

UIA Capitalization workshop

The role of cities in the integration of migrants and refugees

12 -13 June 2019 - Antwerp (Belgium)

With the number of migrants and refugees living in urban areas in constant rising, cities become key to solve the challenges of migrants and refugees integration that Europe is currently facing. The four UIA cities Antwerp, Vienna, Utrecht and Bologna implementing innovative ways for better managing integration in their territory, are currently cooperating to identify lesson learned and common challenges encountered in their first two year of implementation. They will gather together in **Antwerp on the 12/13 of June** to discuss how cities can innovate in the way they deal with the reception and integration of their new inhabitants.

Supported by their UIA experts, the projects have identified four key aspects that could bring an added value to the role that cities can play in tackling the challenge of integration in our society. These issues will be the core of the UIA capitalization workshop, where different cities practitioners, experts, stakeholders and EU institution, will enter in a fruitful exchange starting from the following questions:

1. What is the optimal and sustainable intensity of personalized case management and support services that can increase chances of integration?

When designing an integration path and defining key actions such as reception, training, work, legal assistance, health care and social mediation, the kind of management is frequently given by the framework conditions and by the project itself. Nevertheless, it is necessary to define the intensity of the approaches, how to integrate their effects and how to deliver a sustainable and viable model. Management model design should take into account all the assets that will be faced along the project, from the economics and human resources commitment, to the flexibility of adjustments when the project is running already.

It seems from the experiences of Antwerp, Utrecht, Bologna and Vienna that projects where a good ratio has been set among the approaches, and where ideal solutions have been reached, do not turn out to be feasible and sustainable outside of funded projects.

It is consequently clear that analysing, structuring, knowing the specific politics context and sharing management approaches in between projects is more than necessary to help setting the best personalized and feasible strategy.

2. How important is the physical dimension of co-housing and combination with new type of reception and social centres in these interventions?

How the integration services are organised in space can play an important role in supporting refugees and asylum seekers to integrate faster and better. Each of the projects has chosen a different configuration of its co-housing arrangements combined with a range of services which are either onsite in the

neighbourhoods or further afield. The configurations developed by the UIA cities of Antwerp, Bologna, Vienna and Utrecht can be compared and contrasted with migrant one-stop shops developed in the Member States and specifically with good practices in Lisbon and Porto supported by the Portuguese government working closely with each of the cities. The contrast here is between service coordination in the one-stop shops and the focus on living, working and socialising together and with the host community developed within the UIA projects. For many refugees, the experience of the first years is of being in limbo while dealing with endless bureaucracy. This speaks to the need for a multilevel approach between cities and their Member States in which the administrative processes are well coordinated while the best use is made of 'limbo' time to enable people to become settled in communities in the cities. To some extent this is variable geometry and our aim is to explore the benefits of each configuration.

3. What role can the engagement of stakeholders and citizens play in leveraging public opinion and political support?

The success of policies for the reception of asylum seekers and refugees depends on many factors. Some are of a more "internal" nature, such as starting from a good diagnosis and getting the methodology and its implementation right. But more "external" aspects related to public opinion and the level of political commitment can also influence, especially in contexts where there is an increase in support for populist anti-immigration discourses in practically all of Europe. The engagement of diverse stakeholders and citizens in general in the design and implementation of these policies, apart from being able to improve their effectiveness, can also be useful in countering negative narratives and reinforcing political support. But what actors and engagement strategies are most effective in achieving these objectives? This is the main issue that we will address in this workshop based on the experiences of the four projects.

4. What kind of organisation of multi-level governance is required to address the challenge of integration if migrants and refugees effectively?

The integration of migrants and refugees is defined by an entanglement between different levels of authorities. Cities are suggested to develop, and to implement, concrete integration measures which ideally spoken should be in line with national or even supranational policies. In practice, however, the implementation of specific measures is not friction-free, and this does not only refer to the fact that the actors involved - public authorities at different levels, institutions, civil society organizations, associations, not least the targeted population - follow different interests; they may also define and perceive situations differently, differ in their way of functioning, or vary in terms of time perspectives. Most city-lead projects have to grapple with the gap between the political intent of representatives of local and national governments, the focus of project partners/stakeholders and social workers involved in the project, and the real needs of the target group. How to find a balance between these different interests and perspectives? Under the title of "multi-level governance" this tricky question will be addressed in this workshop based on the experiences of the four UIA projects, being currently implemented under the topic of "Integration of migrants and refugees".