which is especially important for unaccompanied minors. Right now there are sixteen languages in one 'transition' class, which makes it difficult to teach in all native languages.

Results of the discussion:

A solution could be to teach these soft skills outside of school; maybe by starting a special camp. Another suggestion was to narrow down the amount of languages by also looking into the second languages of the children. Moreover, one can use an IT translation tool to help with the spoken communication or develop a glossary with pictograms. But since most skills are acquired non-verbally, this can even be addressed when migrants do not speak the language.

There are also suggestions to make the youngsters feel safe. This can be the establishment of a buddy programme, the placement minors in foster families or organisation of a mentor programme. Other suggestions are to set up a peer-to-peer communication network to increase the uptake. Connect children from around the same age, where one has been longer in the Netherlands and can share its knowledge.

Thematic sessions of the module Integration and Working Effectively with Civil Society

- Facilitator:** Sue Lukes, MigrationWork
- Experts:** Thomas Huddleston, Migration Policy Group
Gemma Pinyol, Instrategies
Jan Schröder, Smart Social Lab
- Rapporteur:** Anna Hakami, European Commission, Joint Research Centre

INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC BY THOMAS HUDDLESTON OF MIGRATION POLICY GROUP

Thomas Huddleston discussed five issues that make it difficult to partner with civil society:

The first challenge is multi-level governance. The policy making processes of integration policy often remains a national affair. In some countries cities have a lot of room to develop their own integration practices, in other countries they are completely dependent on national governments. The problem is that funding often comes via the national level. Questions that arise are:

- How do you make sure that local authorities and civil society actually have integration policies that make sense?
- How can local government be a part of integration policy making? Together with national authorities? Or through umbrella organisations?
- How can we make sure that our municipalities live up to people's expectations in terms of integration?

Multi-level governance is very weak in Europe – there is not a lot of co-creation between national and local level in integration policy.

The second challenge is EU funding (AMIF). The European Union's response to the refugee crisis has been funding. There are problems with how AMIF is implemented in member states. There can be an absorption problem, which means that some funding cannot be transferred to different levels of governance.. Another challenge is that national governments decide who gets funding and are responsible for the implementation of the partnership principles and on the degree of collaboration with different stakeholders and their involvement in programming.

The third challenge is migrant community empowerment and representation. In particular:

- How can we make sure that local government, national authorities and mainstream NGOs are working towards migrant empowerment?

- How can we support migrant community organisations and how to we get migrants into regular organisations and political participation?

Migrant organisations have problems with attaining funding, and the existing framework does not work for them. Local authorities can play an important role in finding ways of offering small scale funding, core funding and technical support. Another important challenge is how immigrants are represented into mainstream organisations and politics. There is a need for improving interaction and consultation of migrants and immigrant associations.

The fourth challenge is community-based integration. There is little room for initiatives focused on building relationships between immigrants and non-immigrants. The result is that many CSO's and large volunteering organisations do not have explicit diversity policies (e.g. how do we make sure that our volunteering group is as diverse as the population?). Do they try to achieve diversity? (e.g. scouts, are they actively trying to include children of migrant backgrounds)

The fifth and final challenge is voluntary initiatives. Since 2015 there has been an explosion of new initiatives. A lot of people wanted to get involved and help out. The problem was that many volunteering organisations did not work specifically on migration and local level migration organisations did not have a structure for engaging volunteers. Thus, people started their own initiatives such as creating online courses, creating apps, set up housing- and mentorship initiatives. It brought together a more diverse group of volunteers, often young. Local governments, however, did not seize the opportunity to use these groups for integration practices. This could have benefited both parties since voluntary initiatives could then create a more systematic way of offering integration services, and exchange best practices and feedback with local authorities.

These five challenges show the gaps in integration policy that local authorities could try to solve.

Comment from expert Gemma Pinyol, Instrategies:

Keep in mind that we can find contradictions in some of these issues. For example emphasising peoples' migrant background is not necessarily good for community building. When we are talking about 'civil society' we are talking about the formal civil society. In our engagement with civil society then, we are asking for a certain level of knowledge of the system - social capital - and a level of commitment to want to change things. When working with more informal civil society organisations/initiatives, maybe we need to rethink what we are actually asking of them.

THEMATIC SESSION 1: SECURING AND PROMOTING EFFECTIVE MIGRANT INVOLVEMENT AND/OR PARTICIPATION

Question 1: How to motivate migrants, especially refugees, to participate in the voluntary sector and foster their long-lasting commitment? – Laura Krause, Berlin Neukoeln District Office (DE)

Information on the dilemma:

The aim of the project is to set up a voluntary centre or agency that gives guidance, pools resources, and sets up a network for existing local actors and an umbrella structure. At the moment it consists of two fulltime employees (one with a migrant background). The challenge lies in the organisation. There are many different ways of volunteering. There is formal volunteering (organised) and informal volunteering (initiatives). Often, people engage in private volunteering (help family and friends).

Results of the discussion:

The challenge is to bring them together and get migrants and refugees involved. The group suggested to find the answers to the following questions: is there an actual demand/need in organising volunteers, or is this project a product driven by personal motivations and ideas? Why is political recognition of private volunteers so important? Do they have to be part of the system? Moreover, there needs to be more cooperation with migrant organisations. Instead of working for migrants, the city needs to work with them.

Question 2: How to make democratic involvement of migrants and refugees relevant?
– Jenny Segersten, City District East Gothenburg (SE)

Information on the dilemma:

With regard to the low democratic involvement of people with a foreign background, migrants, refugees, one of the challenges the district faces are our lack of knowledge about how to raise their will to be more engaged.

Results of the discussion:

When promoting democratic involvement with migrants and refugees, a generic message will not work. The message should focus on specific target groups. Local public figures can be involved with engaging migrant communities by promoting participation via social media etc. An proactive attitude to reach out to migrant populations should be encouraged. The process should be continuously be re-evaluated. This feedback can be used to create new discussions and debates.

Question 3: How to reach the hard to reach? How to engage our migrant populations in neighbourhood community development when they are not currently engaging in local activities, volunteering opportunities or community groups systematically? – Colin Havard, Sheffield City Council (UK)

Information on the dilemma:

The challenge is to engage migrant populations in community development as they are not currently engaging in volunteering opportunities or community groups systematically.

Results of the discussion:

It is important to look at previous projects, for example mediators, and see if this can be redone in a different way. Moreover, it is crucial to understand why it is so difficult to reach this community and maybe wait for a better moment to engage with them.

Question 4: How to ensure that migrants receive and understand certain information (from the government) and how to encourage this audience to participate in various existing projects? – Katja Zadorina, City of Ostend (BE)

Information on the dilemma:

For local governments, it is important to reach all the citizens of the city. With over 130 different nationalities, Ostend is very diverse. Besides, a lot of effort and resources are being put into projects that are meant for people with a migration background and therefore can benefit them.

Results of the discussion:

What came out of the session is that personal contact is important. It is preferable to have a proactive attitude towards migrants by finding out where migrant groups socialise, and establish personal relations with the people. By using media outlets – social media, local newspapers, radio and TV – and publishing small segments in multiple languages one can reach a more diverse audience.

Wrap-up

An important overarching theme is the motivation of migrant communities. People need to be motivated to participate, and decide for themselves if they want to get involved. There is not always an easy solution to this problem. Cities should lower their expectations, and focus on small steps in the right direction. This by evaluating and adapting the intervention modalities and working out the core principles of political engagement and involvement. Being creative and trying something new are key factors for success as well. Keep learning from your mistakes, and keep moving forward.

Moreover, integration is a two-way process. Everybody needs to make an effort. Relationships and connections are the only way to solve these issues. Sustain these relations with different communities is essential; there is not just one migrant community. This can be challenging because of existing networks and old hierarchies.

Question 1: How to support local migrant-led organisations (NGO's) in becoming professional actors in the field of integration services and to better include them in policy making processes? – Suvi Lindén, City of Vantaa (FI)

Information on the dilemma:

The challenge is that in Finland a new level of government (in between local and national government) will be implemented. Certain competences from the cities will be transferred to this new, regional government, including social- and health care services. With the national government's focus on privatisation, there is a worry that private companies will get the service contracts, which means that the city will lose all existing networks and human capital from local NGOs that deliver the services now. Vantaa has partnerships with four local migrant-led organisations that take care of integration-related services, and without the city's contracts these NGOs will lose funding they need to exist.

Results of the discussion:

A possible solution is trying to influence the new legislation. By lobbying the city could try to assure that the role of local and migrant-led NGOs are included in the regulations and policies (e.g. social-value contracting, social procurement rules). Partnering up with other cities and include other local organisations that might be affected by this new law but are not migrant-led could be beneficial as well. Moreover, look for support from the city council.

There was also the suggestion to see if there has been any research done on the topic that can support her case. Moreover, look for situations in other cities and countries that have experienced a similar development. Quantifying the work of the migrant-led organisations and showing the kind of expertise they have could also build your case. Consider 'migrant organisations' as experts, and address them as such. The migrants have the expertise needed for the success of integration processes.

Question 2: How to best support the engagement and empowerment of migrant and refugee communities so that they can play an active role in strategic planning for integration at the local level? – Dionysia Lambiri, Migration & Refugee Coordination Centre and Observatory (ACCMR), Athens (EL)

Information on the dilemma:

ACCMR encourages active participation and inclusion at all levels. However, so far, it has been quite challenging to directly engage with representatives from migrant communities and involve them in a meaningful way in the work of ACCMR.

Results of the discussion:

Goals should be specified through answering the following questions: What is the objective? Is it participation of migrant communities or gathering information from them? Is it more participation or improvement of the city's programmes and services? If the objective is more engagement from migrants in decision making processes, support should be asked from local NGOs and migrant communities.

Question 3: How can policy development, project planning and decision making processes of political and civil society actors on integration be opened up to the participation of refugees and migrants and what kind of support would this extremely heterogeneous group need to make their voices heard? – Janina Stürner, City of Stuttgart (DE)

Information on the dilemma:

The City of Stuttgart has a long-standing tradition of integrating representatives of different diaspora groups in municipal policymaking. The inclusion of refugees in local policymaking has thus far been more difficult, given the lack of organisational and representational structures in these heterogeneous groups.

Results of the discussion:

It is crucial to consider migrants as experts who could share their knowledge with other actors, such as city officials. Right now, the city of Stuttgart has no official structure to find potential social partners for projects, but this should change by for example setting up an online bulletin board or website. Moreover, the city could ask a university to do a continuous evaluation during the project.

Question 4: How to manage the Communities roundtables (new ways of directly involving first and second generation migrants in policy making) to make them more effective in terms of inclusion in and with civil society? – Chiara Gionco, City of Turin (IT)

Information on the dilemma:

We are developing the “Communities round tables” that are the instrument we use to deal directly with our migrants communities of first and second generation.

We convene them according to the needs that emerge.

Results of the discussion:

The goal of this project should be changed. The goal should not be to involve communities but to involve people/citizens, including Italians. People should be selected for roundtables based on what they have in common instead of their migrant background, such as being students, parents or business owners. Roundtables should take place at a neutral place instead of city hall. This will create the opportunity for a more relaxed and open conversation. It could also be beneficial for city administrators

to go out and meet people from different neighbourhoods instead of inviting the people come to them. Hiring someone with a migrant background to create a more diverse culture within the local government could also be beneficial.

Question 1: How do the other participants involve the local community in the integration of refugees? – Iris de Kok, City of Tilburg (NL)

Information on the dilemma:

In Tilburg there is an attempt to include refugees more in citizen participation. The challenge is to find connections between the Dutch people and refugees, and let them interact in activities. The city wants to increase volunteering in the city and try to engage them more within the volunteering networks. Moreover, Tilburg wants find ways to make public spaces more inviting for refugees.

Result of the discussion:

One outcome is to start with the physical spaces. Make the city centre more attractive for all citizens, so people will engage more. Furthermore, the focus should be on actions that address the interests of both (native and non-native citizens). Another idea is to include existing clubs and associations and work with them to include refugees. Efforts should be made to make sure that communities or NGOs become more welcoming for refugees.

Question 2: How to secure and maintain volunteer involvement in refugee integration in the city? – Pablo Peralta de Andrés, Barcelona Ciutat Refugi (ES)

Information on the dilemma:

The issue to be discussed was volunteering: professionalization of volunteering, the funding of volunteering, and the challenge to keep volunteers. There is a need for more political commitment from the citizens.

Results of the discussion:

It has been proposed that instead of directly funding volunteers that work with refugees, it would be better to fund local projects and activities that are focused on the needs of all citizens. This allows for setting up a more inclusive policy and expand these 'inclusive' projects, avoiding the problem of people only volunteering for a short amount of time (as was the case in 2015/2016 with the high influx of refugees). Moreover, voluntary sector and citizen initiatives can be used interchangeably without conflict.

Question 3: How to keep high levels of engagement of volunteers working on implementing our city strategy on integrating migrants? – Paulina Właźlak, City of Gdansk (PL)

Information on the dilemma:

In Gdansk, decreasing levels of engagement are observed when it comes to implementation of our cities strategy on integrating migrants. Those levels were very high at the conceptual phase of the project and right now we hardly have any volunteers to work on implementation of our integration policies.

Result of the discussion:

The strategy to integrate refugees for 2030 is too structural and complicated. A suggestion was to create and implement short-term goals and make services more accessible to people, such as newcomers. It is important to downsize on the formal structure, and to become more flexible and reach out to people. Another suggestion was to communicate the achievements of the strategy with the citizens.

THEMATIC SESSION 4: THE ROLE/S OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS IN MIGRANT SETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION

Question 1: How to tackle the challenges of tensions between existing communities and their organisations and the new arrivals, and what learning and best practices on integration can be applied to our diverse inner city areas? – Bash Uppal, Leeds City Council (UK)

Information on the dilemma:

Leeds has around nine-hundred thousand inhabitants. It is a growing city with an affluent city centre, but poverty is increasing. The poorest areas are the areas with a diverse population, and big refugee communities. The municipality chose to change city funding, focusing on the poverty-stricken neighbourhoods instead of dividing the money equally over the city. The challenge is that this caused a lot of tension between richer and poorer areas, but also within the poor areas themselves (newcomers vs (poverty-stricken) natives).

Result of the discussion:

Demonstrating that the redistribution of city funding is good for everybody could be a solution. Trying to create a more inclusive narrative about neighbours and communities could be beneficial as well. Another suggestion was to establish a fairness commission that can safeguard fair treatment from the city council for everybody in Leeds.

Question 2: How can the administration work with civil society organisations to combat the daily discrimination and racist exclusion migrants are facing in a specific neighbourhood of Berlin? – Birgit Gust, Berlin Pankow District (DE)

Information on the dilemma:

In Pankow a very active civil society supports refugees. On the other hand there are many sceptical citizens living in Pankow who are dissatisfied with the changes in their environment occurring with immigration. Refugees face discrimination and racist attacks.

Result of the discussion:

Best practices were exchanged during this session, in particular relating to raising awareness or creating a positive narrative for people living within the neighbourhood. This can be achieved by buddy programmes or newspaper articles that focus on the personal background of refugees. This will help to create more understanding by personifying refugees; to individualise them instead of them being a statistic or stereotype.

Question 3: How best to collaborate with civil society, to develop measurable, positive, empowering relationships which leave a long-term legacy and how best to gain their support and ‘buy in’? – Rowenna Foggie, Newcastle City Council (UK)

Information on the dilemma:

Newcastle is not allowed to provide services for failed asylum seekers. This poses a challenge since these people are in need of services. The city relies on NGOs to support these failed asylum seekers, but cannot give them any funding. These legislative barriers cannot be changed on the local level, since the competences lie with the national government. But how can the city build a lasting NGO engagement without giving them any resources?

Result of the discussion:

An important step is to take stock of what the city needs from NGOs by answering the following questions: What are the issues that the city cannot manage itself? What is the expertise the city has and has not? Beyond funding the city could provide them with access to legal support, venues or information about the organisational structure of civic society. The city can encourage networks, alliances and the creation of an umbrella organisation.

Wrap-Up Session

ALIYYAH AHAD, MIGRATION POLICY INSTITUTE EUROPE

The issue of the motivation of actors (e.g. teachers, parents, children, school administration) to promote migrant integration was central in the discussions. A solution is to try to engage the middle class and encourage parents. Teachers should be trained differently in order to cater the needs of these migrant students and school leaders should encourage diversity.

Given the time it takes to create these kinds of changes one needs to manage expectations (clear indicators) and be realistic about what cities can achieve. Large barriers in and outside of educational policy, such as housing, have to be taken into account.

GEMMA PINYOL, INSTRATEGIES

Local policy makers are the experts who should take every opportunity to share their know-how and best practices. The real problem is to have the right tools. There are good ideas, but policy makers lack the right tools to make integration more successful. Are the challenges stooled on migration, or is it inequality? There is a need to think differently; to look beyond traditional actors, and involve social media and technology. Moreover, we need to invest in research but share our ideas and best practices.

There is a need to rethink multi-level governance on migration. Migration and integration cannot be solved on a local level. Moreover, the narrative on migrant communities needs to be changed. There is no homogenous community. Migrants should be considered as individuals. Nationality is important at a national level, but not at a local level. On a local level people are parents, students, neighbours.

JAN SCHRÖDER, SMART SOCIAL LAB

EU societies are in the middle of a shift; a shift from helping migrants and refugees to developing a society. This results in a shift in targets (from migrant communities to neighbourhoods - inclusive) and a shift in systems towards social innovation and open systems. This is a structural change, but should leave open a lot of room for experimentation. Moreover, communication is more important now than ever. This was a recurring theme in every session. These dilemmas raised today should be addressed at a national level as well.