



# European Cities on the Front Line

New and emerging governance models for migrant inclusion



Co-funded by the  
European Union



The opinions expressed in the report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout the report do not imply expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of IOM concerning legal status of any country, territory, city or area, or of its authorities, or concerning its frontiers or boundaries.

IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As an intergovernmental organization, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to: assist in the meeting of operational challenges of migration; advance understanding of migration issues; encourage social and economic development through migration; and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

Migration Policy Institute Europe, established in Brussels in 2011, is a nonprofit, independent research institute that aims to provide a better understanding of migration in Europe and thus promote effective policymaking. MPI Europe provides authoritative research and practical policy design to governmental and nongovernmental stakeholders who seek more effective management of immigration, immigrant integration, and asylum systems as well as successful outcomes for newcomers, families of immigrant background, and receiving communities throughout Europe.

This document was produced with the financial assistance of the European Commission. The views expressed herein can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of the European Commission.

Publisher: International Organization for Migration  
Mission in Italy with Coordinating Role for the Mediterranean  
Casale Strozzi Superiore  
Via L.G. Faravelli snc 00195, Rome  
Italy  
Email: [iomrome@iom.int](mailto:iomrome@iom.int)  
Website: [www.italy.iom.int](http://www.italy.iom.int)

Publisher: Migration Policy Institute Europe  
Residence Palace, 155 Rue de la Loi  
3rd Floor  
1040 Brussels  
Belgium  
Tel.: +32 (0) 2235 2113  
Email: [communications@migrationpolicy.org](mailto:communications@migrationpolicy.org)  
Website: [www.mpieurope.org](http://www.mpieurope.org)

This publication was edited by MPI Europe. It was issued without formal editing by IOM.

© 2020 Migration Policy Institute Europe and International Organization for Migration.  
All Rights Reserved.

Design and Layout: Sara Staedicke, MPI  
Photo: Francesco Cirigliano

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission from Migration Policy Institute Europe. A full-text PDF of this document is available for free download from [www.mpieurope.org](http://www.mpieurope.org).

Information for reproducing excerpts from this publication can be found at [www.migrationpolicy.org/about/copyright-policy](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/about/copyright-policy). Inquiries can also be directed to [communications@migrationpolicy.org](mailto:communications@migrationpolicy.org).

Suggested citation: Patuzzi, Liam. 2020. *European Cities on the Front Line: New and emerging governance models for migrant inclusion*. Brussels and Geneva: Migration Policy Institute Europe and International Organization for Migration.

# European Cities on the Front Line

## New and emerging governance models for migrant inclusion

By Liam Patuzzi

May 2020



Co-funded by the  
European Union



# Contents

---

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>1 Introduction</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>2 Common Roadblocks to Inclusive Local Communities</b> .....	<b>5</b>
A. Access to housing.....	7
B. Access to local labour markets.....	9
C. Access to education and child care.....	11
D. Access to health care and mental health services.....	13
E. What governance choices are behind these challenges?.....	14
<b>3 Local Policy Approaches: How can cities tackle integration governance challenges?</b> .....	<b>15</b>
A. Defining target groups.....	16
B. Improving coordination and collaboration within the municipality.....	19
C. Pursuing a multi-stakeholder strategy.....	22
D. Designing inclusive services.....	26
E. Improving migrant representation.....	28
<b>4 Conclusions and Recommendations</b> .....	<b>30</b>
<b>About the Author</b> .....	<b>33</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>34</b>

## Executive Summary

Over the past decade, migration has transformed cities and towns across Europe. Major destinations such as Brussels and Paris, in which immigrants make up a far larger share of the population than the national average, have become increasingly superdiverse, home to residents with a wide range of national, cultural, linguistic, and religious backgrounds and socioeconomic profiles. These metropolises are often the focal point of debates about migrant inclusion. A less frequently told story is that of smaller cities and those with less experience with migration.

For localities along key transit routes or new to managing diversity, recent influxes of asylum seekers and other migrants have strained infrastructure and services unused to fluctuating and heterogenous populations. Localities close to Europe's southern borders such as Thessaloniki, Greece; Malaga, Spain; and Palermo, Italy faced an especially difficult set of challenges following the 2015–2016 migration crisis, as large numbers of newcomers struggled to find their footing in tight housing markets and troubled local economies. Meanwhile, Central and Eastern European cities such as Warsaw and Gdansk in Poland have witnessed growth in their cultural and religious diversity, amid sometimes uneasy relations between local authorities and the national government. Further east, cities such as Bucharest, Romania, have only recently begun to get acquainted with more sustained and diversified immigration flows – including asylum seekers as well as labour migrants attracted by emerging skill needs.

A central issue for many of these cities on the front line of recent migration to Europe has been housing. For some Greek, Italian and Spanish cities that are major tourist destinations, increases in migration have coincided with the rise of Airbnb, leading to spiralling rent prices and a limited supply of accommodations. Such trends have resulted in many newcomers living in overcrowded housing or concentrated in neighbourhoods far from jobs and services. Some have ended up homeless. Other pressing immigrant integration issues have included supporting newcomers into work, expanding school places and meeting mental health needs – often against the backdrop of fluctuating flows, scarce resources, limited local authority over integration matters, rapidly changing national legislation, and mercurial public opinion. And while many cities in Southern and Eastern Europe have a large informal economy that can make labour markets more porous, this may come at the price of newcomers getting stuck in low-wage, precarious or exploitative work.

Since many integration issues cut across policy areas, they cannot be solved by one department independently, or even by the government in isolation. Cities face the challenge of designing services

*Since many integration issues cut across policy areas, they cannot be solved by one department independently, or even by the government in isolation.*

capable of meeting the needs of diverse groups, including immigrants with varying legal statuses and associated access to public services, to reduce the risk that they fall through the gaps of support systems – for instance, as unaccompanied children turn 18 or refugees leave reception centres.

Yet, cities must do so without fuelling accusations that newcomers are “jumping the queue” amid rising xenophobia and anxiety over competition for scarce resources. Many of these challenges are universal, but they are often felt particularly keenly in localities with more limited resources or immigration experience.



A number of governance approaches have emerged through this research that can help cities address these challenges and promote migrant inclusion:

- ▶ **Balancing targeted and mainstream services.** European governments of all levels have seen a shift towards “mainstreaming” diversity and inclusion; in other words, meeting the needs of diverse groups across all services instead of through stand-alone integration programming. Cities in Southern as well as Central and Eastern Europe – the focus of this study – are no different, yet their more limited experience with immigration and often limited integration budgets have driven two broad trends: first, a greater tendency towards targeted services developed recently or for specific groups; and second, a de facto mainstreamed approach because the response to immigration is still nascent. Finding the right balance between mainstream and targeted services is important everywhere, but particularly in cities that need to address highly specific newcomer needs with limited experience and resources, and without fuelling locals’ concerns about competition. While some targeted services may always be needed, particularly for the most vulnerable newcomers, proactive strategies may include creating pathways between targeted and mainstream services to ensure they do not duplicate or work against one another.
- ▶ **Improving intragovernmental coordination.** In some cities, the recent bump in immigration has been a mixed blessing: Milan, for example, improved coordination between governmental actors to handle the migration crisis, yet once the sense of crisis abated, this collaborative approach did not translate into permanent structures. Next to helping local officials identify and reduce contradictions between policies in different integration-related areas (such as social benefits, education and housing), intragovernmental coordination also helps give migrant and refugee inclusion cross-cutting policy relevance. This may be especially important in newer destinations, where the tendency to view integration as a niche topic confined to the social and cultural domain may result in limited political attention and underinvestment. Strong leadership, either in the form of an integration commissioner or a mayor endorsing inclusion as a priority, can help bring different agencies to the table.
- ▶ **Supporting multi-stakeholder partnerships.** Cities with limited budgets and authority over integration matters, as well as those only recently exposed to immigration, often rely on non-governmental partners to deliver critical services. Close coordination and/or collaboration with civil society may help local authorities guarantee more consistent integration support in contexts of uncertain funding and shifting competences. It can also help circumvent barriers of trust that may make some immigrants wary of accessing services offered by public authorities. And in newer destinations where governments’ in-house capacity may be lacking, partnering with civil society can be an affordable and effective way to build migration-related know-how. But cultivating trust between local authorities and civil society actors can be tough, especially when funding is uncertain or all partners have different objectives or views on an issue (such as prioritizing law and order versus protecting human rights). To address this gap, Milan has been working to shift from a donor–supplier relationship to one of “co-design”, in which the city and its non-governmental partners share responsibility for service design and implementation. Other cities such as Gdansk, Thessaloniki, and the Austrian town of Kufstein have an integration strategy that sets out principles for cooperation with partners.
- ▶ **Re-examining the organization, location and accessibility of services.** The real test of governance structures is in the design and delivery of local services, including where they are located and how they are linked to one another. Making the right choices from the outset will

allow integration investments to have the widest possible reach and impact by ensuring that migrant communities (and newcomers in particular) are aware of existing services and by reducing roadblocks within individual integration pathways. Concentrating services in one location, as in the “one-stop shop” model popularized in Portugal and more recently adapted to contexts as different as Bucharest, Milan and Thessaloniki, can help newcomers understand what services are on offer and improve collaboration between providers. But one-stop shops may require an iterative approach – for example, starting as a single information point, and progressively incorporating new partners and services – in cities where public authorities and civil society have long worked separately (or mistrusted) each other. Neighbourhood-based approaches, on the other hand, may help engage local residents in integration activities. One pioneering model for smaller cities with limited resources to dedicate to inclusion efforts is sharing services with neighbouring municipalities, as is the case in Kufstein, provided that newcomers have good access to public transportation so they can reach these services.

- ▶ **Improving immigrant representation in local decision-making.** Municipal advisory bodies that engage migrant communities can empower immigrants by giving them a greater say in local policies and community life. And especially in cities with recent or rapidly diversifying migrant populations, they can reduce the risk that policy decisions and investments are based on misguided assumptions. For instance, Palermo’s *Consulta delle Culture* (Council of Cultures) brings together 21 representatives elected by the city’s immigrants to advocate for the interests of different communities and organize intercultural activities. But in some places, there are concerns that such exercises may be tokenistic – a perfunctory show of inclusivity with little real effect on local decision-making. A more ambitious approach is for local authorities to more proactively seek to hire people from an immigrant background through outreach and efforts to reduce entry barriers; though such measures have proven to diversify the municipal workforce in some European cities, including Amsterdam and Ghent, they are sparse in the cities studied for this project. Making city administrations reflective of the populations they serve may be a longer-term goal, requiring a shift in mindset towards valuing the expertise of workers from diverse backgrounds on more than just migrant integration issues.

Adapting to rising diversity is becoming a key priority in European cities and towns, including those that have only recently become immigrant destinations, or where migrant populations are becoming more varied in their profiles and needs. These localities can learn from promising practices seen both in traditional immigrant-receiving metropolises and – as this study demonstrates – in a much wider range of cities and towns. In this period of transition, city leaders would do well to present migrant inclusion as a non-partisan issue and reach out to unlikely partners both within and outside of government – from small social enterprises to big employers and community groups. They may also wish to consider building out local monitoring and evaluation capacity, so that officials have appropriate diagnostic tools to understand the fast-evolving population dynamics reshaping their communities.

---

*City leaders would do well to present migrant inclusion as a non-partisan issue and reach out to unlikely partners both within and outside of government.*

# 1 Introduction

Across Europe, migration issues have dominated national and EU-level debates in recent years. But it is at the local level that migration-related challenges – from overcrowding in housing to pressures on public services – come to the fore. The rapid surge in mixed migration in 2015–2016 thrust many local authorities across Europe into emergency mode, forcing them to find ways to address the needs of vulnerable groups, including refugees with a range of physical and mental health conditions and unaccompanied children. Often, localities faced these challenges amidst tight budgets, existing pressures on housing and labour markets, and intensified public scrutiny of and political polarization around migration and integration policies.

Some of the European cities most affected by recent migration trends have large and growing immigrant populations. Often, these are urban areas where economic opportunities are more plentiful and diaspora communities offer newcomers networks and resources. In Brussels, for example, the foreign-born share of residents is 43 per cent, more than 25 percentage points higher than Belgium's national average.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, in Milan, the number of foreign-born residents has more than doubled in the past 15 years, now accounting for almost 20 per cent of the city's population.<sup>2</sup> Many of these cities are cradles of superdiversity, with residents who speak a staggering array of languages and have varied countries of origin, immigration experiences and statuses, and socioeconomic profiles.<sup>3</sup> Gaps between national and local demographics can pose significant challenges for service delivery, population planning and multilevel governance.

But while many European metropolises are old hands when it comes to receiving immigrants, these are hardly the only cities that have been affected by migration in recent years. Others – including newer immigrant destinations, small- and medium-sized cities, and places on the front line of receiving new arrivals to the European Union – have been forced to rapidly develop strategies for managing population changes and coordinating public services. As the sense of crisis has abated, some of these cities have struggled to transition from emergency response to long-term planning for migrant and refugee inclusion due to factors ranging from limited budgets and jurisdiction, to tensions with higher levels of government and public opinion.

This report explores how local administrations across Europe have navigated providing migrants and refugees access to public services and supporting their broader inclusion. It focuses on cities and smaller towns in Southern as well as Central and Eastern Europe that are facing particularly difficult situations, such as high levels of spontaneous arrivals, restrictive national policies, strained economies, limited integration experience, and a weak and/or thinly spread service infrastructure. The report starts by examining different challenges to migrant and refugee inclusion at the local level before turning to options to address such challenges. It concludes with recommendations on how to make the most of local governance levers to optimize integration outcomes in the face of various constraints.

1 Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), “[Foreign-Born Population](#)”, accessed 26 February 2020; Paolo Veneri, “[The Integration of Migrants in OECD Regions](#)” (presentation at the International Forum on Migration Statistics, Paris, 15–16 January 2018).

2 Tuttitalia, “[Cittadini Stranieri Milano 2019](#)”, accessed 26 February 2020.

3 As described by Steven Vertovec, the term “superdiversity” indicates a level and kind of complexity that goes well beyond what many immigrant-receiving countries have previously experienced – diversity in terms of national, ethnic, linguistic, and religious backgrounds, legal status, migration channels, human capital levels and many more dimensions. See Steven Vertovec, “[Towards Post-Multiculturalism? Changing Communities, Conditions and Contexts of Diversity](#)”, *International Social Science Journal* 68, no. 227–28 (March–June 2018): 167–178.



**BOX 1****About the ADMin4ALL project**

This research was conducted as part of the ADMin4ALL project on supporting social inclusion of vulnerable migrants in Europe. The project, which is implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and funded by the European Commission, aims to enhance the capacity of local governments to develop sustainable strategies and inclusive services for the successful social and economic integration of migrants.

This study draws its findings in part from semi-structured qualitative interviews conducted by the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) Europe, either in person or via telephone, with representatives of Kufstein, Austria; Thessaloniki and the neighbouring municipalities of Kalamaria and Neapoli-Sykies in Greece; Milan and Palermo, Italy; Malta; Gdansk and Warsaw, Poland; Bucharest, Romania; and Malaga, Spain. These cities offer an interesting range of examples, given differences between them in terms of population size, the framework of national policies and resources, and their experiences as immigrant destinations. Interviewees included local authority officials and public service providers as well as non-governmental local stakeholders from civil society, migrant organizations, social enterprises and the private sector.

For more information on the ADMin4ALL project, see: <https://admin4all.eu/>.

## 2 Common Roadblocks to Inclusive Local Communities

Recent migration trends have posed a wide range of challenges for European cities and towns, many of which found themselves having to rapidly address newcomers' basic needs when the response of national governments lagged behind. For example, the arrival of large numbers of vulnerable refugees has increased the need for mental health services, and growth in the irregular migrant population has challenged communities to rethink how to help meet the basic needs of residents without legal status and, thus, with limited access to many formal state supports. Not all of these challenges were new; recent immigration has also exacerbated long-standing (and in some cases, long-ignored) challenges, such as limited social housing or funding constraints.

How sharply these challenges have been felt depends on a number of factors, including: (i) the locality's history of immigration and diversity; (ii) its geography and positioning along mobility routes; (iii) the size and characteristics of its immigrant population; (iv) how responsibility and resources for migrant integration are distributed among authorities (multilevel governance); (v) existing integration services and support infrastructure; and (vi) the wider social, economic and political context.

The European localities facing some of the most acute challenges in managing diversity – exacerbated by the inflows of 2015–2016, but often with deeper roots – can be grouped into five categories:

- ▶ **Frontline cities.** Localities close to the external borders of the European Union – in this study's sample, Thessaloniki, Malaga, and Palermo – have faced strong pressures as a result of heightened arrivals over the past five years. Over time, some of these cities have experienced a high density of vulnerable migrants, as the most resourceful frequently move on to other destinations that promise greater economic opportunities, better asylum prospects, and stronger social networks thanks to pre-existing migrant communities.

- ▶ **Cities that are both destinations and transit hubs.** Some cities that have long been attractive destinations thanks to a strong local economy and the livelihood opportunities they offer – such as Milan, which boasts a much lower unemployment rate for migrants from outside the European Union than the rest of Italy<sup>4</sup> – experienced a dramatic increase in arrivals during 2015–2016. At the same time, some of these cities became important transit hubs for migrants on their way to wealthier destinations; these localities faced additional challenges in planning services due to uncertainty about how many newcomers would stay and how many would move on.
- ▶ **Cities whose immigrant populations are becoming more diverse.** For cities such as Gdansk and Warsaw, immigration is not a new reality. But while the numbers are still relatively small, until recently the migrant communities in these cities were rather homogeneous and from geographically close/culturally similar countries, such as Ukraine. Over the past few years, however, migration to these cities has diversified, with labour migrants coming from South and South-East Asia and (to a much lesser extent) refugees coming from the Middle East and Central Asia.<sup>5</sup> This has given rise to pushback against immigration from parts of local society (including some public institutions) and highlighted the need for tailored integration strategies for more diverse newcomers. While some of these destinations have taken big steps in recent years as regards integration governance – with Gdansk being widely acknowledged as a European “best practice”<sup>6</sup> – many face resource constraints and suffer from the lack of national integration frameworks.
- ▶ **Smaller receiving communities.** Smaller towns often lack the resources, capacity or incentive to develop fully fledged integration policies. However, growing migrant populations and recent experiences with refugee arrivals for communities along key mixed-migration routes – such as Kufstein, which is close to the Austrian-German border – have resulted in greater awareness of the importance of long-term investments in integration governance instruments.
- ▶ **Newer immigrant destinations.** Other European cities are just starting to experience immigration, including some that have more traditionally been places of emigration, such as Bucharest.<sup>7</sup> Here, local authorities tend to be less familiar with migrants’ needs and to lack experience operating migrant-focused services as these are more often run by civil society actors, international organizations, and (to some extent) national governments. But these local authorities’ responsibilities’ vis-à-vis migrant integration may grow as national governments recognize the benefits of a decentralized approach. At the same time, some localities’ growing appetite for migration as a means of filling emerging labour gaps may encourage authorities to tap into the experience of civil society, build their own capacities, and develop a more coherent integration infrastructure.

Wider contextual factors also play a key role: the economic downturn of the late 2000s and early 2010s has reduced integration investments across all government levels,<sup>8</sup> and many cities are still grappling

4 Tuttitalia, “Cittadini Stranieri Milano 2019”, accessed 26 February 2020.

5 *The Economist*, “Poland Is Cocking Up Migration in a Very European Way”, *The Economist*, 22 February 2020; Eurostat, “Five Main Citizenship of (non-EU) Asylum Applicants, First-Time Applicants, Rounded Figures” (data tables, 2019).

6 European Web Site on Integration, “Gdansk, Poland Wins 2018 Innovation in Politics Award for Work in Immigrant Integration”, updated 18 November 2018.

7 Intercultural Cities, *City of Bucharest Intercultural Profile* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2015); Vedran Obucina, “Will Romania Accommodate Asian Workers and Change Its Labor Market?”, *Obserwator Finansowy.pl*, 3 June 2019.

8 Elizabeth Collett, *Immigrant Integration in Europe in a Time of Austerity* (Washington, D.C.: Migration Policy Institute, 2011).

with the effects of eroding tax revenues and budget cuts.<sup>9</sup> Protracted economic stagnation may also result in higher unemployment of migrant workers, who more often hold precarious jobs,<sup>10</sup> and local residents who have had to “tighten their belts” due to decreasing wages and cuts in social support may view the arrival of newcomers more critically.<sup>11</sup>

Many of the most pressing integration challenges have thus emerged at the intersection of recent population changes and broader social challenges, as will be discussed in the subsections that follow.

## A. Access to housing

Pre-eminent among the integration challenges cities are facing is ensuring that newcomers can find appropriate housing – a task that has become more complex in recent years. Housing is vital to help new arrivals, and especially newly arrived asylum seekers, develop a sense of security and build autonomy; it is also a key part of connecting them to local services and job opportunities. Barriers to finding housing can put migrants at risk of living in overcrowded conditions and/or in segregated neighbourhoods, and of passing associated disadvantages on to their children.<sup>12</sup> Segregation, in particular, can be a vicious circle, since minimal contact with other social groups constrains newcomers’ access to economic opportunities that could be their ticket to moving elsewhere. Recent research has shown that in the European Union, a lack of contact with mainstream society, as experienced by migrants living in “minority niche areas”, leads to a higher risk of unemployment and lower wages.<sup>13</sup>

---

*Finding good quality housing is one of the most frequently cited challenges across very different cities in Europe.*

Finding good quality housing is one of the most frequently cited challenges across very different cities in Europe, and beyond.<sup>14</sup> Migrants may face barriers to renting associated with their legal status, unstable employment, or (particularly for newcomers) a lack of credit history and financial guarantees.<sup>15</sup> Some also face discrimination from landlords.<sup>16</sup>

These migrant-specific challenges often interact with broader housing issues. In Warsaw, for example, there is very limited social housing, and both native- and foreign-born applicants face long waiting

9 A recent OECD study surveyed a sample of 72 cities and found that 80 per cent of them struggle with funding gaps, due to uncertain and/or insufficient local taxes and national budget provisions. See OECD, *Working Together for Local Integration of Migrants and Refugees* (Paris: OECD, 2018).

10 Federico Biagi, Sara Grubanov-Boskovic, Fabrizio Natale, and Raquel Sebastian Lago, *Migrant Workers and the Digital Transformation in the EU* (Brussels: European Commission, Joint Research Centre, 2018).

11 Joachim Vogt Isaksen, “The Impact of the Financial Crisis on European Attitudes toward Immigration”, *Comparative Migration Studies* 7, no. 24 (2019).

12 OECD, *Working Together for Local Integration of Migrants and Refugees* (Paris: OECD, 2018).

13 Growth, Equal Opportunities, Migration, and Markets (GEMM) Project, *GEMM Policy Briefs in Focus* (Brussels: GEMM Project, 2018).

14 World Economic Forum, *Migration and Its Impact on Cities – An Insight Report* (Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2017).

15 In the United Kingdom, for example, landlords are required to check legal status, which leads to a chilling effect that makes them less likely to rent to minorities more broadly. See C. J. McKinney, “Immigration Inspector: Right to Rent Scheme not Being Properly Monitored or Evaluated”, *Free Movement*, 28 March 2018.

16 Author interview with Dominik Wach, Senior Social Work Specialist, Warsaw Family Assistance Centre, 26 September 2019; author interview with Chiara Cianciolo, Social Housing Coordinator, Diaconal Centre of the Waldesian Church “La Noce”, Palermo, 6 November 2019; author interview with Antonella Colombo, City Official for Social Assistance Services, Unit on Policies for Inclusion and Immigration, City of Milan, 10 September 2019; International Organization for Migration (IOM), European Commission, and Italian Ministry of the Interior, “L’accesso alla casa per titolari di protezione internazionale: Risultati preliminari” (internal publication, EU Structural Reform Support Service Project, IOM, Geneva, September 2019).

times.<sup>17</sup> In some Southern European cities, such as Malaga, that are both holiday destinations and recipients of notable numbers of recently arrived immigrants, this overlap has complicated matters; the increased popularity of short-term rental platforms such as Airbnb, gentrification, and rising rental costs all make it much more difficult for newcomers to find suitable accommodations.<sup>18</sup> In Thessaloniki, similar developments may jeopardize the success of initiatives such as IOM's HELIOS project that aim to help refugees transition from temporary to independent living but rely on the availability of affordable housing on the private rental market.<sup>19</sup> In cities such as Milan that have tight housing markets<sup>20</sup> and Greek cities whose residents are among the most overburdened by the cost of housing of any country in the European Union,<sup>21</sup> migration may fuel resentment among established residents if housing initiatives for newcomers create the perception that they are "jumping the queue".<sup>22</sup>

The uptick in arrivals in 2015–2016 also forced many localities to find housing extremely quickly, resulting in makeshift solutions that were often poorly suited to the needs of vulnerable migrants. For example, civil society representatives interviewed in Thessaloniki observed that separate tents within refugee camps or rented hotel spaces – commonly used across Greece as housing for unaccompanied children<sup>23</sup> – often fall short of ensuring the mental health and well-being of these children<sup>24</sup> due to their precarious/temporary nature and the lack of specialized services. In other cases, the main housing challenge occurs later on, due to limited follow-on support for those leaving reception centres. In Italy, recognized refugees are initially able to live and access early integration supports at SIPROIMI centres,<sup>25</sup> but after leaving, many struggle to find their feet in local housing markets.<sup>26</sup> And social workers in Thessaloniki and other major Greek cities have reported that the scale of housing problems and rising rent prices there have created such high barriers to housing for refugees leaving overcrowded camps that only international aid programmes have been able to provide some relief by offering funded urban accommodation – including for unaccompanied young migrants who age out of some reception supports when they turn 18.<sup>27</sup>

17 Author interview with Dominik Wach, Senior Social Work Specialist, Warsaw Family Support Centre, 26 September 2019.

18 Author interview with Irida Pandiri and Nefeli Pandiri, Social Workers, Association for the Social Support of Youth (ARSIS), Thessaloniki, 17 September 2019; author interview with Ahmed Khalifa, Vice President and Project Manager, Association Marroqui for the Integration of Immigrants, Malaga, 20 December 2019.

19 The HELIOS Project run by the IOM contributes to rental and moving costs and operates networks with apartment owners. For more information, see European Commission, "IOM's HELIOS Project Promotes Integration of International Protection Beneficiaries in Greece", European Web Site on Integration, 22 November 2019.

20 Author interview with Paolo Pagani, Coordinator, and Paolo Grassini, Head of Social Housing, Cooperative Farsi Prossimo, Milan, 10 September 2019.

21 World Bank, "EU Faces Affordable Housing Crisis Excluding Young People From Top-Quality Job Opportunities, Says World Bank" (news release, 8 November 2018).

22 OECD, *Working Together for Local Integration of Migrants and Refugees* (Paris: OECD, 2018).

23 Asylum Information Database (AIDA), "Special Reception Needs of Vulnerable Groups Greece", accessed 30 March 2020.

24 Author interview with Irida Pandiri and Nefeli Pandiri, Social Workers, ARSIS, Thessaloniki, 17 September 2019.

25 The SIPROIMI system, which replaced the previous SPRAR system in 2018, is a second-line reception system only accessible to beneficiaries of international protection and unaccompanied children; in contrast, the SPRAR was also accessible to asylum seekers. See Asylum Information Database (AIDA), "Short Overview of the Italian Reception System", accessed 26 February 2020.

26 Author interview with Paolo Pagani, Coordinator, and Paolo Grassini, Head of Social Housing, Cooperative Farsi Prossimo, Milan, 10 September 2019; IOM, European Commission, and Italian Ministry of the Interior, "L'accesso alla casa per titolari di protezione internazionale: Risultati preliminari" (internal publication, EU Structural Reform Support Service Project, IOM, Geneva, September 2019).

27 Author interview with Irida Pandiri and Nefeli Pandiri, Social Workers, ARSIS, Thessaloniki, 17 September 2019. For example, the Emergency Support to Integration and Accommodation (ESTIA) programme provides urban accommodation and cash assistance to refugees and asylum seekers in Greece. The EU-funded programme is run by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in collaboration with the Greek government, local authorities and NGOs. See UNHCR, "ESTIA – A New Chapter in the Lives of Refugees in Greece", accessed 5 March 2020.

Finally, certain groups of migrants – including asylum seekers awaiting a decision on their case, those whose claims have been rejected, and irregular immigrants – are extremely vulnerable to destitution and homelessness. In some European cities, they may be forced to sleep rough, either due to limited places available in night shelters or to policies that make emergency accommodation in such shelters conditional on demonstrating one’s regular residency status.<sup>28</sup> In Milan, irregular migrants may benefit from emergency dorms and a city plan to accommodate up to 1,600 people experiencing homelessness in the cold months (known as “Piano Freddo”), but they have very limited access to other housing and integration supports.<sup>29</sup> Asylum backlogs have swelled the population at risk of homelessness; in Greece, humanitarian arrivals waiting to submit their asylum applications often exist in a state of protracted limbo, at risk of destitution.<sup>30</sup> Meanwhile, in Malaga, the national legislative framework and lack of local safety-net programmes mean many unaccompanied children turning 18 abruptly fall out of eligibility for public support and struggle to transition into independent housing, education and the labour market, and some even lose their precarious residence rights – policy and support gaps that can lead to extreme marginalization for these young adults.<sup>31</sup>

## B. Access to local labour markets

A second major integration challenge is finding work. Employment helps refugees and other migrants gain financial autonomy, improve their host-country language skills, build social ties to other local residents, support mental health by cultivating a sense of purpose, and even access more suitable accommodation on the private housing market thanks to having proof of stable income. Getting newcomers into work also helps cities save public resources and prevent long-term, intergenerational patterns of disadvantage; even short periods of economic inactivity can translate into years’ long disadvantage in the labour market.<sup>32</sup> If migrants’ skills are adequately matched with local economies’ needs, they can also be an important engine for local development.

---

*If migrants’ skills are adequately matched with local economies’ needs, they can also be an important engine for local development.*

Yet immigrant-receiving cities routinely cite employment as one of the most challenging areas for migrant inclusion.<sup>33</sup> Common barriers include newcomers’ limited host-country language proficiency and social capital, lack of skills in demand locally (or difficulties making their command of such skills known to employers), poor knowledge of how to navigate local labour markets, and living far away from

28 European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA), “The State of Emergency Shelters”, Homeless in Europe, Spring 2019.

29 Author interview with Miriam Pasqui, City Official, Unit for the Coordination of Social Emergencies, Municipality of Milan; Alessia Cattaneo, Coordinator of Central Station Help Centre (CASC); Claudia Martinez and Massimo Petrignani, Social Workers, CASC, Milan, 10 September 2019.

30 Author interview with Eleni Tsaousakou, Legal Officer; Evaggelia Tsilivarakou, Social Worker and Centre Coordinator; Eva Theodosiadou, Psychologist; and Rozy Panagiotou, Cultural Mediator, Centre of Migrant Integration (KEM), Thessaloniki, 17 September 2019.

31 Author interview with Ahmed Khalifa, Vice President and Project Manager, Association Marroqui for the Integration of Immigrants, Malaga, 20 December 2019.

32 Moritz Marbach, Jens Hainmueller, and Dominik Hangartner, “The Long-Term Impact of Employment Bans on the Economic Integration of Refugees”, *Science Advances* 4, no. 9 (2018).

33 World Economic Forum, *Migration and Its Impact on Cities – An Insight Report* (Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2017).



where job opportunities are available.<sup>34</sup> The characteristics of local labour markets also shape migrants' job prospects. In Northern Europe, the combination of highly regulated labour markets, limited low-skilled work opportunities, and generous social benefits systems may slow down newcomers' labour market entry.<sup>35</sup> Meanwhile, migrants in other parts of Europe face a different set of challenges. In Malaga, Palermo, Thessaloniki, and other Southern European cities, for example, high structural unemployment can be a huge barrier, sometimes compounded by the limited availability of well-funded initiatives to help newcomers, or jobseekers more broadly, navigate the labour market. Interviews with social workers in Thessaloniki, for example, pointed to the lack of vocational training opportunities for refugees leaving reception centres.<sup>36</sup>

Cities such as Gdansk, Warsaw, Milan and Bucharest are seeing gaps widen between the skills many employers need and those potential workers possess. While newcomers could in theory help fill these gaps, public employment services' standard offerings may fall short of addressing refugees' needs for intensive and combined support (for example, those that link vocational training with language learning and psychosocial counselling, as integration challenges may reinforce one another). Public employment services may also not be equipped to help employers understand foreign-earned credentials and employment histories that are unfamiliar to them, or to advise them on how to address intercultural misunderstandings among their workers or other potential integration-related challenges.<sup>37</sup> A strong informal economy, as in Bucharest, may attract newcomers keen to avoid cumbersome bureaucracy, high labour taxes, and potential work restrictions linked to legal status, but informal employment may put them at risk of exploitation and reduce their long-term prospects of social mobility.<sup>38</sup>

Addressing migrants' labour market integration at the local level has some key advantages. Thanks to their granular knowledge about local economies and populations, cities are often well positioned to design policies and programmes to match workers' skills with available jobs. But local governments' power in the area of employment vary significantly across countries. While Germany and Sweden have encouraged locally tailored labour market policies,<sup>39</sup> in many Southern as well as Central and Eastern European countries, local authorities have very little jurisdiction in this area.<sup>40</sup> Some cities, however, have been creative in using the authority they have over other areas – such as social inclusion or local economic development – to support the economic integration of refugees and other migrants. In Milan, for example, the Labour Mediation Centre (CELAV) offers tailored employment support to disadvantaged groups – a category that has recently been expanded to include refugees alongside people with disabilities, former prisoners, those at risk of poverty, and others.<sup>41</sup> And in Gdansk, the city's Immigrant

34 IOM, European Commission, and Italian Ministry of the Interior, "L'inserimento lavorativo delle persone titolari di protezione internazionale: Risultati preliminari" (internal publication, EU Structural Reform Support Service Project, IOM, Geneva, September 2019).

35 Demetrios G. Papademetriou and Meghan Benton, *Rebuilding Community after Crisis: Striking a New Social Contract for Diverse Societies* (Washington, D.C.: Migration Policy Institute, 2019).

36 Author interview with Irida Pandiri and Nefeli Pandiri, Social Workers, ARSIS, Thessaloniki, 17 September 2019.

37 Author interview with Ornella Vilella, Director, and Angela Guma, Operator/Counsellor, Centre of Work Mediation (CeLav), City of Milan, 6 October 2019; author interview with Bernhard Kapfinger, Mobile Counsellor, Emergency Shelter Kufstein, Tiroler Soziale Dienste GmbH, 3 September 2019.

38 Author interview with Ioana Barbu, Project Manager, Schottener Foundation Social Services, Bucharest, 27 September 2019.

39 In Germany, municipalities cooperate with the national level in running local job centres to support the long-term unemployed. After 2015–2016, local branches of the Federal Employment Agency were given more funding and authority to promote migrants' early integration. In Sweden, local agencies of the public employment services maintain a certain autonomy in the area of migrant integration – for example, to initiate local multi-stakeholder agreements – despite a recent trend to re-centralize integration competences. See Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), *Local and Central Government Co-Ordination on the Process of Migrant Integration: Good Practices from Selected OSCE Participating States* (Warsaw: ODIHR, 2017).

40 Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), *Local and Regional Governments in Europe* (Brussels: CEMR, 2016).

41 Author interview with Ornella Vilella, Director, and Angela Guma, Operator/Counsellor, CeLav, City of Milan, 6 October 2019.

Council supports the local job centre (part of the national administration for employment support) by providing training designed specifically for migrants, for example on getting formal job permits.<sup>42</sup>

## BOX 2

### Gender-specific barriers to employment: What can cities do?

In the European Union, migrant women are disproportionately affected by unemployment and underemployment, compared to both the native born and migrant men. In addition to the barriers many immigrants face, they pay the price of gender-segregated labour markets and frequently end up in low-skilled, service-sector jobs such as domestic work and cleaning. Moreover, migrant women are often underrepresented among integration service participants. This may be because of family and child care obligations, or because they face cultural pressure not to participate in public activities, and this can result in poorer language skills, information gaps, and a lack of autonomy. Women who come to the European Union via non-economic immigration channels – such as family migration and humanitarian arrivals – may face even higher obstacles to entering destination countries' labour markets.

Some cities have taken steps to break down these gendered barriers. Milan, a major recipient of family migrants, will soon launch “WeMi”, an EU-funded hub providing services to newly reunified migrant families, including training and employment supports for women. In Innsbruck, the Austrian Integration Fund – a national provider of public integration services – has partnered with local non-governmental organizations to design tailored programming for refugee women, for example by combining child care, language training, and company visits. For migrant and refugee women who are particularly far from the labour market due to limited prior education and work experience, empowerment programmes that leverage participants' existing informal skills (for example, in catering, crafts and trades, and gardening) can boost self-esteem, improve mental health, and promote social interaction. Where local integration budgets are limited, civil society is an essential ally in such activities. In Warsaw, for example, the Ukrainian migrant association *Fundacja Nasz Wybór* (Our Choice Foundation) launched a “Women's Club” to facilitate exchange, peer coaching, skill development, and social-capital building.

Sources: Monica Li, “Integration of Migrant Women: A Key Challenge with Limited Policy Resources”, European Web Site on Integration, 12 November 2018; International Organization for Migration (IOM), *Crushed Hopes: Underemployment and Deskilling among Skilled Migrant Women* (Geneva: IOM, 2012); Erick R. Vickstrom, “Legal Status, Gender, and Economic Incorporation of Senegalese Migrants in France, Italy, and Spain”, in *Pathways and Consequences of Legal Irregularity*, ed. Erick Vickstrom (Berlin: Springer, 2019); City of Milan, “WeMi: Nasce il Nuovo Spazio Dedicato al Ricongiungimento Familiare” (news release, 22 August 2019); Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), “A Portrait of Family Migration in OECD Countries”, in *International Migration Outlook 2017* (Paris: OECD, 2017); Natalia Banulescu-Bogdan, *Beyond Work: Reducing Social Isolation for Refugee Women and Other Marginalized Newcomers* (Washington, D.C.: Migration Policy Institute, 2020); author interview with Myroslava Keryk, President of the association *Fundacja Nasz Wybór* (Our Choice Foundation), Warsaw, 27 September 2019; author interview with Director of Integration Centre Tirol, Austrian Integration Fund, 28 October 2019.

## C. Access to education and child care

Education has been a central pillar of local integration policies in recent years – and a challenge exacerbated in some cities by the arrival of large numbers of unaccompanied children. Milan, for example, saw this vulnerable population grow considerably in 2016–2017, reaching more than 1,000 children and youth, and numbers have remained high since then.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Author interview with a representative of migrant communities in the Immigrant Council, City of Gdansk, 14 November 2019.

<sup>43</sup> Author interview with Barbara Lucchesi, Unaccompanied Minors Team Coordinator, Unit for Inclusion and Immigration Policies, City of Milan, 9 September 2019.

Cities face several challenges when it comes to education, particularly as regards compulsory schooling. A lack of early information and orientation to help migrant families navigate school systems may mean that children are not always enrolled in schools – a problem observed among family migrants in Milan.<sup>44</sup> The concentration of immigrants in specific neighbourhoods can lead to similarly high concentrations of migrant-background pupils in certain schools, but if municipalities lack granular data on the spatial distribution of migrant communities, it can be difficult to plan and allocate resources accordingly.<sup>45</sup> This in turn can make it difficult for schools and teachers to adapt to increasingly diverse classrooms – especially in newer immigrant destinations and cities used to more homogeneous migrant populations. In Warsaw, schools have struggled to develop teaching strategies for pupils from different cultural backgrounds and to communicate regularly with immigrant parents due to a lack of experience, tools, and mediators/interpreters.<sup>46</sup> The absence of a shared strategy can create further challenges; for example, only a few schools in Warsaw offer “welcome classes” for newly arrived children, which further encourage their concentration in these schools. Some experts have also expressed concerns that these newcomer classes may hinder social integration by reducing encounters between these students and other pupils.<sup>47</sup>

Inequalities in education can have early roots. Early childhood education and care (ECEC) is an important means of promoting young children’s physical, cognitive and socioemotional development; on top

*On top of these general benefits, ECEC can also help immigrant children develop host-country language skills, thus laying the foundation for long-term educational success.*

of these general benefits, ECEC can also help immigrant children develop host-country language skills, thus laying the foundation for long-term educational success. But because many national governments do not regard early child care as a priority in the same way as primary and secondary education, the availability and quality of ECEC varies significantly at the

local level, leaving some cities with too few programmes to serve all young children and staff shortages, particularly of staff with the intercultural and linguistic competences to work effectively with diverse populations.<sup>48</sup> Beyond its benefits for children, access to child care also grants parents – and mothers in particular, as they often bear the bulk of parenting responsibilities – the time to engage in integration activities such as language learning or job search initiatives. However, a lack of coordination between local departments and services can hinder enrolment, even where ECEC is available. In Milan, for example, rigid time windows for enrolment in public child care may delay newly arrived mothers from starting a labour market insertion programme.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, while some innovative initiatives targeted at migrant and refugee women have emerged in recent years that offer child care to facilitate participation

44 Author interview with Rosanna Sucato, Social Assistant, Unit for Inclusion and Immigration Policies, City of Milan, 9 September 2019.

45 Author interview with Rosanna Sucato, Social Assistant, Unit for Inclusion and Immigration Policies, City of Milan, 9 September 2019.

46 Author interview with Malgorzata Zasunska, Project Coordinator, Warsaw Centre for Socio-Educational Innovation and Training, 27 September 2019.

47 European Commission, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), and Eurydice, *Integrating Students from Migrant Backgrounds into Schools in Europe: National Policies and Measures* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2019); Jenny Nilsson and Nihad Bunar, “Educational Responses to Newly Arrived Students in Sweden: Understanding the Structure and Influence of Post-Migration Ecology”, *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* 60, no. 4 (2016): 399–416.

48 Maki Park, Caitlin Katsiaficas, and Margie McHugh, *Responding to the ECEC Needs of Children of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Europe and North America* (Washington, D.C.: Migration Policy Institute, 2018).

49 Author interview with Antonella Colombo, City Official for Social Assistance Services, Unit on Policies for Inclusion and Immigration at City of Milan, 10 September 2019.

– from coding classes to language courses<sup>50</sup> – these may be less readily available in newer immigrant destinations and smaller receiving communities.

#### *D. Access to health care and mental health services*

Although cities often have better health service infrastructure than non-urban areas, high concentrations of immigrants with specific needs and vulnerabilities can complicate access to health care. Factors such as language barriers, complex administrative requirements, and a lack of staff trained in intercultural communication can make it harder for immigrants to navigate host-country health care systems, and these obstacles are sometimes compounded by broader structural factors such as skills shortages and budget cuts.<sup>51</sup> Across the cities involved in this study, most of the local actors interviewed did not rank access to general health care as one of the most burning integration issues, as was the case for housing and employment. Still, some barriers may lie under the surface, more visible to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) than to authorities. In newer immigrant destinations such as Bucharest, for example, interviewees suggested that bureaucratic hurdles, high levels of discretion in how policies are implemented (resulting in variation), and a general lack of transparency sometimes made it very hard for newcomers to access and afford treatment.<sup>52</sup>

Large-scale humanitarian arrivals in recent years have added to health care challenges. Many cities received notable numbers of vulnerable individuals in a short period of time and had to improvise solutions to address the most basic needs of those unable to access public health care due to their uncertain legal status. In Greece, national reforms passed in 2019 prevented asylum seekers who enter the country irregularly from obtaining a social security number (AMKA), which is a prerequisite to accessing publicly funded health care – a change whose potential effects on localities hosting populations with urgent care needs but unable to access basic treatment and medication deeply concerned some city officials and NGOs, as interviews in Thessaloniki highlighted.<sup>53</sup> A February 2020 decision by the Greek government to grant a provisional social security number to asylum seekers, enabling them to access medical coverage and granting the right to work, may ease this barrier for those with pending cases.<sup>54</sup>

In cities experiencing large mixed-migration arrivals and transit flows, health care providers' normal capacity may quickly reach its limits. And if newcomers lack health records, this can lead to treatment issues such as misdiagnosis and inappropriate or double treatment.<sup>55</sup> EU and international projects have developed a plethora of instruments to help public authorities improve coordination and forecasting to

50 Monica Li, "Integration of Migrant Women: A Key Challenge with Limited Policy Resources", European Web Site on Integration, 12 November 2018.

51 Antonio Chiarenza, Marie Dauvrin, Valentina Chiesa, Sonia Baatout, and Hans Verrept, "Supporting Access to Healthcare for Refugees and Migrants in European Countries Under Particular Migratory Pressure", *BMC Health Services Research* 19, no. 513 (2019).

52 Author interview with Stefan Leonescu, Legal Counsellor and Projects Coordinator at Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Romania, 12 September 2019.

53 Author interview with Irida Pandiri and Nefeli Pandiri, Social Workers, ARSIS, Thessaloniki, 17 September 2019; author interview with Andreas Karadakis, Finance and Project Manager, Operational Planning Department, City of Thessaloniki, 17 September 2019.

54 The provisional social security number (PAAYPA) differs from the AMKA in that it can be immediately deactivated if the holder's asylum application is rejected. See *Ekathimerini*, "Greece to Grant Provisional Social Security Number to Asylum Seekers", *Ekathimerini*, 3 February 2020.

55 Valentina Chiesa, Antonio Chiarenza, Davide Mosca, and Bernd Rechel, "Health Records for Migrants and Refugees: A Systematic Review", *Health Policy* 123, no. 9 (2019): 888–900.

better gauge emerging local needs and to devise timely responses<sup>56</sup> – but many cities may be unaware of these tools or how they can be adapted to their local context.

One of the most under-resourced areas in many refugee-receiving cities has been mental health services. The provision of these services can be viewed as a litmus test for cities' progress in shifting from an emergency response to long-term integration planning: mental health conditions may emerge well after

initial settlement or as a result of protracted “limbo” situations for those without secure legal status, limited social interactions, and forced inactivity.<sup>57</sup> One key barrier to expanding access to mental health services is the lack of (interculturally trained) mental health specialists and interpreters who could help vulnerable groups obtain psychological support in their mother tongue or another language in which they are sufficiently proficient. In Kufstein, Austria, for example, refugees requiring mental health support may only be able to access it in their mother tongue in the nearby city of Innsbruck (about one hour away), where waiting times are about eight months.<sup>58</sup> While data on the prevalence of mental health disorders among refugees and migrants in Europe are inconclusive,<sup>59</sup> interviews in some cities (such as Milan and Warsaw) suggested an increase in the numbers of highly vulnerable individuals among newer asylum seekers.<sup>60</sup> In the case of Milan, it was suggested this may be linked to the pattern of more healthy and resourceful migrants moving on to promising destinations elsewhere in Europe, while more vulnerable individuals remain and become more concentrated in first-arrival countries.<sup>61</sup>

---

*One key barrier to expanding access to mental health services is the lack of (interculturally trained) mental health specialists and interpreters.*

## *E. What governance choices are behind these challenges?*

Many of the factors that contribute to the integration challenges described above lie outside the direct control of local authorities. These include insufficient financial and human resources, tensions between national policy frameworks and local needs, evidence gaps, and macro-trends such as economic slowdowns. As a result, many of the most promising policy responses look beyond innovations in particular services and instead focus on governance reforms to tackle cross-cutting challenges,<sup>62</sup> such as:

- ▶ how to address the needs of migrant communities without creating structures that run parallel to standard services, separating and perhaps creating unequal services for locals and migrants;

---

56 These range from indicators/tools to assess health conditions and vulnerabilities on the ground, to health mediation services, to electronic cards that keep track of a newcomer's medical history. See European Hospital and Healthcare Federation (HOPE), *Migrants and Refugees: Good Practices in Hospitals and Healthcare Services* (Brussels: HOPE Publications, 2018). The electronic Personal Health Record, developed by IOM with the support of the European Commission, helps to reconstruct the medical history of newly arrived migrants and refugees. See Re-Health, “E-PHR”, accessed 26 March 2020.

57 Author interview with Bernhard Kapfinger, Mobile Counsellor, Emergency Shelter Kufstein, Tiroler Soziale Dienste GmbH, 3 September 2019; World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe (WHO EURO), *Mental Health Promotion and Mental Health Care in Refugees and Migrants* (Copenhagen: WHO EURO, 2018).

58 Author interview with Meral Sevenscan, Integration Commissioner, City of Kufstein, 19 September 2019.

59 Stefan Priebe, Domenico Giacco, and Rawda el-Nagib, *Public Health Aspects of Mental Health Among Migrants and Refugees: A Review of the Evidence on Mental Health Care for Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Irregular Migrants in the WHO European Region* (Copenhagen: WHO EURO, 2016).

60 Author interview with Dominik Wach, Senior Social Work Specialist, Warsaw Family Support Centre, 26 September 2019.

61 Author interview with Miriam Pasqui, City Official, Unit for the Coordination of Social Emergencies, Municipality of Milan; Alessia Cattaneo, Coordinator of CASC; Claudia Martinez and Massimo Petrigiani, Social Workers, CASC, Milan, 10 September 2019.

62 United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), “Local Governance”, accessed 27 February 2020.



- ▶ how to ensure services work with one another so out-of-sync policies do not curtail integration pathways (for example, rigid deadlines for accessing child care hindering newly arrived mothers from participating in training and employment programmes);
- ▶ how to engage NGOs, community organizations and the private sector to design services around the specific profiles of migrants and refugees;
- ▶ how to address the basic needs of the most vulnerable populations (for example, when national legislation excludes irregular migrants from basic health care and housing);
- ▶ how to ensure that migrants who are geographically dispersed or living away from economic centres can still access integration supports; and
- ▶ how to make sure that local decision-making and democratic processes reflect the diversity of a community's backgrounds, profiles, needs and aspirations by giving immigrants the tools to help shape local policies.

The next section analyses how local authorities can advance migrant and refugee inclusion across policy siloes, rather than responding to housing, employment or education challenges as separate issues.

### 3 Local Policy Approaches: How can cities tackle integration governance challenges?

Local authorities lack the power and scope of those at the national level when it comes to governing integration. For example, they do not have the reach, resources and regulatory power to establish standard introduction programmes and make them compulsory for all newcomers; they cannot pass legislative reforms (e.g., on access to employment and education) to set early integration incentives; and they have little control over the link between immigration and integration policy, which determines the terms of immigrants' residence as well as their access to benefits and services.

But cities and towns do have some advantages vis-à-vis other levels of government. For one, they can better monitor the daily realities of their residents and more directly address their diverse needs. They are also well placed to engage local communities as proactive stakeholders in immigrant integration. The spatial concentration of public institutions (which in large cities may encompass several government levels), civil society organizations, multinational corporations and local businesses creates valuable resource pools and synergy effects. In contrast to the national level, local authorities can hardly afford to make access to basic services rigidly conditional on legal status, as this may drive some groups of residents into destitution or homelessness and weigh negatively on finances, social cohesion and public order;<sup>63</sup> but this can also serve as a catalyst for cultivating

---

*The spatial concentration of public institutions ... civil society organizations, multinational corporations and local businesses creates valuable resource pools and synergy effects.*

<sup>63</sup> Nicola Delvino, *European Cities and Migrants with Irregular Status: Municipal Initiatives for the Inclusion of Irregular Migrants in the Provision of Services* (Oxford: University of Oxford, 2017); Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM), *Cities of Rights: Ensuring Health Care for Undocumented Residents* (Brussels: PICUM, 2017).

an alternative (participation- rather than status-based) understanding of belonging and building programmes that serve everyone.<sup>64</sup>

European cities have had to be creative to operate within the tight space dictated by governance structures, limited resources and political tensions. This has sometimes meant that their initiatives have been little more than stopgap or emergency response measures, especially in localities with fewer resources and less experience with immigration. But some cities have also turned this reality to their advantage. Some have broadened the base of local governance by encouraging networks with civil society and other non-governmental stakeholders. Others have tried to optimize coordination and communication processes within the local administration and between different departments. And still others have sought to develop a more coherent local inclusion strategy, in a participatory fashion and based on a shared long-term vision. These and other approaches will be examined in the subsections that follow.

## A. *Defining target groups*

In many European cities, integration services are targeted primarily at newcomers rather than more established immigrants – a trend reinforced by the recent uptick in spontaneous arrivals, many of whom had specific integration needs that could not be met through mainstream services. This emphasis on newcomer-focused integration programmes has been especially pronounced in cities with a (relatively) recent history of immigration and those where diversity has only recently become more “visible”. In Thessaloniki, for instance, the main concern of local authorities and other stakeholders, such as civil society and international organizations, is addressing the needs of refugees, while immigrants who arrived in previous periods (for example, those from Albania and other Balkan countries) are generally considered well integrated – despite reports that they too face informational and navigational barriers to accessing services<sup>65</sup> – and rarely benefit from specific support.<sup>66</sup> In Bucharest, the main focus of the still nascent integration infrastructure, which strongly relies on the initiative of NGOs, is similarly on newly arrived refugees.<sup>67</sup> Meanwhile, cities that are more established immigrant destinations have been improving targeted supports for a variety of groups, including humanitarian newcomers, unaccompanied children and family migrants.

However, limiting most support to the initial period after arrival may underestimate the long-term dimensions of structural inequalities, including those related to segregated schools or segmented labour markets. Interviewees pointed to the risks of ignoring older cohorts of immigrants who have

64 For example, the City of Utrecht has collaborated with NGOs to give irregular migrants and rejected asylum seekers access to shelter as well as financial, legal and medical assistance; to restore dignity; and to help them explore potential pathways out of irregularity. The project has proven so successful in creating alternatives to irregularity that the national government – which initially had mixed feelings towards the initiative – decided to pilot it nationwide. Comments by Jan Braat, Senior Policy Advisor, Migration and Integration, City of Utrecht, at the workshop Facilitating Access to Quality Services for People with a Migrant Background during the conference Go Local: Supporting Regions, Cities and Rural Areas in Migrants’ Integration, Brussels, 3 December 2019. See Nicola Delvino, *European Cities and Migrants with Irregular Status: Municipal Initiatives for the Inclusion of Irregular Migrants in the Provision of Services* (Oxford: University of Oxford, 2017).

65 In Europe, Greece is a relative latecomer to migrant integration policy, which was virtually non-existent until 2010. See Anna Triandafyllidou, *Greece: How a State in Crisis Manages its Migration Crisis?* (Paris: Institut Français des Relations Internationales, 2012). Despite the focus on recent inflows, however, Greece has experienced considerable immigration since the 1990s, and long-term migrants were among those hit hardest during the economic crisis that began in 2008. See OECD, *Working Together for Local Integration of Migrants and Refugees in Athens* (Paris: OECD, 2018).

66 Author interview with Maro Vassara, Director of Social Services, City of Neapoli-Sykies, 16 September 2019.

67 Author interview with Ioana Barbu, Project Manager, Schottener Foundation Social Services, Bucharest, 27 September 2019; author interview with Stefan Leonescu, Legal Counsellor and Projects Coordinator at JRS Romania, 12 September 2019.

resided in a city for years and who may have arrived at a time when integration policies were more starkly underdeveloped, resulting in limited navigational and institutional knowledge, protracted marginalization and language gaps.<sup>68</sup> For instance, in Milan, where significant and diversified investments have been made in recent years to improve the integration of refugees, unaccompanied children<sup>69</sup> and newly arrived family migrants,<sup>70</sup> interviewees from the municipal administration admitted to being less familiar with the situation and needs of long-standing migrant communities, despite being aware that they also experience a degree of exclusion from certain services.<sup>71</sup>

Reflecting on questions around the focus of policies to promote migrant and refugee inclusion also casts new light on the debate about “mainstream” versus “targeted” services – that is, is it more beneficial to support immigrant integration through services provided to the broader population, or to specifically design measures for immigrants or even subgroups of immigrants?<sup>72</sup> Rotterdam’s approach is a typical

*Is it more beneficial to support immigrant integration through services provided to the broader population, or to specifically design measures for immigrants or even subgroups of immigrants?*

example of mainstreaming, with education and other policies targeting all Rotterdammers rather than differentiating between groups, in an attempt to prevent stigmatization.<sup>73</sup> At the same time, most European cities have some degree of targeted services, partly incentivized by group-specific funds at the national and supranational level, such as the EU Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). For the cities involved in this study – where many local administrations and service

providers have significant capacity-building needs around diversity, and financial resources and public/political openness to highly targeted interventions is sometimes limited – these are important strategic questions.

A number of approaches to balancing mainstreaming and targeted services have emerged, including:

- ▶ **Mainstreaming: simple (status quo) or mature (tailored to diversity).** Some cities largely rely on mainstream services to support migrants – either by default, if they are new to immigration or have limited awareness of migrant-specific obstacles and needs, or by design, if providing “special” support to immigrants carries the risk of political backlash. In Bucharest, public authorities provide almost no migrant-specific services, despite growth in the city’s immigrant population; to fill the gap, specialized NGOs engage with mainstream services and public authorities to help them

68 Author interview with Bediha Yildiz, Counsellor, Centre for Migrants in Tirol (ZeMiT), 18 September 2019.

69 Author interview with Barbara Lucchesi, Unaccompanied Minors Team Coordinator, Unit for Inclusion and Immigration Policies, City of Milan, 9 September 2019.

70 Author interview with Rosanna Sucato, Social Assistant, Unit for Inclusion and Immigration Policies, City of Milan, 9 September 2019.

71 Author interview with Antonella Colombo, City Official for Social Assistance Services, Unit for Inclusion and Immigration Policies, City of Milan, 10 September 2019; author interview with Rosanna Sucato, Social Assistant, Unit for Inclusion and Immigration Policies, City of Milan, 9 September 2019.

72 For more information on this debate, see Meghan Benton, Helen McCarthy, and Elizabeth Collett, *Into the Mainstream: Rethinking Public Services for Diverse and Mobile Populations* (Brussels: Migration Policy Institute Europe, 2015); Elizabeth Collett and Milica Petrovic, *The Future of Immigrant Integration in Europe: Mainstreaming Approaches for Inclusion* (Brussels: Migration Policy Institute Europe, 2014); Peter Scholten, Elizabeth Collett, and Milica Petrovic, “Mainstreaming Migrant Integration? A Critical Analysis of a New Trend in Integration Governance”, *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 83, no. 2 (2017): 283–302.

73 Han Entzinger, “A Tale of Two Cities: Rotterdam, Amsterdam and Their Immigrants”, in *Coming to Terms with Superdiversity: The Case of Rotterdam*, eds. Peter Scholten, Maurice Crul, and Paul van de Laar (New York: Springer, 2019).

more fully understand the needs of diverse service users.<sup>74</sup> By contrast, in cities that have long had standalone integration policies, the adoption of a mainstream approach can be a deliberate choice to signal an effort to overcome “pigeonhole thinking” and to address the diverse needs of all local residents. In Palermo, the city government has recently reorganized the local administration to stress a needs- rather than group-based approach – rebranding the Department for Social Affairs as the Department of Citizenship and the area responsible for migrant integration into the “area for citizen solidarity”<sup>75</sup> to strengthen service provision for all residents and to convey the message of a common identity in diversity.<sup>76</sup> The main risk of a mainstreaming approach is that it can overlook the (sometimes hidden) barriers that hinder migrants from seeking and receiving support.<sup>77</sup> To do justice to highly specific needs, Palermo has opened a “House of Citizens” to address complex cases (involving both foreign and Italian citizens) that require tailored support to help individuals access their rights. For example, this service supports refugees in finding housing, helps irregular migrants apply for regular status, and advises mainstream service providers on how to handle matters related to migrants’ legal status, language barriers and intercultural communication.<sup>78</sup>

- ▶ **Building systematic links between targeted and mainstream services.** In more experienced immigrant destinations, the needs of certain subgroups of newcomers and of immigrants more generally – such as women, families, children and unaccompanied children – are often addressed through a palette of targeted services. The City of Malaga, which has had a strategic plan for migrant integration since 2008, has separate administrative units to deal with refugees, other foreigners and hate crimes.<sup>79</sup> Targeted services are costly, but they can produce long-term savings if the knowledge they generate about a population’s needs and how to meet them is systematically channelled to mainstream services. Sharing the responsibility for working with migrants between specialized and standard services can be one solution: in Gdansk, Poland, for example, the city’s Immigrant Council provides tailored employment support to migrants while at the same time working to build the intercultural capacity of the mainstream Job Centre.<sup>80</sup>
- ▶ **Making central pools of knowledge and support available to all service providers.** Engaging a network of experts to make standard services more responsive to diverse needs can be especially promising in policy areas where local authorities have limited direct power. To improve migrant and refugee inclusion in schools, for example, city authorities may decide to invest in centres for professional training that equip teachers to work with students from diverse backgrounds. In Warsaw, the city-run Centre for Socio-Educational Innovation and Training has developed a range of materials unique in Poland to support teachers in diverse classrooms. The centre has hired and

74 Author interview with Stefan Leonescu, Legal Counsellor and Projects Coordinator at JRS Romania, 12 September 2019.

75 Author interview with Laura Nocilla, Project Coordinator at Unit on Municipal House of Rights, City of Palermo, 3 October 2019.

76 Author interview with Giuseppe Mattina, Council Member for Citizenship (Social Services), City of Palermo, 8 January 2020.

77 Recent research about refugees’ access to services and the role of civil society in Flanders, Belgium, has highlighted that a “waiting attitude” by mainstream public services providers at the local level (that is, “if people do not come with their problems, then there are no problems”) can create serious barriers to accessing services. Comments by Robin Vandevordt, Assistant Professor in Migration and Refugee Studies at Ghent University, at the workshop Facilitating Access to Quality Services for People with a Migrant Background during the conference Go Local: Supporting Regions, Cities and Rural Areas in Migrants’ Integration, Brussels, 3 December 2019.

78 Author interview with Laura Nocilla, Project Coordinator, Unit on Municipal House of Rights, City of Palermo, 3 October 2019.

79 Author interview with Maria del Valle Jodar, Social Worker and Migration Specialist, City of Malaga, 3 December 2019.

80 Author interview with a representative of migrant communities in the Immigrant Council, City of Gdansk, 14 November 2019. Implementing its Immigrant Integration Model has also helped the City of Gdansk become more aware of barriers to services that affect not just migrants, but also other groups – including ethnic minorities and LGBTQ persons – leading to the development of a model for equal treatment. Author interview with Paulina Wlazlak, Inspector, Department of Social Development, City of Gdansk, 12 November 2019.

trained a pool of 30 teacher advisers who work with all the schools in the metropolitan area.<sup>81</sup> In Malta, cultural mediators have been trained to be deployed in hospitals to improve migrants' access to health care services.<sup>82</sup> The on-demand formula of these approaches can improve their uptake by mainstream service providers – especially if they offer concrete support in handling caseload pressures and complex cases – and thus give them a “foot in the door” to provide more comprehensive intercultural awareness training or similar interventions to build diversity-related capacity. On the other hand, being able to rely on mediators may lower the incentives for mainstream services to identify and overcome potential shortcomings in outreach and access if further steps are not taken to build in-house capacity.

Committing to a primarily mainstream approach can be a powerful tool to communicate an inclusive notion of belonging. But not all mainstream approaches are created equal: cutting targeted programmes as a cost-saving measure can result in overburdened services and unaddressed vulnerabilities. Moreover, the transition from a targeted to a mainstream approach requires careful planning and timing, as premature attempts to “go mainstream” may lead to backlogs and bottlenecks. In Milan, for example, responsibility for supporting unaccompanied children was temporarily assigned to mainstream basic services for citizens (“Area Territorialità”) but was then moved back to the unit in charge of migrant services when it became clear that service providers were overwhelmed with the specific needs of this group.<sup>83</sup> Mainstreaming requires a well-oiled support system in which services regularly audit and adapt their offerings to respond to specific needs. As such, a degree of targeting remains necessary, especially for newcomers. But local policymakers – especially in cities already facing service bottlenecks and job and/or housing shortages – should be wary of creating parallel structures, which tend to be more vulnerable to budget cuts and political contestation.

## **B. *Improving coordination and collaboration within the municipality***

Barriers to immigrant integration often have their roots in siloed public administrations, where coordination across policy areas is the exception rather than the rule. Confronted with a rapid increase in new arrivals, several European cities have taken measures in the past few years to improve and make more coherent cross-policy management of migrant and refugee integration.

These approaches fall into four broad categories:

- ▶ **Interdepartmental working groups.** Interdepartmental committees on migration and integration have cropped up in several destination cities. A 2018 study by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) found that more than 40 of the 71 surveyed cities had put such a committee in place – from Tampere to Vienna – in a more or less formalized way.<sup>84</sup> The most immediate function of these bodies is to improve coordination, but they can also give migrant inclusion cross-cutting policy relevance. Such committees may be harder to establish in cities that have long treated immigrant integration as a minor issue, or as a question relegated to a circumscribed policy area. Working groups require significant time investments and may be

81 Author interview with Malgorzata Zasunska, Project Coordinator, Warsaw Centre for Socio-Educational Innovation and Training, 27 September 2019.

82 Author interview with project staff of IOM Malta, 5 July 2019.

83 Author interview with Barbara Lucchesi, Unaccompanied Minors Team Coordinator, Unit for Inclusion and Immigration Policies, City of Milan, 9 September 2019.

84 OECD, *Working Together for Local Integration of Migrants and Refugees* (Paris: OECD, 2018).



regarded as a nuisance in times of low perceived urgency if the long-term strategic importance of inclusion for the city is not convincingly spelled out. In the cities involved in the present study, local actors described responsibility for integration as generally falling within the remit of social departments, and collaboration with other relevant departments, such as those responsible for education or housing, as frequently limited and ad hoc.<sup>85</sup> In Malaga, a social worker pointed to a perceived disconnect between social affairs and other parts of the administration, which may be partly attributed to a lack of intercultural awareness in other departments, as brought to light by recent anti-rumour trainings.<sup>86</sup> In Milan, the spike in arrivals in 2015–2016 spurred some progress in internal coordination, for example between the departments of social affairs and education as well as the office for international relations. Still, one local official observed that increased bottom-up interaction between officials (usually ad hoc and/or project based) has not fully been accompanied by top-down initiatives to establish a more permanent coordination structure (a “control room”).<sup>87</sup>

- ▶ **Using the opportunities offered by externally funded projects.** The recent emphasis of EU integration funding on innovative, multi-service and multi-stakeholder approaches<sup>88</sup> has encouraged some cities to use these and other, similar funding calls to encourage collaboration between departments – from joint project design to shared implementation. In localities where integration officials feel relatively isolated from or even disregarded by the rest of the administration – especially in newer and/or small immigrant destinations that have only recently started to address integration policy systematically – EU and international projects are highly valued as a way to gain new knowledge, make the case for certain interventions, and boost motivation by interacting with like-minded local policymakers. In the words of Kufstein’s integration commissioner, who participated in several EU-wide exchanges, “it is good to know that you are not alone in this.”<sup>89</sup> In 2019, the City of Milan won a European call to implement an innovative project for the inclusion of disadvantaged children and young people – including immigrant children, who make up almost one quarter of all non-EU migrants in the city.<sup>90</sup> The project, called “WISH MI”, is centred on the idea of multidimensional well-being, ranging from health care and education to social relations and self-determination; it therefore builds on broad-based cooperation within the municipality, including between representatives of the departments on education and housing.

85 The lack of systematic and regular exchange with other departments within the municipality, such as employment, housing or education, was mentioned in several interviews, for example in Thessaloniki, Milan, Kufstein and Warsaw. Author interview with Antonella Colombo, City Official for Social Assistance Services, Unit on Policies for Inclusion and Immigration, City of Milan, 10 September 2019; author interview with Andreas Karadakis, Finance and Project Manager, Operational Planning Department, City of Thessaloniki, 17 September 2019; author interview with a representative of the Social Communication Centre, City of Warsaw, 26 September 2019.

86 Author interview with Maria del Valle Jodar, Social Worker and Migration Specialist, City of Malaga, 3 December 2019.

87 Author interview with Antonella Colombo, City Official for Social Assistance Services, Unit on Policies for Inclusion and Immigration, City of Milan, 10 September 2019.

88 This is particularly evident when looking at EU funding for local initiatives, such as the Urban Innovative Actions (UIA) programme. See UIA, “[What is Urban Innovative Actions?](#)” accessed 27 February 2020.

89 Author interview with Meral Sevencan, Integration Commissioner, City of Kufstein, 19 September 2019.

90 UIA, “[Milan](#)”, accessed 27 February 2020; author interview with Barbara Lucchesi, Unaccompanied Minors Team Coordinator, Unit for Inclusion and Immigration Policies, City of Milan, 9 September 2019.

- **Appointing an integration commissioner.** Limited coordination within a city's administration can result from several issues: staffing constraints, unclear or diffuse responsibility, or an understanding of migrant integration as a separate, niche topic.<sup>91</sup> Installing a dedicated integration commissioner within the municipal administration can help address some of these challenges. In Kufstein, the municipality introduced the position of integration commissioner five years ago, taking advantage of co-funding from the regional level (the State of Tyrol). The commissioner, who has enjoyed a certain degree of autonomy in defining her own mandate, has focused on developing an action plan with the participation of more than 50 stakeholders to highlight the relevance of immigrant integration in areas as different as health care, employment, and sports and recreation.<sup>92</sup> Notably, while many European cities have an integration commissioner, the way this function is understood can vary significantly from mainly political to more operational, and in terms of how the commissioner is selected and appointed. While in Kufstein the position was filled through a normal recruitment process, commissioners in other cities are political appointees or approved by a committee of migrant representatives, as in Berlin.<sup>93</sup> Combining a concrete operational role with a clear political mandate can be a tricky balance to strike, but it may be the key to gaining the trust of migrant communities while at the same time being valued and respected within the administration.<sup>94</sup>
- While many European cities have an integration commissioner, the way this function is understood can vary significantly.*
- **Expressing a political vision for migrant inclusion.** A mayor explicitly endorsing migrant inclusion as a strategic priority can give departments a common sense of purpose and improve their incentives to engage in this area. It can also communicate the importance of integration to the wider community. In Palermo, where the mayor has explicitly committed to creating a welcoming city, municipal and civil sector representatives confirmed this has benefited the well-being and self-confidence of newcomers.<sup>95</sup> In Gdansk, where a whole-of-government approach to migrant integration has been an integral part of local development since 2014, city hall has approved integration officials' proposal to build a module on migrant integration and equal treatment into the standard training for civil servants.<sup>96</sup> However, there are important risks in politicizing migrant integration. For one, it can fuel polarization and hinder whole-of-community responses, while placing local policymakers and service providers under increased public scrutiny.<sup>97</sup> Another danger is that investments may be scaled back or cut entirely by subsequent administrations with different political orientations to make a symbolic point. These risks can be reduced by anchoring migrant and refugee integration in more "technical" discourses of local

91 Author interview with Meral Sevensan, Integration Commissioner, City of Kufstein, 19 September 2019.

92 Author interview with Meral Sevensan, Integration Commissioner, City of Kufstein, 19 September 2019.

93 OECD, *Working Together for Local Integration of Migrants and Refugees in Berlin* (Paris: OECD, 2018).

94 In Kufstein, for example, the commissioner's work on the ground helped her earn credibility among migrant communities but triggered some scepticism among colleagues used to a more office-based work routine. Author interview with Meral Sevensan, Integration Commissioner, City of Kufstein, 19 September 2019.

95 Author interview with Laura Nocilla, Project Coordinator at Unit on Municipal House of Rights, City of Palermo, 3 October 2019.

96 Author interview with Paulina Wlazlak, Inspector, Department of Social Development, City of Gdansk, 12 November 2019.

97 Author interview with Antonella Colombo, City Official for Social Assistance Services, Unit on Policies for Inclusion and Immigration, City of Milan, 10 September 2019.

economic development and benefits for the community at large. Cities such as in Thessaloniki<sup>98</sup> and Athens,<sup>99</sup> which were hit particularly hard by the financial and economic crisis that began around 2008, have promoted such narratives to avoid a zero-sum logic and tensions over scarce resources.

These efforts to improve coordination within local administrations are promising steps towards a more well-rounded approach to migrant inclusion. Still, the early results have in many cases been rather modest, in part because of the persistent tendency (especially in newer immigrant destinations) to view integration as a topic on its own. While joint interdepartmental projects can help encourage collaboration, strong leadership is important to sustain these efforts.

### C. *Pursuing a multi-stakeholder strategy*

Local authorities across Europe rely significantly on the expertise and engagement of civil society partners when it comes to integration matters. This is all the more true for cities and towns with limited budgets and formal authority in this area (such as Malaga, Palermo and Thessaloniki), as well as those only recently exposed to larger and/or more diverse migrant inflows (such as Bucharest, Gdansk and Warsaw). The relationship between the local administration and civil society can take very different forms. In cities with more plentiful resources and more formalized integration governance, such as Milan, civil society organizations may be contractors and run services on behalf of public authorities. Elsewhere, they may coordinate and collaborate with the city somewhat more loosely in the form of multi-stakeholder networks (as in Malaga, Palermo, Thessaloniki and Warsaw). Alternately, civil society may choose to run their own projects independently and maintain greater autonomy. In Palermo, for example, the Istituto Valdese decided not to request municipal accreditation for a social housing project for refugees and other vulnerable individuals – thus forgoing some funding advantages – in order to stay true to its own housing model rather than adapting it to external requirements.<sup>100</sup>

Cultivating trust between local authorities and non-governmental partners can be tough. Civil society may approach inclusion issues from a different standpoint than authorities – for instance, favouring a human-rights perspective over a public-order one,<sup>101</sup> or simply following a different organizational logic and mission. In Thessaloniki, where the city collaborates closely with NGOs (and neighbouring municipalities) in providing services to refugees within the multi-stakeholder REACT programme,<sup>102</sup> finding a shared “philosophy” and defining a common target amongst the partners – one that resonated with both faith-based and political perspectives, for example – took time and patience, but eventually led to a well-balanced relationship built around a shared understanding of human rights.<sup>103</sup> Other conditions that can hamper effective partnership, such as funding uncertainty or substantial delays

98 Author interview with Andreas Karadakis, Finance and Project Manager, Operational Planning Department, City of Thessaloniki, 17 September 2019; author interview with Virginia Politi, Head Officer, Social Services Department, City of Thessaloniki, 17 September 2019.

99 Comments by Lefteris Papagiannakis, Head of Advocacy, Policy and Research and SOLIDARITYNOW and former Vice Mayor for Migration at the City of Athens, at the workshop Facilitating Access to Quality Services for People with a Migrant Background during the conference Go Local: Supporting Regions, Cities and Rural Areas in Migrants Integration, Brussels, 3 December 2019.

100 Author interview with Chiara Cianciolo, Social Housing Coordinator, Diaconal Centre of the Waldesian Church “La Noce”, Palermo, 6 November 2019.

101 Author interview with Irida Pandiri and Nefeli Pandiri, Social Workers, ARSIS, Thessaloniki, 17 September 2019.

102 URBACT, “Accommodating and Integrating Refugees in the City of Thessaloniki: the Multi-Stakeholder Programme REACT”, updated 24 June 2019.

103 Author interview with Virginia Politi, Head Officer, Social Services Department, City of Thessaloniki, 17 September 2019.

in payment, as described by some interviewees in Palermo, can cause high staff turnover within non-governmental service providers, leading to a recurring loss of programme quality and knowledge.<sup>104</sup> And especially when non-profits are paid to deliver city services, short-term contracts and financial dependence can create a power imbalance that leads to tensions on both sides.<sup>105</sup>

Local governments have taken a number of approaches to improving multi-stakeholder partnerships, including:

- ▶ **Formalizing responsibility-sharing.** Fostering trust between public authorities and civil society can improve the quality of services and bring knowledge about migrant-specific issues into the design and delivery of services. In the past few years, the City of Milan has moved from a donor-supplier relationship to one of co-design and co-implementation with civil society service providers in areas such as support for unaccompanied children, labour market integration, and counselling for highly marginalized individuals (both immigrants and Italian nationals). The city's decision to share responsibility was based on acknowledgment of civil society's first-hand knowledge of migrants' needs, and how this could contribute to savvier service design and delivery choices.<sup>106</sup> Such an approach can also be a valuable option for newer immigrant destinations, where governments' in-house capacity is lacking but NGOs and international organizations may already have sophisticated and innovative offerings for migrants and refugees. One potential risk of strengthened ties between a city's administration and certain service providers is "path dependency", as it may become more complicated for new entrants (such as less established civil society organizations) to access tenders.
- ▶ **Developing a (participatory) integration strategy and action plan.** A written integration strategy can help local administrations achieve greater coherence between initiatives and boost the overall visibility of the city's efforts and achievements. Where the strategy is given a legal basis and binding power, it can also result in migrant integration being taken more seriously across the administration. Gdansk's Immigrant Integration Model, the first example in Poland of a city's integration concept being inscribed in local law, sets concrete objectives to advance immigrant integration in all spheres, from education to labour and health care.<sup>107</sup> The model has a grassroots history: in 2014, civil society stakeholders supporting migrants approached the municipality to suggest a more strategic approach to integration and received the support of the city's leadership at a time when Gdansk was experiencing higher immigration (especially from Ukraine).<sup>108</sup> An integration strategy can also help attract donors and sponsors, who will feel as though their contributions are part of a larger whole – especially where dedicated city staff link the strategy's building blocks to different funding opportunities. In Thessaloniki, having a five-year action plan

104 Author interview with Roberta Lo Bianco, Coordinator of Migration Unit, European Centre of Studies and Initiatives (CESIE), Palermo, 28 November 2019.

105 Author interview with Ornella Vilella, Director, and Angela Guma, Operator/Counsellor, CeLav, Milan, 6 October 2019.

106 Author interview with Barbara Lucchesi, Unaccompanied Minors Team Coordinator, Unit for Inclusion and Immigration Policies, City of Milan, 9 September 2019.

107 Gdansk City Hall, *Immigrant Integration Model* (Gdansk: Gdansk City Hall, Social Development Department, 2016). This example was later followed by Krakow and Wroclaw, and Warsaw is planning to develop an integration strategy over the next two years based on recent research on the attitudes and needs of its inhabitants regarding migrant integration. See Renata Stefańska, *Integration Policy and Activities in Poland* (San Domenico di Fiesole: European University Institute, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, 2015).

108 Author interview with Paulina Wlazlak, Inspector, Department of Social Development, City of Gdansk, 12 November 2019.

for integration – developed in 2017 in partnership with URBACT<sup>109</sup> – and an Operational Planning Department exploring funding opportunities for every point of the plan proved essential in the city's efforts to implement a range of integration initiatives, especially for refugees and asylum seekers.<sup>110</sup> A preliminary needs assessment with a wide pool of local stakeholders can give the strategy greater legitimacy – as in Malaga and Kufstein, where the cities' integration strategies and plans were designed in partnership with migrant associations and/or communities.<sup>111</sup> Additionally, creating a monitoring system based on measurable goals and regular reviews, as in Gdansk (see Box 3), can give the strategy greater transparency and allow for ongoing adaptation.<sup>112</sup>

- ▶ **Fostering multi-stakeholder networks.** Another common approach is creating multi-stakeholder networks involving public authorities at different levels as well as non-governmental actors (international organizations, grassroot associations, private companies, representatives of migrant communities, and volunteer groups). These networks meet at regular intervals (generally, bimonthly or longer) to exchange information and avoid duplication of local integration efforts. Some of these forums have existed for years now – Warsaw's Social Dialogue Committee for Foreigners has been in place since 2012.<sup>113</sup> But they have experienced a boom since 2015–2016, especially in localities on the front lines or along mixed-migration routes through Europe, including Thessaloniki and Kufstein. These networks are generally appreciated by the stakeholders involved as instruments that promote mutual collaboration and trust. But if the deliberating power of these networks is weak, significant time investments translate into few concrete outcomes, or they struggle to evolve from an emergency-response to a more long-term perspective, there is a risk of "coordination fatigue";<sup>114</sup> particularly among (smaller) civil society organizations who may, as a result, progressively reduce their engagement.<sup>115</sup>

Strong collaboration with civil society can help local authorities respond to integration challenges more flexibly in a context of uncertain funding and shifting competences. It also allows them to provide basic support to groups excluded from many public services, such as irregular migrants. For newer immigrant destinations, collaborating with civil society can be an effective, low-cost way of building integration know-how and capacity. But establishing common ground and trust may take time where public and non-governmental institutions have not historically interacted, or even regarded each other as ideological adversaries. Networks such as the ones that have sprung up since 2015–2016 can be a starting point – on the condition that they manage to evolve from reactive, rapid-response platforms to proactive, durable investments. If they fail to do so, they may become counterproductive, potentially highlighting the perceived impotence or immobility of the local administration in the eyes of their non-governmental partners.

109 URBACT, *Integrated Action Plan for Integration of Refugees. Municipality of Thessaloniki* (Brussels: European Commission, 2018). URBACT is a European exchange and learning programme promoting sustainable urban development, including in areas such as inclusion and governance.

110 Author interview with Andreas Karadakis, Finance and Project Manager, Operational Planning Department, City of Thessaloniki, 17 September 2019.

111 Author interview with Maria del Valle Jodar, Social Worker and Migration Specialist, City of Malaga, 3 December 2019; author interview with Meral Sevencan, Integration Commissioner, City of Kufstein, 19 September 2019.

112 Author interview with Paulina Wlazlak, Inspector, Department of Social Development, City of Gdansk, 12 November 2019.

113 Author interview with a representative of the Social Communication Centre, City of Warsaw, 26 September 2019.

114 Author interview with Irida Pandiri and Nefeli Pandiri, Social Workers, ARSIS, Thessaloniki, 17 September 2019.

115 Author interview with Myroslava Keryk, President of the association *Fundacja Nasz Wybor* (Our Choice Foundation), Warsaw, 27 September 2019.



**BOX 3****Monitoring immigrant integration at the local level**

While there is a wealth of local approaches to integration governance, it is still hard to tell which produce the best results and under what conditions. Several factors contribute to this lack of evidence. For one, many of these approaches are too new to fully measure their impact, which may play out over many years. Moreover, integration depends on contextual factors, making it hard to draw a direct link between a policy and a certain integration indicator. To complicate matters, very few cities systematically collect and publish integration data, and some – especially more recent destinations – may even lack precise data on the size and characteristics of their immigrant populations. Some groups of migrants may be particularly under-represented in official statistics, including those with insecure legal status and those who move within the country without de- and re-registering with the local authorities. To combat the latter issue, Malaga is working to raise awareness among migrants about the importance of local registration.

Over the past few years, European cities have invested in monitoring and evaluation to improve their policies and allocate resources more efficiently. For example, Milan, in collaboration with Bocconi University, has designed a monitoring system to track the integration of refugees in the SPRAR reception system (a second-line system for the reception and early integration of refugees and asylum seekers); this has proven more precise than the standard monitoring instrument developed at the national level. Meanwhile, Vienna has been running a triannual Integration and Diversity Monitoring System since the mid-2000s, which it uses as a basis for policy planning, and Amsterdam has appointed a specialized economic cabinet to conduct a cost-benefit analysis of the city's integration approach twice a year. Integration action plans with a built-in monitoring mechanism, as in the case of Gdansk's Immigrant Integration Model, can help track progress towards measurable yearly goals. However, reporting systems that are too cumbersome may scare off civil society partners.

One persistent challenge is that, because local indicators differ significantly, it can be difficult or impossible to compare integration data across cities. Supranational initiatives may help bring greater uniformity and comparability. Since 2016–2017, the Urban Agenda Partnership on the Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees – a multilevel, multi-stakeholder partnership that aims to improve the local management of migrant integration – has pursued an action (led by the Migration Policy Group) to improve the availability and use of integration data at regional and local level. In 2018, the European Commission's Joint Research Centre launched the Data for Integration (D4I) challenge, providing researchers around Europe with a unique dataset covering 45,000 local administrations to delve into different migration-related questions, such as residential segregation patterns. And in 2019, the OECD published a database of integration indicators at the regional level, which may support better subnational integration policies.

Sources: OECD, *Working Together for Local Integration of Migrants and Refugees* (Paris: OECD, 2018); author interview with Antonella Colombo, City Official for Social Assistance Services, Unit on Policies for Inclusion and Immigration, City of Milan, 10 September 2019; author interview with Paulina Wlazlak, Inspector, Department of Social Development, City of Gdansk, 12 November 2019; author interview with Maria del Valle Jodar, Social Worker and Migration Specialist, City of Malaga, 3 December 2019; EU Science Hub, "Data Challenge Provides Insights on Migration and Local Integration" (news release, 27 November 2018); City of Vienna, *Monitoring Integration Diversität Wien 2013-2016* (Vienna: City of Vienna, 2017); European Commission, "OECD Database on Immigrant Integration at the Regional Level", updated 3 October 2018; Christiane Heimann and Janina Stürner, *Evaluation Report: Urban Partnership on the Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees* (N.p.: Urban Agenda for the EU, 2019).

## D. *Designing inclusive services*

Local integration governance choices meet their main test when it comes to service design and implementation. For example, local authorities must decide the location of and linkages between different services. Making the right choices at an early stage can ensure that limited resources have the widest possible reach and impact, and that local governments with narrow formal authority over integration matters maximize outcomes by reducing navigational barriers. Underestimating the strategic importance of these choices, on the other hand, can result in patchy awareness among migrants of available supports and interrupted integration pathways – especially where immigrant communities are relatively new and where informal channels of information exchange are not robust.

Strategies for inclusive service provision may involve:

- ▶ **Co-locating services.** The spatial concentration of authorities and service providers relevant to immigrant integration can allow for better referrals between providers and promote common ground between levels of government that usually approach immigration from different perspectives (for example, the security concerns of the police versus the inclusion concerns of municipal social departments). The most prominent model is the “one-stop shop” for migrants, popularized in Europe in the late 2000s by Portugal<sup>116</sup> and still an inspiration for many cities. But fully fledged one-stop shops are not easy to implement. In Thessaloniki, the three-year-old KEM (Centre for Migrant Information) provides some services in house – assistance with accessing benefits, psychological support and legal advice – yet mainly refers migrants to other specialized services and civil society supports.<sup>117</sup> In Bucharest, NGOs and international organizations active in the integration space benefit from the local one-stop shop, the Immigrant Centre, which facilitates mutual referrals and collaboration on projects, but public authorities are not part of it, limiting its possibilities.<sup>118</sup> Roadblocks to implementing genuine one-stop shops vary, from different levels of government not seeing eye-to-eye on migration and integration (as is often the case in Poland) to a lack of funding and limited pre-existing partnerships between very different institutional stakeholders (for example, the police and NGOs). This model may therefore be complicated to implement for cities with a relatively nascent integration infrastructure.<sup>119</sup>
- ▶ **Adopting a neighbourhood-based approach.** In larger cities, concentrating services for immigrants in one place risks excluding those living far away and may result in lower awareness of the services among their intended clients. The Multicultural Centre in Warsaw, for example, is a successful cooperation between the City of Warsaw and civil society organizations (including migrant associations), with a high level of engagement and diversified outreach activities – from a dedicated radio channel to activities in schools. A 2019 survey conducted by IOM Poland for the ADMin4ALL project suggests that 85 per cent of foreigners and 75 per cent of Varsovians who know the centre see it as a useful and necessary initiative.<sup>120</sup> However, the survey also suggests that only about half of Warsaw’s foreign-born population is familiar with the centre<sup>121</sup> – something

116 Cities of Migration, “One Stop Shop: Mainstreaming Integration”, updated 11 February 2020.

117 Author interview with Eleni Tsaousakou, Legal Officer; Evaggelia Tsilivarakou, Social Worker and Centre Coordinator; Eva Theodosiadou, Psychologist; and Rozy Panagiotou, Cultural Mediator, KEM, Thessaloniki, 17 September 2019.

118 Author interview with Ioana Barbu, Project Manager, Schottener Foundation Social Services, Bucharest, 27 September 2019.

119 Rinus Penninx, *Evaluation of the One-Stop-Shop Project – Executive Summary* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies, 2019).

120 Insights into results of the survey “Foreigners in Warsaw” (presentation, IOM Poland, August 2019).

121 Insights into results of the survey “Foreigners in Warsaw” (presentation, IOM Poland, August 2019).

that may be due in part to its location outside the city centre. An alternative to concentrating services is spreading them out across a city's neighbourhoods, for example by taking advantage of existing neighbourhood associations. A neighbourhood-oriented model allows cities to respond more precisely to local needs – such as challenges in superdiverse schools or simmering cultural tensions between neighbours – and to harness local residents' voluntary engagement. In Malaga, the diverse district of Palma-Palmilla, characterized by a high concentration of migrants and with a large portion of residents at risk of unemployment, poverty and social exclusion,<sup>122</sup> has been working since the mid-2000s with local "tables" (assemblies) of migrant and non-migrant residents who meet to discuss and address the neighbourhood's problems – in line with the district's approach of not distinguishing between residents in terms of nationality and instead promoting bonds around a notion of collective responsibility.<sup>123</sup> Meanwhile, the City of Gdansk aims to sensitize existing "neighbourhood houses" (essentially, community clubs for local residents) to attract and include immigrants through tailored activities and outreach.<sup>124</sup>

- ▶ **Creating inter-municipality clusters.** An alternative approach that may hold particular value for smaller cities is to create "clusters" of integration services with neighbouring municipalities, which can help them pool limited resources and optimize reach. Kufstein has an agreement with surrounding villages that allows migrants and refugees from these rural communities to access key integration services in Kufstein, on the condition that the other municipalities cover transportation costs.<sup>125</sup> Similarly, Thessaloniki has partnered with the neighbouring municipalities of Kalamaria and Neapoli-Sykies to accommodate and support refugees through the REACT programme, which allows the city to expand its reach and access a wider pool of resources (for example, in terms of housing), while enabling smaller municipalities to adapt funding and activities to local conditions.<sup>126</sup> Meanwhile, Gdansk has been working with the regional government of Pomerania to develop an integration strategy, partly with the idea of greater responsibility-sharing between the city and its surrounding region.<sup>127</sup> Such approaches can create greater flexibility of services in cities with fluctuating immigrant populations, for instance due to large numbers of transit migrants. Moreover, they can help build the capacity of smaller, less experienced municipalities near larger urban centres, and allow those with strained housing markets to encourage migrants to seek accommodation in areas that may be more affordable.
- ▶ **Organizing efficient referrals between services.** In many European cities, heightened migrant arrivals in recent years led to more efficient cooperation between frontline service providers (at times, as a result of the networks described in Section 3.C.). The urgency of needing to serve large caseloads triggered some simple yet innovative solutions: for example, to improve communication between stakeholders supporting unaccompanied children, a network of civil society and public stakeholders in Palermo introduced a "circulating e-folder" that the various service providers use to share updates on a child's integration progress.<sup>128</sup> A smoother system of referrals can also facilitate

122 City of Malaga, *Palma Palmilla Comprehensive Action Plan Cap 2.0* (Malaga: City of Malaga, n.d.).

123 Author interview with Alberto Rivera de la Puente, Social Worker, Unit of Social Services – District Palma-Palmilla, City of Malaga, 3 December 2019.

124 Author interview with Maria Maslak, Deputy Director, Social Development Department, City of Gdansk, 11 December 2019.

125 Author interview with Meral Sevensan, Integration Commissioner, City of Kufstein, 19 September 2019. This agreement is part of the broader project for regional management. See Kufstein u. Umgebung - Untere Schranne – Kaiserwinkl (KUUSK), "Über uns", accessed 2 April 2020.

126 Author interview with Fae Efthimiadou, Director of Social Services, City of Kalamaria, 16 September 2019.

127 Comments exchanged by the author with representatives of a delegation from the Province of Pomerania, Poland, about regional integration strategies, June 2019.

128 Author interview with Roberta Lo Bianco, Coordinator of Migration Unit, CESIE, Palermo, 28 November 2019.

better division of labour and quality of support, allowing organizations that previously covered a wide range of services in house to specialize their offerings and tap others when additional supports are needed. Increasing mutual reliance, however, can be a double-edged sword: where service providers depart from a model of “across-the-board” support to one of specialization within a tightly interdependent system, bottlenecks in one service can hold the whole system back, as social workers in Milan have observed.<sup>129</sup> Organizing efficient referrals requires significant investments into systematic and up-to-date mapping of local initiatives. The City of Athens, finding itself with limited dedicated funding, staff, or previous experience with migrant inclusion policies as asylum seeker arrivals rapidly intensified in 2015–2016, but with a lively civil society, engaged in a comprehensive mapping exercise that eventually led to the creation of the Athens Coordination Center for Migrant and Refugee Issues (ACCMR).<sup>130</sup>

Ultimately, the best approach to making services more accessible depends on many factors, including how immigrant populations are distributed in a city – something local authorities in cities receiving large numbers of new arrivals may not always know. The one-stop-shop model has attracted much attention due to its elegance and innovation, but for cities with little history of

---

*Where housing, labour markets and services are overstretched, pooling resources with neighbouring localities can increase efficiency by creating economies of scale.*

genuine cross-stakeholder partnership on integration matters, an iterative approach might be a better fit, starting from single information points and progressively incorporating more institutions to provide in-house services. For newer destinations (as well as for cities lacking exact data about their immigrant residents), a neighbourhood-based approach may allow local authorities to monitor patterns of residential distribution as they emerge and to “take the temperature” of residents’ perceptions, prevent misunderstandings, and leverage community activities and voluntary engagement. Finally, where housing, labour markets and services are overstretched, pooling resources with neighbouring localities can increase efficiency by creating economies of scale and allow authorities to combine the integration benefits of urban and suburban areas – for example, economic opportunities with affordable housing. Besides questions of awareness, accessibility and interlinkages of services, a particularly tricky challenge (especially for localities on the front line) is developing creative solutions to address the most basic needs of the “hardest to reach”, including irregular immigrants who may be excluded from most public services and are thus at heightened risk of severe destitution, homelessness and/or (mental) illness.<sup>131</sup>

## *E. Improving migrant representation*

One key aspect of well-balanced integration governance is reflecting the diversity and views of the local population in policymaking and service design. Cities may adopt different solutions to make sure their immigrant residents have a substantial voice in these matters.

129 Author interview with Miriam Pasqui, City Official, Unit for the Coordination of Social Emergencies, Municipality of Milan; Alessia Cattaneo, Coordinator of CASC; Claudia Martinez and Massimo Pettrignani, Social Workers, CASC, Milan, 10 September 2019.

130 Comments by Lefteris Papagiannakis, Head of Advocacy, Policy and Research and SOLIDARITYNOW and former Vice Mayor for Migration at the City of Athens, at the workshop Facilitating Access to Quality Services for People with a Migrant Background during the conference Go Local: Supporting Regions, Cities and Rural Areas in Migrants’ Integration, Brussels, 3 December 2019.

131 How cities have addressed these challenges will be addressed in Liam Patuzzi and Meghan Benton, *Flourishing in the Cracks: Cities Innovating for Migrant Inclusion* (Brussels: Migration Policy Institute Europe, forthcoming).

One approach is to develop migrant councils. Municipal advisory bodies that represent immigrant communities have been established in a number of European cities over the past few years.<sup>132</sup> In Palermo, the *Consulta delle Culture* (Council of Cultures) is an official body comprising 21 members elected by and representing immigrant residents of the city and tasked with both advocating for the interests of different communities and organizing intercultural activities.<sup>133</sup> Similarly, Gdansk's Immigrant Council is a municipal advisory body made up of 14 migrant representatives<sup>134</sup> who meet monthly to discuss local immigrants' needs and concerns.<sup>135</sup> However, some experts are sceptical of the real impact of such councils on decision-making processes.<sup>136</sup> Councils whose opinions are not systematically incorporated into a city's policymaking processes can quickly break down as council members who initially held high expectations of what they could achieve become frustrated and disengaged. In Thessaloniki and the neighbouring municipality of Neapoli-Sykies, local immigrant integration councils have lost much of their engagement potential, according to local officials, possibly due to a drop in motivation following unsuccessful attempts to affect policies that are well outside the remit of the municipality (for example, those governing residence permits).<sup>137</sup> These bodies' credibility also depends on the way migrant representatives are selected: appointment by the city authorities runs the risk of favouring those who are already more engaged and known to officials; organizing a truly representative election, on the other hand, may be challenging in cities with large unregistered migrant populations.<sup>138</sup>

Another, more mainstream approach is to ensure that migrants are well represented across the local administration rather than in special bodies.<sup>139</sup> In recent years, several cities have sought to increase the migrant-background share of their staff through tailored recruitment.<sup>140</sup> The City of Amsterdam, a European leader when it comes to migrant representation in integration policymaking, has hired numerous case managers with a migrant or refugee background to work with newcomers.<sup>141</sup> While adapting recruitment practices can be tricky in the (often highly regulated) public sector, a political decision to set concrete diversity targets can kickstart a self-critical review of existing hiring practices and identify obstacles that may disproportionately affect immigrant candidates. Statistical target-setting helped the City of Ghent to increase the foreign-born share of its staff by 4 percentage points in three years<sup>142</sup> through measures such as simplifying the language of psychological entry tests and making them more video and image based so gaps in host-country language proficiency do not unfairly disadvantage non-native speakers.<sup>143</sup> Another way to reduce common barriers, such as limited language

132 Council of Europe, *Migrant Representation & Participation Bodies in the Intercultural City: Key Considerations & Principles* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, Intercultural Cities Programme, n.d.); OECD, *Working Together for Local Integration of Migrants and Refugees* (Paris: OECD, 2018).

133 Leoluca Orlando, "On Migration: Palermo's Perspective", Climate 2020, 9 November 2018; author interview with Roberta Lo Bianco, Coordinator of Migration Unit, CESIE, Palermo, 28 November 2019.

134 Helen Womack, "Polish City Leads the Way in Solidarity with Refugees", UNHCR, updated 18 February 2018.

135 Author interview with a representative of migrant communities in the Immigrant Council, City of Gdansk, 14 November 2019.

136 OECD, *Working Together for Local Integration of Migrants and Refugees* (Paris: OECD, 2018).

137 Author interview with Maro Vassara, Director of Social Services, City of Neapoli-Sykies, 16 September 2019.

138 Author interview with Paulina Wlazlak, Inspector, Department of Social Development, City of Gdansk, 12 November 2019.

139 Author interview with Paulina Wlazlak, Inspector, Department of Social Development, City of Gdansk, 12 November 2019.

140 Eurocities, *Cities and Migrants: Implementing the Integrating Cities Charter* (Brussels: Eurocities, 2018).

141 Comments by Rutger Groot Wassink, Deputy Mayor for Social Affairs, Democratisation and Diversity of the City of Amsterdam, during the conference Go Local: Supporting Regions, Cities and Rural Areas in Migrants' Integration, Brussels, 3 December 2019.

142 The share of staff with a migrant background rose from 6.8 per cent in 2015 to 10.7 per cent in 2018, although the target was set lower at 8.5 per cent. See Eurocities, *Cities and Migrants: Implementing the Integrating Cities Charter* (Brussels: Eurocities, 2018).

143 Other measures Ghent has taken to make its recruitment process more open to reflect the city's diverse population (30 per cent of residents are first-, second- or third-generation migrants) include recruiting in areas of the city where members of ethnic and migrant communities live. See Eurocities, "Cities Grow Study Visit, Gdansk to Ghent: Making Diversity Work – Migrants and the Labour Market", updated 12 October 2017.



proficiency or formal degrees, is to base recruitment on proven competences rather than official qualifications, and to invest in opportunities for further language and skills development on the job, as tested in Stockholm.<sup>144</sup> However, such measures may not be equally practicable across Europe: Austria and Greece, for example, reserve statutory or tenured public sector jobs for nationals and EU citizens.<sup>145</sup>

A final, bottom-up way to involve migrants in local decision-making can be seen in Malaga, where district-level assemblies discuss neighbourhood challenges and developments, bringing together residents regardless of nationality or origin.<sup>146</sup> While such an approach is not a real alternative to the aforementioned models – these assemblies have more limited power – it can work as a platform to promote a culture of deliberation and political participation, and acquaint migrant communities with the levers of local democracy they can use to shape decision-making.

## 4 Conclusions and Recommendations

In recent years, mixed migration has pushed European cities already familiar with diversity to reshape their integration policies and investments. These rapid, large-scale movements have also triggered other localities, traditionally farther away from the spotlight when it comes to conversations about local integration best practices, to become more aware of their (new or evolving status) as diverse communities.

Addressing migrant integration through local policies and programming comes with some key advantages, such as the proximity of different stakeholders, more granular knowledge of local migrant communities' needs, greater flexibility and adaptability, and the opportunity to build more inclusive and participatory forms of

belonging around local identities. But it also involves important constraints – from limited formal power and resources to tensions with higher levels of government and few options to set integration incentives and obligations. In countries with weak national integration frameworks, for example, local governments may acutely feel the lack of national leadership in establishing clear legal duties and standardized programmes for migrants to participate in integration activities – a sentiment expressed by local stakeholders in Romania and Greece.<sup>147</sup>

---

*Addressing migrant integration through local policies and programming comes with some key advantages.*

Notwithstanding the specificities of local contexts, cities can adopt the following institutional approaches to improve the governance of migrant and refugee integration:

- ▶ **Make migrant inclusion a credible whole-of-community issue.** Highlighting the cross-cutting relevance of immigrant integration allows localities to better coordinate support across policy

<sup>144</sup> Eurocities, *Cities and Migrants: Implementing the Integrating Cities Charter* (Brussels: Eurocities, 2018).

<sup>145</sup> Dirk Gebhardt, *Building Inclusive Cities. Challenges in the Multilevel Governance of Immigrant Integration in Europe* (Washington, D.C.: Migration Policy Institute, 2014); Eurocities, *Cities and Migrants: Implementing the Integrating Cities Charter* (Brussels: Eurocities, 2018).

<sup>146</sup> Author interview with Alberto Rivera de la Puente, Social Worker, Unit of Social Services – District Palma-Palmilla, City of Malaga, 3 December 2019.

<sup>147</sup> Author interview with Maro Vassara, Director of Social Services, City of Neapoli-Sykies, 16 September 2019; author interview with Fae Efthimiadou, Director of Social Services, City of Kalamaria, 16 September 2019; author interview with Ioana Barbu, Project Manager, Schottener Foundation Social Services, Bucharest, 27 September 2019.

areas – from housing and education to employment and health care. It can also help prevent integration from being viewed as a niche topic, as has been the case particularly once the sense of emergency fades and in cities with less experience with diversity and fewer dedicated resources. A mayor declaring migrant integration a strategic priority can create coordination incentives. And doing so as part of a non-ideological discourse – for example, in cities with stagnating economies, highlighting the contribution of migrants to innovation and local consumption – will reduce the risk that future administrations overturn good practices. Some targeted policies and services will always be necessary to address the needs of the most vulnerable, but ensuring that information about migration-related issues is passed on to mainstream services can strengthen their understanding of these issues and help prevent completely parallel structures from emerging – one set serving migrants, the other native-born residents – which is especially important where services and support for all residents are tight.

- ▶ **Promote inclusive partnerships with civil society, based on jointly developed strategies.** Strong collaboration between local authorities and non-governmental entities is a key factor for the success of local integration governance, especially where budgets are thin and city hall lacks expertise in migration-specific issues. Different underlying beliefs about migrant inclusion and a power imbalance can complicate this relationship, but hands-on cooperation – for example, city officials and NGOs co-designing services and delivering them in mixed teams – can promote trust. Cities that have only recently begun to delve deeper into integration policy may profit from a comprehensive mapping of local civil society as a way to identify potential partners beyond the most visible and influential civil society organizations, including among local immigrant communities. Coordinating stakeholders around a shared integration strategy and action plan (developed in a participatory fashion) promotes coherence, frontloads identification and resolution of possible tensions, and can help cities with resource constraints become more attractive to external funders.
- ▶ **Involve immigrants in local democratic processes in ways that are meaningful rather than symbolic.** Municipal migrant councils have become widespread across Europe, including in cities with otherwise relatively underdeveloped integration policies. But they have sometimes been empty exercises, neglected by local authorities and migrants themselves, when they have a purely reactive role, insufficient impact on decision-making processes (at times, coupled with unrealistic expectations), or are not adequately representative of the local migrant population. Giving migrant councils a budget and leeway to develop their own initiatives and projects, as in Palermo and Gdansk, can increase motivation and visibility. Alternately, for cities that are still getting to know their emerging immigrant communities, investing in bottom-up initiatives may be more effective. Neighbourhood-based assemblies where migrants and other residents can debate matters of local interest, as in Malaga, can promote a clearer understanding of how to bring immigrant voices into local democracy while also promoting bonds between foreign- and native-born locals around shared objectives. Such an approach also acknowledges that migrants' expertise and community interests go well beyond questions of integration.
- ▶ **Build monitoring and evaluation capacity at the local level.** One of the main obstacles to improving the local governance of migrant integration is the dearth of strong evidence – both on the impact of specific policies and measures, and on local integration indicators more generally. This puts local authorities and other stakeholders at risk of duplicating efforts and inefficiently using resources; it also limits the transfer of experiences from city to city, and makes it easier

for integration policies to become politicized. Local integration plans with built-in monitoring mechanisms can be particularly practical entry points for tracking the progress of integration measures as they provide information that can be used to improve stakeholder coordination and an opportunity to regularly reflect on and adjust objectives. However, support from higher levels of government – in the form of capacity-building programmes and funding incentives, for example – is essential to make local authorities more aware of existing monitoring and evaluation tools and how they can be adapted to local needs, and to promote the comparability of data across cities and regions.

While discussions of local integration governance in Europe have largely focused on superdiverse metropolises such as Berlin, Vienna, Paris and Stockholm, a huge amount of innovation is happening in cities and towns outside of the limelight. These localities have faced a range of challenges in recent years: the need to address dramatic population changes at the same time as endemic structural issues; adapt to fast-changing migration situations; and navigate sometimes tense relationships with national policymakers, due to different political priorities and discourses.

Many of these cities have stepped up to the task and are now working to translate emergency responses into long-term plans to make the most of diversity. Much can be learned from these examples, as they shed light on how the right local governance choices can help achieve more with less, and how building inclusive communities is not solely a prerogative of particularly large or wealthy cities or those with a long history of immigration. Faced with the prospect of persistent regional inequalities across Europe, and with immigration an undeniable reality for many communities in the decades to come, it is high time to widen the spotlight in debates about the effective local governance of migrant inclusion.

---

*While discussions of local integration governance in Europe have largely focused on superdiverse metropolises ... a huge amount of innovation is happening in cities and towns outside of the limelight.*

## About the Author

---



**LIAM PATUZZI**  @LiamPatuzzi

Liam Patuzzi is a Policy Analyst at the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) Europe, where he focuses on the labour market integration of immigrants, innovative approaches to refugee inclusion, labour migration management and EU free movement.

He previously was a Research Officer and Analyst at ebb (Entwicklungsgesellschaft für berufliche Bildung), a consultancy in the area of integration, employment and education policy. Mr. Patuzzi holds a joint master's degree in social sciences, with a focus on globalization and migration, from the University of Freiburg, Germany and the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. He completed his bachelor's degree in philosophy at Ca' Foscari University in Venice, Italy.

## Acknowledgements

---

This research was carried out as part of the ADMin4ALL project (“Supporting Social Inclusion of Vulnerable Migrants in Europe”), implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and funded by the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs, and Inclusion.

The author thanks the many interviewees who took part in this study: the IOM national focal points for the ADMin4ALL project as well as local stakeholders in Kufstein, Austria; Kalamaria, Neapoli-Sykies, and Thessaloniki, Greece; Milan and Palermo, Italy; Malta; Gdansk and Warsaw, Poland; Bucharest, Romania; and Malaga, Spain. The author is also grateful to IOM analysts who gave valuable support and feedback throughout the research, especially Rossella Celmi, Francesco Vigneri, Geertrui Lanneau, Rabab Ahmad, and Jobst Köhler, and to his colleagues at the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) Europe and MPI for their comments and edits, especially Meghan Benton, Lauren Shaw, Natalia Banulescu-Bogdan, and Michelle Mittelstadt, as well as Timo Schmidt, Antonio Pietropolli, and Maria Gargano for their research support.





[www.mpieurope.org](http://www.mpieurope.org)



[www.iom.int](http://www.iom.int)

Residence Palace, 155 Rue de la Loi, 3rd Floor, 1040 Brussels  
+32 (0) 2235 2113

Mission in Italy with Coordinating Role for the Mediterranean  
Casale Strozzi Superiore, Via L.G. Faravelli snc 00195, Rome