Inclusion for all. Empowering vulnerable migrants in cities – Conference report

On 16-17 November 2022, during the 10th Integrating Cities Conference, the WG Migration & Integration gathered in Utrecht. This conference report gives an overview of the different discussions and issues raised during the workshop sessions and training provided by the 'Integration Champions'.

Parallel workshops – Session I

Undocumented migrants: possible solutions to ensure access to services

Dirk Gerhardt, MigrationWork Director, opened the workshop by reminding that the focus on undocumented migrants has never been absent from the Eurocities agenda. The 2003 Eurocities Contribution to Good Governance concerning Health and Wellbeing policy paper described what cities should do to ensure the health and wellbeing of their citizens, including undocumented migrants. The paper highlighted that non-recognition of migrants was a threat to social cohesion and suggested to ensure open access to services non dependant on legal status.

Furthermore, this topic shows a different understanding of citizenship between cities and state. Five years ago, the University of Oxford – led by Professor Sarah Spencer, started the City Initiative on Migrants with Irregular Status in Europe (C-MISE), a city-led knowledge-exchange programme supporting European cities in sharing knowledge on city practices and policies responding to the presence of migrants with irregular status in their territory.

Jacqueline Broadhead, Director at the Global Exchange on Migration and Diversity, University of Oxford presented this initiative with over 50 cities in 19 countries. C-MISE aims to engage cities and towns in knowledge-exchange on migrants with irregular status; disseminate C-MISE guidance materials throughout Europe; share expertise in national, European and international policy debates; and mainstream C-MISE's issue of focus within city networks focusing on migration. Chaired by the City of Utrecht, C-MISE is facilitated by researchers at the University of Oxford's Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS).

C-MISE identified six focus areas across several national contexts. Some common themes emerged in cities despite the different local contexts, such as education, healthcare, access to services, shelter,

and housing. C-MISE produced "Migrants with irregular status in Europe: guidance for municipalities"[1] in 2019, designed to assist municipal authorities in Europe in providing appropriate access to services for migrants with irregular status. In addition, the C-MISE webpage provides access to a number of useful resources, such as tools and good practices like 'Support for migrant families' – a tool created in partnership with the No Recourse to Public Fund (NRPF) Network and COMPAS. C-MISE also contributed to the 'Safe Reporting of Crime' for victims and witness

ses with irregular migration status and to the 'Local Responses to Precarious Migrants: Frames, Strategies and Evolving Practices (LoReMi) project.

Christof Meier, Head of the Integration Office at the City of Zurich presented how the city found solutions to ensure access to public services. The term '*sans papiers'* is generally used in Switzerland to indicate undocumented migrants. The city of Zurich has identified two types of irregular migrants based on (estimated) facts and background information:

- Primary *sans-papiers* (around 9,000) that entered as tourists or illegally and have never been registered (mostly women coming from Latin America).
- Overstayers (around 1,000) and rejected asylum seekers (around 800), who lost their status but didn't leave the country and are not in an emergency shelter.

Christof Meier reported that almost all *sans-papiers* work and live in precarious conditions, risk exploitation and fear police controls as they can be expelled, especially those from South America. For several years, the city did not promote Zurich's work for undocumented workers. In 2018 the City Council of Zurich published a position paper declaring that *sans-papiers* must be able to exercise their basic and human rights without risk. The measures taken included political work for regularization and access to justice, enhance access to education and health services and facilitate access to municipal services and facilities.

Zurich decided to introduce a city-card for all its residents to simplify life, increase solidarity, enable participation and strengthen the concept of urban citizenship. The idea of a Zurich City-Card was viewed sceptically but was examined due to the parliament's political pressure. After a legal assessment and a positive vote in a popular referendum on 15 May 2022, the City started its preparatory work for this initiative. Before the final introduction of the Zurich City-Card, there will most likely be another popular vote.

Michele LeVoy, Director at the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM) presented the trends on this topic in the last ten years and a historical perspective in relation to three main areas:

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[1] COMPAS (2019), "Migrants with Irregular Status in Europe: Guidance for Municipalities", available here: https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/2019/migrants-with-irregular-status-in-europe-guidance-for-municipalities/

1. Access to services: while Home Affairs policies at national and EU levels still see undocumented migrants exclusively as an enforcement issue, other policy areas offer "anchors" for inclusive local practices. Examples are the EU child guarantee 2021 and EU care strategy 2022 on access to education and childcare. COVID has been a game changer in that it triggered practices of recognition by traditionally restrictive governments (e.g. Greece, Norway) who granted universal access to vaccination while safeguarding data protection.

2. Access to justice: for most countries, immigration enforcement is a stronger priority than the protection of victims. If an undocumented migrant is a victim of crime and wants to report this, their personal data are sent to the police. Victims of hospital or healthcare

Christof Meier, Jacqueline Broadhead, Michele LeVoy | © Koen Peters

malpractice and labour exploitation face the same issue. A recently approved Spanish law aims to protect women victims of labour exploitation that are now allowed to report without fearing of deportation. In June 2022, the European Commission adopted its evaluation of the Victims' Rights Directive. Article 1 sets the scope, stating that the Directive is applicable to all including those without regular status. The Directive also states that the victim's data need to be protected. In October 2021, the European Commission (EC) published a communication on its evaluation of the implementation of the Employer's Sanctions Directive. These instruments provide a legal basis for further protection of undocumented migrants' rights.

3. Regularisation: this policy is currently being applied in many countries and is longer a taboo. Recently, the European Migration Network identified in a report 60 protection procedures that look at humanitarian grounds, even climate change to grant residence status. Italy, Spain and Portugal passed recent legislation on regularisation. Sweden's programme for people studying in the country has however been phased out. Levoy noted that there should be some criteria on how to regularise and PICUM will publish a report with positive and negative examples of regularisation.

The European Commission, through its R&D programme, is currently financing 7 research consortia on irregular migration through Horizon Europe. These projects will hopefully provide the data cities need to provide politicians with to justify policies in support of undocumented migrants.

Shaping local narratives on migration and diversity through decolonisation

The second workshop focused on shaping local narratives on migration and diversity through decolonisation. Both Belgium and Germany held and controlled several territories and concessions during the colonial era and, nowadays, Brussels and Berlin work at the local level on the process of decolonising public spaces, in which diasporas play a key role.

Decolonisation demands equality among all people and calls s for actions to end structural racism. Decolonisation can take various forms. Its implementation in public spaces requires in the first place

the identification of the presence of colonial symbols. At a later stage, it aims at changing the name of streets or other public spaces recalling the colonial past and providing a clearer historical framing for public monuments representing icons of the colonial period.

Lydia Mutyebele Ngoi's presentation | © Koen Peters

Everyone playing an active role in society can be involved in the decolonisation process. Education and raising awareness activities – such as guided walks in the neighbourhoods where symbols of colonisation are still present – are essential. They allow citizens to learn thoroughly about and deconstruct colonial history in order to overcome the structural and internalised racism that results from it.

Decolonisation can also be applied to the political representation of minorities in a city. **Lydia Mutyebele Ngoi**, Alderwoman of Housing, Public Patrimony and Equal Opportunities of the City of Brussels, opened the workshop by saying: "I am myself an example of decolonisation." Mutyebele has become the first sub-Saharan woman to access her current mandate, recalling the essential role of representativity of diasporas within local governments.

According to Mutyebele, "the bust of Lieutenant General Emile P.J. Storms and the statue of Leopold II in Brussels celebrate historical figures known to be racist." The decision to remove the bust was made by the city, in response to the demands of the population, in particular the sub-Saharan diaspora present in Brussels. A decision regarding the statue of King Leopold II has not yet been made. "When we refer to decolonising public space, there is a need to fully understand the symbolism associated with monuments", she said.

Decolonisation actions are not only aimed at eliminating those elements that glorify the values of the colonial past, but also at making room for equitable representation. In 2018, to respond to the demands of the Congolese diaspora, a square in Brussels was named after Patrice Lumumba, an icon of decolonisation, as he was the first Prime Minister of Congo after its independence in 1960. This initiated a process of recognition of the colonial past in Brussels, in which the local Congolese organisations played an active role. Mutyebele expanded on the role of the Brussels' Council for Cultural Diversity, which she chairs. This body is consulted when it comes to addressing racism and inclusion in the city.

According to **Saraya Gomis**, State Secretary for Diversity and Anti-Discrimination of Berlin, narratives glorifying the colonial past are closely connected with racism. "Berlin has served as headquarters of the colonial plan and the city has a special responsibility as it was the former capital of the German Empire", Gomis said. The city has returned a large part of colonial cultural property and exhibits the remaining objects – as a loan – in the Humboldt Forum.

The use of a decolonisation narrative in different fields, such as education, culture and collective memory aims at overcoming the colonial heritage in the representation of the "Other". The

objectification of the "Other" has long excluded racialised people from political debates and decision-making. Gomis and Mutyebele underlined that – in both cities – cultural awareness of the colonial past within the population is not exhaustive. Therefore, the path to acceptance of differences is still a long one. This can undermine the inclusion of racialised people in society. Decolonising the narrative around migration on a local level also means overcoming the colonial heritage of excluding minorities from positions of power, allowing fair representation.

Colonial past symbolism also plays an important role in the German capital. Berlin has confronted it by changing the name of some streets in its African quarter. This happened as the result of a process, the actions of which can often be perceived as purely symbolic. Decolonisation of public spaces has begun recently, and its implementation is still ongoing, Gomis underlined. Furthermore, the city is working to make political participation more representative.

Following Brussels and Berlin's presentations, the discussion with participants revolved around the biggest challenges of decolonising public spaces and the role of this process in contributing to integration and inclusion. The two cities' representatives emphasised that there is a close link between the narrative around colonial history and racism, which is why the process of decolonising cities' public spaces is so important.

How to create safer spaces for LGBTQI+ refugees?
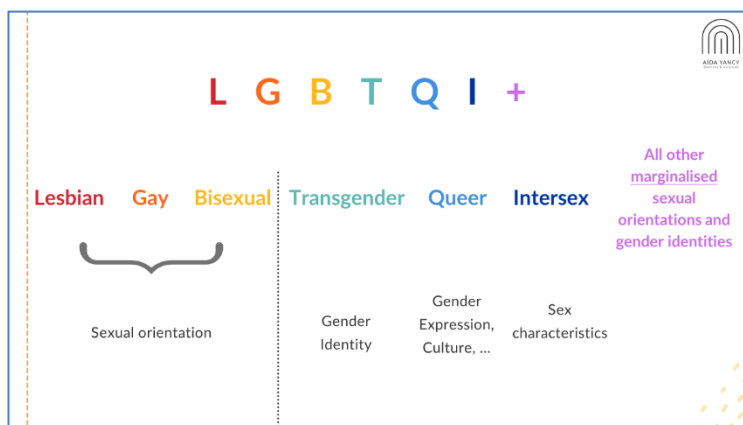
Aïda Yancy's presentation | © Aïda Yancy

Aïda Yancy, Diversity & Inclusion Specialist, opened the workshop by introducing the audience to key concepts. A key concept to better understand LGBTQI+ migrants' needs is intersectionality. First theorised in 1989 by Kimberlé Crenshaw, it stems from the observation that black women face a form of sexism that is different from their white counterparts as it is augmented by racism, and that they face a form of racism different from Black men as it is augmented by sexism. Different aspects of our identity may be subjected to oppression. When several of these aspects intersect, these oppressions do not only add up but merge and form new challenges. As a consequence, people who belong to more than one marginalised group, not only experience greater discrimination than those who are stigmatised due to a single aspect of their identity, but the discrimination they face may take unexpected - and sometimes difficult to identify - shapes.

Yancy then outlined the definition of a safe(r) space as being "any kind of space – not necessarily a physical space - perceived by an individual as welcoming and accepting of their identity, and in which they can share information about themselves without fear of negative repercussion". These safer spaces are not spaces where everyone agrees. Yancy underlined: "Safe does not mean comfortable. It does not even mean that we have to like each other". Her research identified that safer spaces focus on nurturing a sense of belonging, empowerment, and unconditional respect. She concluded by

underlying why it is important to create such spaces: "spaces that are not (perceived as) safe, are spaces that tend to be naturally avoided and thus rendered *de facto* inaccessible. (…) Better practices when welcoming service users can make the difference between people walking through the door or avoiding a service completely, sometimes with high risks."

After this introduction to key concepts, **Florencio Chicote**, Head of LGBTI Division, Senate Department of Justice, Diversity and Antidiscrimination in Berlin outlined the model used by his city. In 2015, the city began to see many LGBTQI+ refugees arriving, who were highly traumatised and had to face exclusion and even violence not only in their country of origin but also during their journey and after arrival. Having often experienced violence from authorities, they were, therefore, reluctant to notify German authorities about their gender or sexuality and if they did, people working in the asylum system were not always well equipped to help them.

For that reason, the city has been developing a 'Berlin Model' – a reception and integration strategy that recognises and accounts for the special vulnerability of asylum seekers who identify as LGBTQI+. An important part of the model is to provide specialised and 'low threshold' counselling, a safe and easily accessible space where LGBTQI+ could talk about their situation without fear of judgement or reprimand and get access to further assistance. Chicote underlined "the challenge is that this group is very heterogenous in terms of needs (healthcare, protection, security, etc). Also, the question is never whether they have experienced violence and trauma, but rather how big and complex this traumatic experience is". A successful approach must take into account both diversity within the category, and intersectionality with other potential sources of vulnerability.

The city also offers a specialised shelter for LGBTQI+ refugees, with around 120 beds. These are safe spaces in which refugees can be confident that they are recognised and respected, regardless of their gender or sexuality. An important part of the 'Berlin model' is the training and education of all stakeholders involved, from the head of the shelter, interpreters, and social workers to people working in the administration. Berlin has also developed lots of materials and tools, including safety protocols in shelters, inspired by the protocol developed to protect women.

To close the workshop, **Elisabeth Palmero**, Project manager at IOM, presented the toolbox developed in the context of the [Equalcity](#) project, aimed at helping frontline services set up safe(r) spaces for LGBTQI+ people with a migrant background (to be downloaded [here](#)). The practical tool is based on the actual needs of social workers that were identified through a comprehensive survey and tested by a wide range of experts. Since the publication of the toolbox, around 450 frontline workers (social workers, workers in the health care sector, police, etc) have been trained.

This comprehensive toolbox includes:

- Guidelines for frontline services' management – setting up safer space
- A manual for frontline workers – managing safer space
- A training manual
- Awareness raising materials (videos, posters and flyers)
- Guide for cities and local authorities

Parallel workshops – Session II

Unaccompanied minors: challenges and good practices for integration

Migrant children are first and foremost children, regardless of whether they are refugees or migrants, accompanied by family members or unaccompanied. They are a particularly vulnerable group and are entitled to protection and care in line with their best interests.

Iris de Kok, Policy Advisor Migration and Integration in Tilburg presented the city's approach to the reception and integration of unaccompanied minors. Tilburg's integration services for unaccompanied minors are built on two pillars to make their transition from childhood to adulthood go as smoothly as possible: (1) a holistic approach coupled with individual and tailored support to the young migrants' needs and skills and (2) support coming from the neighbourhood.

In practice, this means setting up a monitoring board with all relevant stakeholders to support the youngsters with housing, education, work, finances, wellbeing and health. When it comes to the individual support afforded to each young person, there are different paths open depending on their relative independence when they turn 18, including extended guidance, extended foster care, guided housing and independent housing. In parallel, Tilburg makes sure that support to the minors is generated and preserved within the neighbourhood. "It is very important to involve the community living around the shelters to make sure that everybody is truly living together," said de Kok. To do that, the shelters organise activities that are open to the whole community living in the neighbourhood.

Tilburg's model also relies on a network of civil society actors and partners that have established good and trusted relations with unaccompanied minors. By bringing together different social stakeholders, such as sports coaches, the city has found new ways of better receiving and integrating migrant minors.

Antonella Angela Colombo, Head of Unit 'Migration and Inclusion Policies' of the Social Affairs Department in Milan presented the functioning of the 'Service Centre for Unaccompanied Migrant Minors' in the city. Inspired by the model implemented in Stockholm and Leeds, the centre is innovative, multifunctional, and entirely dedicated to unaccompanied migrant minors' needs. The centre offers first immediate protection. Then, in order to refer minors to the most appropriate longer-term residential solution, a comprehensive assessment of their psychological and health conditions, specific needs, family background and personal history is carried out by a multidisciplinary team of experts. Around 20 persons work in the centre which usually accommodates around 12 minors.

One of the most innovative features of the Service Centre is the fact that, upon identification of any specific vulnerabilities of minors, all necessary services are directly activated in the Centre itself, without having minors reach different offices around the city and, most importantly, without transferring minors from a reception centre to another before a suitable accommodation is identified. In this way, the distance between first reception and longer-term solutions is minimised.

In Italy, municipalities have set up around 40,000 places for asylum seekers of which 6,000 are reserved for Unaccompanied Minors (UAMs). The city of Milan manages 400 places for UAMs within this system. The system is currently saturated: the number of UAMs accommodated by Milan up until 30 September 2022, equals to 1,214 children, a 42% increase in comparison to 2021 and a 91% increase in comparison to 2020.

Aaron Greenberg, Regional Advisor Child Protection at UNICEF started by highlighting two important

points stemming from the two previous presentations:

- Migrant children need specialised services, which are resource intensive.
- The situation with UAM's is critical. Care systems are saturated everywhere. The saturation has been compounded by the war in Ukraine and further compounded by the fact that the number of children who need care protection – no matter their nationality and status - is growing exponentially. Referring to a series of interviews of UAMs carried out by UNICEF[2], Greenberg praised the resilience of these children. "It is absolutely mind-blowing that you could be a person of that age, to have gone through that on your own and arrive", he said. However, "it is important to remember that these are children. Whatever we can do for them we should be doing for them" but added that this "takes place in a context of a larger systematic problem in social services and childcare services in Europe which are grossly strained".

Moving on to the topic of children fleeing the war in Ukraine, Greenberg observed that they are a fundamentally different population than the other unaccompanied minors coming to Europe. A first big issue has been that children aged 16 and 17 are permitted by the Ukrainian authorities to leave Ukraine on their own but have been considered unaccompanied when they crossed the border into Europe. Another one has been the situation of 100,000 children – some with severe disabilities – who were accommodated in congregated care in Ukraine before the war, the majority of whom had to be evacuated overnight into Europe. As the Ukrainian government does not want them to be separated, these children have been put under the guardianship of the persons who evacuated them and are staying in hotels, completely out of the national child protection system.

Aaron Greenberg, Iris de Kok, Krista van der Heijden, Antonella Angela Colombo, Lia Barrese | © Alexandra Weerts

Greenberg also underlined that the Ukrainian Government is really concerned that Ukrainian children may never come back to Ukraine. "This is an existential and political crisis for Ukraine. The integration that we are talking about is basically destroying the country. This is something to be aware of when we talk about integration".

Greenberg ended his presentation by identifying some local good practices in Greece, Italy, Poland, and Ceuta[3]. "At UNICEF, we recognised very early on that the only way to response to this crisis in Europe – given the social

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[2] UNICEF (2017), "Harrowing Journeys, Children and youth on the move across the Mediterranean Sea, at risk of trafficking and exploitation", available here: Harrowing Journeys | UNICEF
[3] See the PowerPoint presentation for more information

service dimension to the response we are trying to support – was to work with municipalities", he concluded.

Creating bridges for refugees' integration at neighbourhood level

The workshop presented three examples of cities' measures at neighbourhood level with the main goal to improve refugees' integration. Ceri Hutton, MigrationWork Director introduced the workshop's topic and noted that cities struggled for funding and relied on EU funds for this type of projects.

Fanny Köhler, Head of Team Promoting Participation presented the Welcome Points, an initiative of the City of Dusseldorf. They serve as a central point of contact in the city districts to answer all questions relating to refugee integration. The main goal is to foster social integration in the neighbourhood.

Here, refugees can find initial support, all residents can find answers to their questions and voluntary help can be coordinated. They emerged as a civil society's initiatives at neighbourhood level. Currently there are 14 Welcome Points in 9 of 10 city districts (10 municipally funded, 1 municipally owned).

The concept was further developed in 2022 through a comprehensive and participatory approach that involved all welcome points' staff, civil society, volunteers and migrants. Dusseldorf wanted to focus on creating a sense of belonging and acceptance of migrants as a basis for their work on integration.

The welcome points mainly carry out the following activities:

- Supporting the individual integration process through information provision and individual counselling; volunteer support; opportunities to foster knowledge and skills relevant to integration, e.g. language courses, job application training, and consumer protection.
- Improving access and participation opportunities by promoting participation in local networks, providing contact/source of information for the municipality and politics and by organising training for local actors and other initiatives.
- Shaping the migration society by letting people experience diversity in a positive way; promoting open cultural and creative events for the whole neighbourhood; tapping into the neighbourhoods' cultural potential and promoting dialogue and democratic education.

Fanny Köhler's presentation | © Koen Peters

In conclusion, Dusseldorf has developed a holistic integration strategy with a social space approach with a goal to enhance social integration by encouraging residents to act together.

Niene Oepkes, independent consultant and former senior advisor for the city of Utrecht presented Plan Einstein, which started in 2015-2016 with the first Syrian refugees' flow in Utrecht.

The city decided to open a reception centre in Utrecht in a neighbourhood that considered itself as deprived (a lot of people on welfare, many students). Following this decision, there were

demonstrations against the construction of the reception centre showing a clear climate of polarisation and tension in the neighbourhood.

The First Plan Einstein had the idea to change the intruder into a present. The city listened to the dire neighbourhoods' needs and fears. People were angry that local youth were waiting 20 years for housing and refugees received accommodation in a few months. People were afraid that the centre was in a very dark corner and that would affect their sense of security.

These concerns were addressed by having lights and by creating a quiet space.

They understood the need to create a common language. Being Dutch difficult to learn, Utrecht decided to teach English as a common language to all neighbourhood's residents. Language classes were free for everyone. They also provided urban housing for 40 dedicated neighbourhood youngsters, organised free entrepreneurship classes for all residents and free social activities with the aim of creating a free open welcoming space.

Plan Einstein recently moved to a new location because it was no longer possible to house youngsters. The second location is in a new neighbourhood whose main inhabitants are elderly people, and there are several churches and cultural centres. The city created hubs within 2km from the reception centre, such as Wilde Westen where people with interest in music could get together. In this new gentrified area, Plan Einstein continues to be a welcoming space for all residents.

Sue Lukes, MigrationWork Director, presented her experience as an elected local politician, councillor for Highbury East ward London Borough of Islington between 2018 and 2022. In the UK local authorities have less powers and competencies than other cities in the EU being a very centralised system.

Highbury East is a very mixed area with a few people with very low means. There is an affordability gap for housing with people moving in and out constantly, thus there is little sense of belonging.

According to Lukes, the councillor's role includes representing the local area, attending 8 or 9 meetings of the full council, scrutinising via committees, and oversight e.g. of pensions and audits. Most decisions are taken by the council executive formed of only 8-9 people. Councillors are expected to focus on their own ward. Many things happen at London level thus it is more difficult to work on integration. The councillor can show that s/he is available and their doors are open to anyone and especially for casework. Also important is the scrutiny role, such as on homelessness or to check if there are checks on legal status when there should not be.

In 2018, Lukes became Islington's first migrant champion to ensure that all Islington's communities benefited from the energy, creativity and resilience that migrants brought to the borough. Her main role was to help migrants to connect with local services, ensure they are considered in council policy and that migrant voices are heard. Cllr Sue Lukes set up advice sessions for EEA nationals affected by Brexit, worked with a local primary school to campaign for refugee children, supported the nomination of Islington as City of Sanctuary, set up a national network of migrant champions (e.g. in Oxford).

To sum up, the councillor's role is to provide political leadership, to engage with all communities in a neighbourhood, to be open and listen to all residents. This is particularly difficult in times where all countries register a loss of faith in "politicians". To fill this perceived distance, local councillors should be "the politicians you meet at the bus stop" and fulfill a crucial role to maintain democracy.

Crisis management at the local level: initial reception of refugees and beyond

The various narratives around the so-called migration "crises" offer different perspectives and have always influenced and shaped Europe's reactions to the arrival of migrants and refugees. Building on 2015 restrictive policies, this workshop addressed the reception of refugees, including short and long-term integration solutions.

According to UNHCR, since the escalation of the war in Ukraine in early 2022, over 7,8 Million Ukrainian refugees have been recorded across Europe[4]. In this respect, Warsaw's innovative response has gained international recognition. **Tomasz Pactwa**, Director of Social Affairs in Warsaw, started his presentation by recalling the mobilisation of the city and its citizens in February 2022. Warsaw made prompt arrangements to receive an unprecedented number of refugees. "We didn't have resources at the beginning," Pactwa said. Sharing with the participants the biggest challenges of welcoming thousands of refugees, he referred to the data collected to provide insights into the scale of the crisis in Warsaw. The peak reached 30,000 refugees per day. Today, 10-20% of refugees live in shelters provided by the city. The remaining percentage lives in apartments or houses or is hosted by a local family. A registration process equalising Poles and Ukrainians facilitated Refugees' access to the labour market, social services, health services and education. Warsaw made it possible through access to funds and by collaborating with 36 NGOs and regional and central national units. "Warsaw has put in place a top-down funding approach," providing 10 € per person per day and easy access to various services providing subsidies, concluded Pactwa. The whole system has proved to be successful as today, over 70,000 of the Ukrainian refugees who arrived in Warsaw have a job.

Lefteris Papagiannakis is currently the Director of the Greek Council for Refugees. During the workshop, he shared his view on the current context and his experience as the Deputy Mayor of Athens between 2016-2019. Back then, Europe was reacting to the arrival of refugees from Syria, Iraq,

Afghanistan, Eritrea and Somalia. "The definition of a migration crisis is sharply a political one. Using the term 'crisis' is easy because during crisis times we don't have to be accountable," Papagiannakis said. With respect to the political management of the refugees 'crisis' in 2015, "racism is at the origin of the unwillingness to take emergency measures when refuges were arriving through the Mediterranean" he underlined.

Lefteris Papagiannakis' presentation | © Koen Peters

Making different decisions back then would have meant that different things might be possible now. Furthermore, he illustrated the situation in Greece, where refugees were offered camps, not apartments. The 'crisis' led to a collaboration with Greek authorities, UNHCR, IOM

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[4] UNHCR Regional Bureau for Europe (2022), "Ukraine situation flash update #35, available here: https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/96923

and members of the Eurocities network, such as Munich, that supported Athens through transnational learning of good practices.

As for the current context, Greece issued 20,000 temporary protection status to Ukrainian refugees and they were not provided specific financial support. "This would be unfair towards the other refugees," Papagiannakis said.

Steven Bunce, Senior Integration Officer at UNHCR, provided an overview of their multisectoral response. "While no urban setting is the same, local governments have consistently been first responders in situations of large arrivals of refugees," Bunce said. Many cities throughout Europe have adopted an approach to early integration, linking reception to inclusion, thus enabling refugees to contribute to their host communities. In this respect, UNHCR collects data to ensure more targeted interventions, also based on refugees' socio-economic characteristics, status, and integration needs. Deep knowledge of data allows local authorities to better address gaps relating to housing, employment, and access to social protection systems. According to UNHCR, 80% of Ukrainian adults have completed technical or higher education but are still facing barriers to employment. The main reason for this is access to language courses, recognition of work skills, and access to childcare.

Parallel training

The four parallel trainings were based on the four topics explored by the CONNECTION project and given by partners in the project trained to become 'Integration champions'.

The four practical How-to guides can be found here

Training 1: How to create strategic approach to migrant integration?

Given by integration champions Jan Janoušek, Specialist for Integration of Foreigners at the City of Prague, Jana Radić, Head of Department for Promoting Human Rights and Civil Society at the City of Zagreb, Matteo Decostanzi, Project Manager, International Cooperation and European Projects Office at ANCI Piemonte, the training identified the reasons to adopt a strategic approach. The integration champions provided advice on how to get started, the resources needed and the dos and don'ts when developing a strategy. Furthermore, they highlighted the importance of involving and consulting migrants in all phases of the strategy's development.

Training 2: How to build a gender dimension into local integration policies?

Given by Integration Champions Jan Braat, Senior Policy Advisor at the city of Utrecht, and Turkay Rahimova, Head of Unit in the Social Administration Centre of the city of Gothenburg, the training identified key issues migrant women face during their integration pathway, why it is important to consider a gender dimension for cities, as well as some practical steps and good practice principles. These include building dedicated services in a complementary fashion to accessible mainstream services, involving migrant women in service design and delivery, working with family life and being sensitive to the meaning of gender in different cultures.

Training 3: How to build pathways to employment for migrants?

Given by Integration Champions Carmen Gutierrez, Head of European Projects in the city of Madrid and Mina Bouhlal, Business Coordinator & EU project Coordinator in the city of Tampere, the training

identified the does and don'ts of building pathways to employment for migrants. These included tips such as the importance of providing personalised support and following up once the recruitment process is finalised.

Training 4: How to set up a one-stop-shop?

Given by Integration Champions Anna Almén-Bergström, Project Coordinator at the city of Stockholm and Andriana Cosciug, Researcher in Cluj-Napoca, the training identified the main components to design, set up and run a one-stop-shop to support migrant integration. The training also included tips to secure political buy-in and to organise the service in a way that empowers users.