



Organisation for Economic Development and Cooperation

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POLICY BRIEF

OECD- EU Initiative

**“A territorial approach to migrant integration:
The role of local authorities”**

Summary

In 2016, the OECD launched the initiative **“A territorial approach to migrant integration: The role of local authorities”** in partnership with the European Commission, in order to support local efforts in receiving and integrating migrants and vulnerable migrant groups. The initiative consists of:

- A statistical pillar, comparing the integration outcomes (i.e. labour, housing, education) of foreign-born relative to native-born at regional level in 14 OECD countries;
- Case studies describing migrant integration practices in nine large European cities: Amsterdam, Athens, Berlin, Barcelona, Glasgow, Gothenburg, Paris, Rome and Vienna.

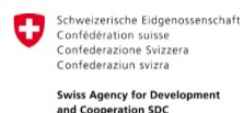
Context

Cities are key actors to help with economic and social inclusion of recognised refugees and economic migrants. OECD work on the territorial approach to migrant integration shows that on average, close to two-thirds of the foreign-born population in the OECD live in urban areas, 6 percentage points more than the average of the native-born population (OECD elaboration based on LFS 2015 data). Furthermore, 60% of all migrants and refugees worldwide have migrated to cities and this percentage is on the rise (UNHCR, 2016). In addition, subnational governments (such as cities) are responsible of 40% of public spending and 60 % of public investment on average in the OECD. They thus play a key role in a variety of local public services for migrants and local community.

Migrants add their competences and skills to the local development trajectories of the cities and communities where they settle. Because of their responsibilities in education, economic development, housing, social welfare and their proximity to the citizens, subnational governments are the best placed to develop environments where communities can both respond to migrant aspirations and from migrant contributions, while still preserving the cohesion of their local communities. In the wake of increased refugee and asylum seekers arrivals in Europe in 2015 and 2016, many municipalities have stepped up to meet the increased need for public service delivery, thus building awareness of the need for a territorial approach to migration.

Conclusion

This study takes stock of the existing multi-level governance frameworks and policy tools for migrant and refugee integration at local level in nine European cities. Cities in the sample have different track records in integrating migrants. The study looks at



updates of the governance mechanisms in the wake of recent asylum seekers and refugee inflows, in order to improve local migrant reception and integration capacities. It also investigates opportunities to extend some of the services recently established for newcomers to long-standing migrant groups.

The study's ambition is to identify *how* integration takes place. Which governance mechanisms – such as an integration department or co-ordination channels with NGOs and migrant communities – are associated with the better integration of migrants? The project also analyses cities' policies for reception, housing, work, participation and education for migrants, looking how these may be implemented in support of a holistic approach to integration.

The study analyses what room for manoeuvre cities have in designing and implementing integration policies within the existing legislative and financial frameworks at regional, national and supranational levels. Given their knowledge of the situation “on the ground”, local authorities are the best placed to work in partnership with, and draw from the experience of, non-governmental organisations, businesses, trade unions, citizens and migrant associations to successfully receive and integrate their new inhabitants. Through co-ordination and planning tools, cities can establish clear responsibilities and share service provision across their departments. The study also explores the scale benefits of establishing partnerships within municipalities and intra-metropolitan areas and of strengthening urban-rural linkages.

Finally, the study looks at which integration measures have worked, and for who, trying to include migrant and refugees' views on whether and how their aspirations have been met. Positive stories of win-win results for host and migrants communities are included.

The main expected outcome of this work is the joint production, in collaboration with the nine partner cities and organisations, of a ***checklist for public action to migrant integration at the local level*** - a practical tool to help cities integrating migrants with a multi-governance perspective. This tool could then be disseminated to other cities and adapted to rural areas and its implementation could be piloted to improve local action related to migrant integration.

Key lessons

Across the OECD sample of nine European case studies we observe that cities deploy significant efforts to create a favourable environment for integration. Some of the preliminary key lessons that we have learned are:

- **Multi-level, multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral policy making:** local responsibilities for housing, education and support to job market integration call for information and objective sharing among municipal services, levels of government and with non-public stakeholders with regard place-based integration strategies. Adjusting to increased local reception and integration needs, some countries (i.e. Netherlands, Sweden) have devolved part of reception, welfare and housing responsibilities for asylum seekers and refugees to the regional and municipal levels. Outsourcing to NGOs and private partners is

also widely used to deliver local public policies for migrant integration, making the contract among them a key dimension for transparent and stable commitment. Municipalities also provide information on employment opportunities, in partnership with the private sector or connect migrant talents with employer needs for apprenticeship and recruitment after the fact.

- **The priority objective for local authorities is social sustainability:** creating equal rights and opportunities for all their residents, while ensuring that local communities perceive the benefits of migrant participation in local development. In doing so, cities are aware that effective inclusion models go well beyond reception and need to take into account all areas of life: education, labour, housing, health, culture, participation etc. With this aim, some cities developed comprehensive early integration packages (i.e. Start Wien, Amsterdam Approach, the Establishment programme in Gothenburg, Integrationslots in Berlin) for asylum seekers and refugees. In some cases, cities provide recognised refugees with targeted housing solutions, either through provision of social housing units or through rental cash support (Berlin, Amsterdam, Gothenburg).

- **Involvement of local authorities in the decisions about asylum seekers localisation:** quotas of refugees and asylum seekers have been attributed across countries according to allocation criteria established at the central level. These distribution mechanisms have not been fully negotiated with all local governments, leading to different modes of reception in different areas, with subsequent consequences on the integration of the assigned refugees. The SPRAR system in Italy, however, is an example of good practice in this area.

- **Local NGOs, business and third-sector enterprises:** traditionally such partners have played a crucial role in migrant and refugee integration. As a result of the recent increased migration inflows, cities turned towards these entities to build on their expertise and to organise a jointly co-ordinated response. At the same time, new citizen initiatives have sprung up, sparking independent mechanisms that the city can then support to respond to needs.

- **Show win-win results:** cities often lack clear strategies on how to measure and communicate on the positive results of migrant integration in their territories. Some efforts have been made to quantify the economic contributions of foreign communities in terms of increased tax revenues, higher levels of risk capital investment, more patents being filed, etc. However, valuing cultural diversity as a positive factor, including in classrooms, is also critical in order to strengthen social links and to help people see migrants and refugees not only as recipients of, but as contributors to, the cultural attractiveness and social fabric of the city.

In parallel, the OECD Champion Mayors for Inclusive Growth have been working with local leaders on the integration of migrants and refugees through the Champion Mayors for Inclusive Growth initiative. Champion Mayors delivered the Paris Action Plan for Inclusive Growth in Cities, in which more than 50 mayors from around the world committed to facilitate the smooth integration of migrants and refugees through policies for more inclusive labour markets.