



Report

# Fostering cooperation between local authorities and civil society actors in the integration and social inclusion of migrants and refugees

Challenges and Opportunities



**Eurodiaconia** is a European network of churches and Christian NGOs providing social and healthcare services and advocating social justice.

## Mission

Eurodiaconia is a network of churches and Christian organizations that provide social and health care services and advocate for social justice. Together we work for just and transformative social change across Europe, leaving no-one behind.

## Vision

Driven by our Christian faith, our vision is of a Europe where each person is valued for their inherent God-given worth and dignity and where our societies guarantee social justice for all people, including the most vulnerable and marginalized.

**Editor:** Heather Roy

**Co-Authors:** Lukas Humer, Gabriela Agatiello

**Publication:** June 2019



This publication has received financial support from the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation "EaSI" (2014-2020). For further information, please read <http://ec.europa.eu/social/easi>. Eurodiaconia is a network of social and health care organisations founded in the Christian faith and promoting social justice.

# Table of content

POLICY SNAPSHOT	4
About this publication	5
Why this publication	7
Who are we talking to?	10
Types of cooperation between local authorities and CSOs	11
Opportunities for cooperation at the local level	12
Challenges to efficient cooperation	16
Recommendations for more effective cooperation	20
Case studies	27
Baba – Advice and support for unaccompanied children and young people, Stockholms Stadsmission, Sweden	27
TourIK – Tourism and Integration in Carinthia, Diakonie de la Tour, Austria	28
Flight & Human Trafficking – Prevention Awareness raising and Protection, Diakonie Deutschland, Germany	29
Table of members contributing to this study	30
CONCLUSIONS AT A GLANCE	33

# POLICY SNAPSHOT



Municipalities and civil society organisations play a key role in the integration of migrants and refugees in local communities. The Urban Agenda for the EU lists their inclusion among its priority themes for cities.



This paper explores how local authorities and civil society organisations can better work together to create integration models and more inclusive social services for migrants and refugees.



The report is based on the experiences of thirteen projects from the Eurodiaconia membership. Their promising practices provide a broad picture of different multi-stakeholder approaches to integration.



Multi-stakeholder platforms that bring together local authorities, civil society as well as migrant organisations are one concrete measure to coordinate the expertise of actors involved in migrant integration at the local level. When local authorities commission CSOs to provide services, clear contracts as well as transparent monitoring and evaluation procedures are important.



Well-managed cooperation increases the expertise and knowledge about migration among all actors and is crucial to adapt services to changing realities. However, efficient cooperation is often limited by a lack of dialogue.

# About this publication



Eurodiaconia is a dynamic, Europe-wide community of social and health care organisations with direct experience in providing services to migrants and advocating for their fundamental rights. Our federation is committed to a Europe of solidarity, equality, and justice. We currently have 50 members in 32 countries and territories who are NGOs and churches rooted in the Christian faith. They have a longstanding commitment and engagement in working with documented and undocumented migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, covering many facets of support to migrants, ranging from emergency aid to integration measures such as supporting access to the labour market and social participation. Most of our member organisations often represent first entry and meeting points for newcomers and accompany them towards integration into European societies.

*Eurodiaconia and its members believe that it is important to promote and improve the key role of the local level in the integration of migrants and refugees.*

The increased arrival of migrants and refugees to Europe in 2015 has led to a “local turn”<sup>1</sup> in the public perception of integration and in research, acknowledging the special capacities and commitment of the local level in timely responding to the needs of newcomers.

The increasing percentage of migrants living in cities demands new

---

<sup>1</sup> Spencer, S. and N. Delvino, Cooperation between government and civil society in the management of migration: trends, opportunities and challenges in Europe and North America, COMPAS, School of Anthropology, University of Oxford, 2018, p. 28. <https://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/AA18-Background-paper-FINAL.pdf>

strategies to deal with their reception and integration.<sup>2</sup> From the perspective of Eurodiaconia and its members, it is crucial to acknowledge, promote and improve the key role that local authorities play in cooperation with service providers at the local level in the integration of migrants. Against this background, this research paper will explore the guiding question of how local authorities and civil society organisations (CSOs) can create effective short-term and long-term integration models and cooperate in fostering more inclusive social services for migrants.

This report is based on the contributions of thirteen projects from the Eurodiaconia membership in five countries (Austria, Finland, Germany, Italy and Sweden). Their promising practices of cooperation with local authorities concern different dimensions of integration, such as education, access to employment, empowerment of migrant women, provision of health services as well as social and legal counselling services.

The report is organised into four sections. The first section gives an overview as to why the role of the local level has become more important for integration policies across Europe. Based on an assessment of the main challenges and opportunities for cooperation in section two, the third part provides practical ideas to improve models for cooperation among local authorities and non-state actors. The last section showcases projects from the Eurodiaconia membership that are organised in close cooperation with local public actors and municipalities to meet the needs of migrants and refugees.

---

<sup>2</sup> Urban Agenda for the EU, ACTION PLAN: Partnership on Inclusion of migrants and refugees, p. 4. [https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/sites/futurium/files/action\\_plan\\_inclusion\\_of\\_migrants\\_and\\_refugees.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/sites/futurium/files/action_plan_inclusion_of_migrants_and_refugees.pdf)

## Why this publication



Integration takes place at the local level, in communities where newly arrived migrants make contacts with the local population, at schools and at the workplace.<sup>3</sup> Integration tends to be an urban phenomenon, as most migrants and refugees settle in cities where they have bonds to diaspora communities and economic opportunities are usually higher.<sup>4</sup> Against this background, the OECD Report *Working Together for Local Integration of Migrants and Refugees* recommends that integration policies should follow a “place-based approach”, respecting the needs of local communities and migrants.<sup>5</sup>

Municipalities and cities are key independent actors in the integration field. They are often the first point of contact for newly arrived migrants and refugees, providing a range of basic services that are necessary for settlement and the integration of newcomers.<sup>6</sup>

Local and regional authorities ensure the local social and economic

*Successful outcomes of integration efforts are the product of multi-level governance and the active involvement of many stakeholders.*

---

<sup>3</sup> OECD, *Working Together for Local Integration of Migrants and Refugees*, OECD Publishing, Paris, 2018, p. 3. [https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/working-together-for-local-integration-of-migrants-and-refugees\\_9789264085350-en#page1](https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/working-together-for-local-integration-of-migrants-and-refugees_9789264085350-en#page1)

<sup>4</sup> Urban Agenda for the EU, p. 4. op. cit. note 2.

<sup>5</sup> OECD (2018), p. 24. Op. cit. note 3.

<sup>6</sup> Wolffhardt, Alexander, *Integration. Cities as providers of services to migrant populations*. ReSOMA Discussion Brief, 2018, p.5 [http://www.resoma.eu/sites/resoma/resoma/files/policy\\_brief/pdf/Policy%20Briefs\\_topic9\\_Cities%20as%20service%20providers\\_0.pdf](http://www.resoma.eu/sites/resoma/resoma/files/policy_brief/pdf/Policy%20Briefs_topic9_Cities%20as%20service%20providers_0.pdf)

wellbeing,<sup>7</sup> in a number of countries this includes reception and integration of newly arrived migrants in local communities and service delivery in the fields of housing, healthcare, education and vocational training. The increased influx of refugees and migrants in 2015 has demonstrated that cities tend to have a more flexible and pragmatic approaches to integration when faced with newly arrived migrants.<sup>8</sup> In addition, local authorities pursue more inclusive policy objectives in the long term<sup>9</sup> and tend to actively promote positive public perceptions of migration and the public responsibility to protect vulnerable migrants and refugees.<sup>10</sup>

While successful outcomes and challenges of integration efforts are most visible at the local levels, they are the product of multi-level governance. In this framework, the national level defines immigration policies and integration strategies and clarifies competences and provides financial means for local action.<sup>11</sup> The European Union is entitled to support and coordinate the Member States' integration actions for third-country nationals (Art 79(4) Treaty of the Functioning of the EU). Since 2015, the European Commission has increased efforts to involve local authorities in migrant integration, for example by prioritising the inclusion of migrants and refugees in the Urban Agenda for the EU.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, the European and national context determine and shape the actual capacities of local authorities to implement and adapt integration services.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> OECD (2018), p. 30, op. cit. note 3.

<sup>8</sup> Wolffhardt, A. (2018), p. 5, op. cit. note 6.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Urban Agenda for the EU, ACTION PLAN, p.5, op. cit. note 2.

<sup>11</sup> OECD (2018), p. 31, op. cit. note 3.

<sup>12</sup> FRA, Current migration situation in the EU: impact on local communities (update), 2018, p. 3. [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/fra-2018-february-monthly-migration-report-focus-local-communities-update\\_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2018-february-monthly-migration-report-focus-local-communities-update_en.pdf) 1Notes

<sup>13</sup> Wolffhardt, A. (2018), p. 4, op. cit. note 6.





Typically, multilevel governance is built on partnership and dialogue to foster mutual learning and to transfer promising practices across regions. Localities should be enabled to inform national policy making through their experience on the ground.<sup>14</sup> It is worth noting, that in a number of cases the concept of multi-level governance has been challenged by conflicts between cities, regions and national governments, in part due to different strategies to migration and integration as well as funding issues.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> OECD (2018), p. 24, op. cit. note 3.

<sup>15</sup> Wolffhardt, A. (2018), p. 4, op. cit. note 6.

## Who are we talking to



Across all levels of government, the implementation of integration policies in diverse societies involves a broad range of stakeholders, including NGOs and CSOs, migrant communities, businesses, trade unions and third sector organisations. Most of the collaboration in the migration field happens at the local level, in delivering integration programmes.<sup>16</sup> The objective of this publication is to provide policy makers at European and national levels with a concrete picture of the types of partnerships and corporations between service providers and local and regional authorities in migrant integration. By highlighting the role our members play in assisting local and regional authorities in the effective integration of migrants as well as exploring the challenges and opportunities they face across member states, this publication provides input for designing integration policies that strengthen cooperation and dialogue at the local level, in line with the objective of the Partnership of the Urban Agenda for the EU on the Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees.

*This publication provides input for designing integration policies that strengthen cooperation and dialogue at the local level.*

---

<sup>16</sup> Spencer, S. and N. Delvino (2018), p.11, op. cit. note 1

## Types of cooperation between local authorities and CSOs

Migration studies and research define cooperation and collaboration along shared visions of objectives and means.<sup>17</sup> This encompasses the active consultation of civil society actors in policy making, for example consultative committees or informal meetings or collaboration and support in the implementation of policies and projects.<sup>18</sup> In addition, relations can be of complementary partnerships when there is agreement on objectives and authorities outsource tasks to NGOs or support them financially.<sup>19</sup> Collaboration and outsourcing typically affects different areas relevant for the integration of migration, such as language learning, housing, employment, support in administrative issues and health services.

More than 85 % of the cities consulted for the OECD report on local integration of migrants and refugees collaborate with NGOs in their work on migration.<sup>20</sup> More than half of the cities delegate integration services to NGOs and almost half of the cities consult with NGOs when planning integration strategies.<sup>21</sup>

It is worth mentioning that the scope of cooperation between authorities and CSOs also depends on the respective model of the welfare state and on the history of the relations between the state, NGOs and churches. In Germany, churches and faith-based organisations, such as our member Diakonie Deutschland, are institutionalized partners of the state

---

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p. 6-8.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p.7.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p.8.

<sup>20</sup> OECD (2018), p. 138, op. cit. note 3.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

in the provision of social and health services at all levels. In the field of integration, the Migration Special Services of Diakonie Deutschland (Migrationsfachdienste) provide social counselling in close cooperation and exchange with local authorities and the state in more than 1000 centers across the country.<sup>22</sup> In France, on the other hand, the centralized social system has traditionally left less room for cooperation on the local level. Likewise, cooperation is less institutionalised in the UK and in the Nordic welfare state. For example, in Sweden, the state has not incorporated faith-based organisation and voluntary organisations as service providers and their role in service delivery has grown significantly in recent years.<sup>23</sup>

## Opportunities for cooperation at the local level

Cooperation can be of great benefit to all the actors involved, firstly in terms of integration outcomes for migrants and refugees themselves but also by facilitating the work of authorities and CSOs in terms of cost and time efficiency. In the context of the increase of volunteering and the strong commitment to integration in 2015, a particular window of opportunity for establishing cooperation was opened in many European countries.<sup>24</sup> Cooperation is therefore not only helpful to contribute to the goal of integration but also to foster participation and engagement of citizens. Ultimately, collaboration strengthens the sense of public ownership and can have a positive effect on democracy.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> NDiakonie Deutschland, Diakonie in der Einwanderungsgesellschaft, Migrationsfachdienste mit Adressverzeichnis, 2017, p.4. [https://hilfe.diakonie.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Diakonie/PDFs/Ratgeber\\_PDF/P170517\\_Broschu\\_\\_re\\_Migration\\_180125\\_Web.pdf](https://hilfe.diakonie.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Diakonie/PDFs/Ratgeber_PDF/P170517_Broschu__re_Migration_180125_Web.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> Spencer, S. and N. Delvino (2018), p.5, op. cit. note 1.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p.32.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. p. 34.



The so-called local turn in integration, that is the increased attention paid to the local level in meeting the demands of migrants, has subsequently led to more forms of cooperation between local authorities and civil society organisations. These include information campaigns, ad-hoc provision of basic services and delivering long-term integration policies.<sup>26</sup>

## Opportunities for local authorities: new solutions and expertise to integration

From the perspective of authorities, cooperation with CSOs brings expertise and new solutions to challenges related to migration and diversifies the provision of integration services by trusting different actors who are experts in their respective area.<sup>27</sup> In addition, well-managed commissioning of services reduces the size of government bureaucracy and spending, in part because CSOs can rely on the help of volunteers who know local circumstance very well and on donations.<sup>28</sup> Most of all, however, the benefits of cooperation are practical in achieving short and long-term integration goals: Civil society organisations may have greater capacities than the authorities themselves and additional knowledge. Given their experience on the ground, CSOs are best suited to recognize the needs of migrants. CSOs and non-governmental stakeholder were perceived as more innovative in responding to new challenges and changing realities and in tailoring their services to multiple target groups. In many cities, local authorities outsource activities to non-state actors as they are beyond their legal mandate to intervene themselves.<sup>29</sup> In addition, cooperation with CSOs

---

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. p.32.

<sup>27</sup> OECD (2018), p. 138, op. cit. note 3.

<sup>28</sup> Spencer, S. and N. Delvino (2018), p.27, op. cit. note 1.

<sup>29</sup> OECD (2018), p. 138, op. cit. note 3.

is attractive as their services are often more accessible for migrants, partly because they work more personal and CSOs and in particular faith-based organisations are therefore often more trusted than state driven projects.<sup>30</sup> Our members have reported that their social workers are often important mediators between refugees and migrants and local decision makers. Having a close ear to the migrants' experiences, enables our members to report potential shortcomings, for instance in reception centers, to the responsible authorities. The benefit of involving CSOs and faith-based organisations is also that they help migrants to build up social networks and to establish contacts with local communities. This has proven to be helpful to increase the chances for integration and for accessing the labour market, particularly for migrant women.<sup>31</sup>

## Opportunities for civil society organisations

Cooperation with authorities offers opportunities for civil society organisations and their staff for a number of reasons. CSOs can benefit from financial support and administrative assistance that helps to increase their capacities. Cooperation and exchange with authorities can also boost the institutional weight and influence of CSOs. Moreover, cooperation and partnerships contribute to building networks of experts that are of key importance to meet the needs of migrants.

- **Additional capacities to develop services.**

Across the EU, CSOs rely on funding and operational assistance from

---

<sup>30</sup> Spencer, S. and N. Delvino (2018), p.27, op. cit. note 1.

<sup>31</sup> Eurodiaconia's Guidelines for the integration of migrant women, 2018, p. 16. [https://www.eurodiaconia.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Eurodiaconia\\_Guidelines\\_Integration\\_Migrant\\_Women\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.eurodiaconia.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Eurodiaconia_Guidelines_Integration_Migrant_Women_WEB.pdf)

local governments to set up new projects and to operate services in the long-term. Therefore, cooperation is crucial to develop services that meet the demand of the target groups, without leaving anyone behind, and to adapt their services to changing needs and realities.<sup>32</sup> Our Swedish member, Stockholms Stadsmission, has highlighted that local authorities and public employment agencies offered additional capacities to successfully implement their labour market integration programmes, for instance by offering translators when needed. In addition, the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth has commissioned funding to our member to tailor labour market integration services to the target groups of newly arrived migrants and foreign-born individuals at risk of long-term unemployment.

- **Being part of local networks working for the same cause.**

In addition to the benefits for the implementation of services, cooperation in the form of regular public consultations offers possibilities for CSOs. Firstly, it is as an opportunity to gain valuable knowledge about the functioning of the public sector and to contribute to evidence-based integration policy making in the field of integration and service provision.<sup>33</sup>

In the same way, regular public consultations help to develop networks and to share best practices among likeminded organisations. Several of our members have experienced that working with vulnerable groups of migrants, such as unaccompanied children or potential victims of human trafficking, requires a functioning network of all stakeholders involved in service provision. Otherwise, efficient referral to counselling services that meet the need of everyone cannot be guaranteed, the Diakonie Hessen's Counselling Center for Migrant Women and their Families points out. Our member, Diakonie Österreich, has highlighted that cooperation with

---

<sup>32</sup> Spencer, S. and N. Delvino (2018), p.36, op. cit. note 1.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. p. 35.



local policy makers and municipalities in providing housing for refugees has led to a transfer of knowledge from legal experts to social workers and improved the knowledge of our member's staff about social legislation. This can be of added value for big and small CSOs, considering new challenges for social and legal counselling arising from the increased migration inflows, the shortages of housing as well as subsequent changes in migration and integration laws.

## Challenges to efficient cooperation

In practice, the effective implementation of cooperation can be constrained by power asymmetries and conflicting interests among local governments



and CSOs providing integration services.<sup>34</sup> In this case, local authorities and CSOs might still agree on basic objectives on integration, however, CSOs might not be able to implement their services according to their understanding and principles.

## Challenges for local authorities: Balancing cost efficiency and quality in service provision

Research has found that the increased involvement of local authorities as partners for advancing integration projects has also led to controversies and problems related to EU funds and policies.<sup>35</sup> Cities have reported limited access to funds and mismatches of the funds' objectives with the needs of municipalities.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, cities claimed that the impact of EU policies on social service provision for migrants has been limited in the context of cuts on public budgets.<sup>37</sup> Scholars point out that austerity measures and the particular pressure on social service provision to be cost efficient can limit the quantity and quality of integration services and might influence decisions on commissioning services to non-state actors that are not necessarily in the interest of the migrants.<sup>38</sup>

The recent OECD report on local integration has identified three major obstacles for local authorities working with NGOs.<sup>39</sup> Firstly, they concern long selection procedures. Particularly in the period of 2015 to 2016 the length of public procurement procedures did not allow to adjust to changing needs. Secondly, cities have reported that clear standard setting for delivering

---

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. p. 37.

<sup>35</sup> Wolffhardt, A. (2018), p. 6, op. cit. note 6.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Spencer, S. and N. Delvino (2018), p. 5, op. cit. note 1.

<sup>39</sup> OECD (2018), p. 139, op. cit. note 3.

integration services as well as monitoring procedures had been missing in many cases. Meeting high standards also implies striking the balance between government oversight and leadership of NGOs.<sup>40</sup> Thirdly, some cities in the OECD's sample have experienced obstacles related to potential competition with services provided by public agencies when responding to public calls for attributing service provision. For public authorities it is therefore challenging to balance the advantages and disadvantages of outsourcing and to maintain the right level of competitiveness that might help to improve the quality of integration services.<sup>41</sup>

Our members are also aware that it is challenging for municipalities to maintain cooperation with CSOs in the long term, considering a lack of continuity in relations due to relatively short funding periods and changing projects.

### Challenges for CSOs working with local authorities: lack of dialogue leads to fragmented services

One major obstacle to efficient service delivery identified by NGOs and CSOs is the difficulty to improve dialogue and coordination with local authorities but also among the non-state actors.<sup>42</sup> A lack of dialogue might result in duplication of services and in the fragmentation of local policies and calls for proposals, especially in bigger cities. As a consequence, local approaches to integration tend to be segmented rather than holistic and CSOs are required to segment their activities by target groups and specific objectives.<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> Spencer, S. and N. Delvino (2018), p. 35, op. cit. note 1.

<sup>41</sup> OECD (2018), p. 139, op. cit. note 3.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

Our members would like to add to this assessment that a limited flow of information among public and non-state stakeholders also hinders the duplication and scaling up of promising practices at local and regional levels. According to our members, successful dialogue also requires a framework that allows for continuity in achieving overarching goals but also a certain amount of flexibility to respond to changing priorities and needs. Some of our members encountered particular challenges in maintaining regular dialogue across projecting periods, especially once piloting phases had ended.

According to findings from OECD, non-state actors frequently face financing problems due to delays in payment, which negatively impacts the quality of service provision but also the ability to cover current expenses. If CSOs significantly rely on that source of funding they might be unable to attain and retain professional staff and suffer from capacity drain.<sup>44</sup> While this issue affects CSOs of all size, it is worth noting that contracting processes put smaller NGOs at a disadvantage, as they tend to have fewer capacities to meet the procedural requirements.<sup>45</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Spencer, S. and N. Delvino (2018), p. 36, op. cit. note 1.

# Recommendations for more effective cooperation



- **Formulate policy documents on cooperation between authorities and NGOs.**

Policy documents on the European and national level should establish a basis for cooperation between public authorities and NGOs. The European Commission's Action Plan on the Integration of Third-Country Nationals highlights the need to “strengthen the dialogue with local and regional authorities and civil societies” under the Urban Agenda for the EU and by launching a roundtable between the European Commission and cities.<sup>46</sup> This should be complemented by measures at the national level. For example the UK introduced a “Compact on Relations between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector in England” in 1998 (revised in 2010) to provide an “environment for partnership working” and to ensure that CSOs are supported in reasonable manner where they are contributing to the government's aims.<sup>47</sup> The benefit of such documents is that they express clear political commitment to improve relations between public and non-state actors. In order to contribute to concrete outcomes on integration, they should include specific targets and allow for adaption to the situation on the local level.

---

<sup>46</sup> European Commission, Action Plan on the Integration of Third-Country Nationals, 2016, p. 15. [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160607/communication\\_action\\_plan\\_integration\\_third-country\\_nationals\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160607/communication_action_plan_integration_third-country_nationals_en.pdf)

<sup>47</sup> Spencer, S. and N. Delvino (2018), p. 9, op. cit. note 1.



- **Strengthen cooperation, including through institutionalized multi-stakeholder platforms at the local level.**

Successful cooperation should prioritize a relation of partnership over commissioning of tasks to assure that the role of CSOs is not reduced to service provision and filling the gaps of policy failures. Our members are aware that coordination takes time and effort to develop and, therefore, resources should be attributed to establishing coordination mechanisms.

Institutionalized multi-stakeholder platforms are one concrete measure to coordinate the experience and expertise of all stakeholders involved in providing integration services at the local level. These platforms should bring together local authorities, representatives of civil society organisations, migrant organisations as well as other stakeholders with the purpose to guarantee accessible, inclusive and relevant services regardless of immigration status.<sup>48</sup>

Multi-stakeholder platforms help to exchange information between service providers and authorities and are an efficient means to coordinate services. While such platforms had been put in place to coordinate responses to the increased influx of refugees in 2015, coordinated responses to integration remain the exception.<sup>49</sup> Their full potential could be explored, if they were set up based on areas, such as labour market integration, education or language learning and include the relevant experts. According to the OECD report on cooperation at the local level, in municipalities in Greece, Spain and the Netherlands multi-stakeholder platforms contributed to more efficient integration services by mapping the needs and identifying

---

<sup>48</sup> European Economic and Social Committee, Recommendations adopted by the European Migration Forum, 5th meeting, 2019. [https://www.eesc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/files/recommendations\\_adopted\\_by\\_the\\_european\\_migration\\_forum\\_5th\\_meeting.pdf](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/files/recommendations_adopted_by_the_european_migration_forum_5th_meeting.pdf)

<sup>49</sup> OECD (2018), p. 142, op. cit. note 3.

gaps in the existing service provision.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, the collaboration of actors helped to develop strategic plans for integration and to formulate collective proposals. In the city of Athens, the platform consisted of five working committees of municipal and NGO actors responsible for service provision in the areas of housing, employment, health, education and legal support.<sup>51</sup>

- **Ensure quality in the long-term, including by flexibility in contracting and transparency in communications.**

When authorities commission NGOs to provide services, it should be guaranteed that NGOs are enabled to effectively meet the needs of the migrants in an atmosphere of mutual trust between authorities and NGOs. According to our members, one way to achieve this is the use of clear and transparent contracts that set a common ground and define responsibilities as well as expectations for the project. Moreover, contracts should allow for learning from past experiences and should be flexible enough to allow for adaptations and new goals when needed. Ideally, a contracting period should consist of a piloting phase that is followed by renewable contracts that allow for a stable delivery of services in the long run, including investment in the quality of services and attainment and retention of staff.<sup>52</sup> Next to stable financial planning our members emphasize the importance of long-term commitment to agreements on integration goals.

According to our members, the implementation of integration projects is likely to be constrained by decreasing interest of public authorities over time and by changing political priorities on integration on all levels. Mutual respect and transparent communication channels (that take record of agreements

---

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. p. 143.

and changes of plans) have proven to contribute to the aim of implementing projects in a successful manner beyond the pilot phase. Our members point out that structured dialogue is one of the single most important tools to maintain good cooperation. In the case of Sweden, misunderstandings and challenges in the relation with public authorities could be solved through a close and regular dialogue. Clear communication channels between authorities and CSOs establish a common understanding of the different roles and responsibilities of authorities, public service providers and non-state actors, which is also helpful for the migrants' understanding of welfare provision.

- **Set standards in service delivery and design public and transparent monitoring and evaluation procedures.**

In the long run, the quality of cooperation between local authorities and civil society organisations can be improved by setting standards in integration needs that serve as a benchmark for developing common objectives on integration.<sup>53</sup> If possible, these standards and objectives should be developed in line with national integration plans and with respect to local needs. For these measures to be effective and in line with local objectives, regular monitoring of outsourced services is recommended. This allows authorities to identify possible failure in agreements and whether they lead to gaps in service provision. The OECD report on the relevance of cooperation has highlighted the case of Berlin where a transparency database was introduced. Non-state actors using municipality grants were encouraged to indicate their expenses on a voluntary basis and could get rewarded with a “transparency emblem”.<sup>54</sup>

To conclude, the design of common standards for integration policies at local

---

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. p. 142.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

levels and monitoring procedures contributes to a common understanding of the priorities that need to be addressed among local authorities and other stakeholders that provide services. By focusing on complementarities of public authorities and external service providers, monitoring procedures can help to increase the overall quality of service provision and help to better prepare local authorities for unexpected increases in the demand of services. In their own interest our members recommend evaluating the added value of cooperation and consultations with CSOs. Our members try to contribute to the monitoring and evaluation of integration programmes. For its Vamos project on youth integration, our Finnish member, Helsingin Diakonissalaitos, is developing an analytical model to measure results linked to the use of funding.

- **Foster an atmosphere of mutual learning among all stakeholders at the local level.**

As part of the so-called local turn within integration policies it was acknowledged that local authorities can learn from experience through partnerships with local actors.<sup>55</sup> It is therefore important that integration strategies are open to the input of stakeholders with longstanding experience in the field of integration, such as migrant communities, charitable and faith based organisations as well as other CSOs, as they are key actors to communicate best practices and recommendations for improvement to local authorities. In practice, the daily contact between CSOs providing integration services and migrant communities helps to introduce newcomers to the administrative system of the country and to facilitate overall integration into societies.

---

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. p. 120



- **Create multiple entry points to services and efficient networks of services through cooperation.**

Many cities have made positive experiences in providing a broad range of integration services to different groups of migrants in one center together with the expertise of civil society organisations and migrant organisations.<sup>56</sup> One-stop shops offer information ranging from administrative services to job orientation and legal assistance in multiple languages.<sup>57</sup> Considering the long-term orientation of integration strategies, it is crucial to deepen such structures of accessible integration services that offer services for newly arrived refugees as well for migrants who have settled in and experience unexpected challenges.<sup>58</sup> Our members operating social counselling centers consider themselves as particularly well equipped for working with migrants over a longer period of time and for building relationships of mutual trust, accompanying their integration process.

- **Developing spaces for interaction between different communities.**

During the years of increased arrivals of refugees and migrants to Europe, civil society organisations such as the members of Eurodiaconia were at the forefront of creating an atmosphere of welcoming and encouraged the exchange of local residents and newly arrived migrants through community action, such as leisure activities or low threshold language conversation classes. In many cases, local authorities have contributed to the success of these bottom-up activities by providing financial support or public venues.<sup>59</sup> While CSOs can be understood as the “engine” to transforming public spaces into places of encountering, action from local

---

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. p.128.

authorities is needed to sustain interaction between different communities across municipalities.<sup>60</sup> Ultimately, local authorities and CSOs should work together on inclusive urban development policies that take diversity into account and encourage intercultural dialogue in public spaces. In the long run, such strategies should also include affordable housing and inclusive schools.

■ **Build capacities across the social services sector.**

Implementing integration strategies and projects also requires capacity building targeting at all professionals interacting with migrants on a regular basis.<sup>61</sup> To this end, our member Diakonie Deutschland has contributed to webinars and workshops that aimed at raising awareness of the specific needs of different groups of migrants and refugees and explained special vulnerabilities of victims of trafficking to different stakeholders, including the police. Providing intercultural training to municipal workers has proven to be one key strategy to raise awareness of the multiple dimensions of the topic of integration and to sensitize municipal workers about their role in fostering integration.<sup>62</sup> More specifically, our members recommend to measures to raise cultural sensibility of staff in job centers or home offices to meet the needs of migrant women with greater sensibility. This would relieve some of our members from the role of working as “cultural mediators” between migrants and public servants.

---

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. p. 134.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.



### Baba – Advice and support for unaccompanied children and young people, Stockholms Stadsmission, Sweden

The Baba project supports migrant children and youth who have been separated from their parents and receive limited support from public authorities. It reaches out to the needs of this target group by providing basic needs such as food and clothes and helps them to get in touch with health care services and lawyers. If needed, Baba provides anonymous counselling in safe meeting places to explore possible solutions to the challenges faced by this target group. The challenges of the young migrants are related to losing guardians when reaching the age of majority or to making informed and self-conscious decisions about their future, including voluntary returns.

The Stockholms Stadsmission built the programme on an assessment of the needs of the children, including interviews with the target group. In 2017, the programme was organized as an “idea-based public partnership” together with the Swedish Red Cross, Save the Children, the child rights bureau and the social administration of the municipality of Stockholm. Together, these actors have formed a reference committee to inform the Country Administrative Boards of Sweden on the prevention and responses to disappearances of unaccompanied refugee children.

Thanks to the support of local municipal funding the program has assisted more than 300 individuals since it was implemented in 2016. For these young migrants the programme has helped to establish safer living conditions, for instance by assuring temporary residence permits for studying at high schools.

## TourIK – Tourism and Integration in Carinthia, Diakonie de la Tour, Austria

This project was started in 2017 to provide vocational training and apprenticeships to young asylum seekers in tourism in the Austrian region of Carinthia. In cooperation with the federal and local government and the public employment agency, the project aims at contributing to the social and economic integration of young refugees and migrants, while also meeting the regional and local labour shortages in tourism. In a first step, a target group of 30 participants of mainly unaccompanied minors and young refugees from Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran was selected to participate in a one-year training at the local technical college for tourism. After this special training period focusing at professional language acquisition and professional skills in catering and service, Diakonie de la Tour in cooperation with the regional government and the public employment agency supported the young people in finding traineeships or jobs in local tourism. The University of Carinthia was commissioned to monitor and evaluate the project to replicate its success in other regions.

TourIK has been running since October 2017 and currently includes 22 participants. The project successfully found job placements for 12 refugees and asylum seekers in 9 companies in the region of Carinthia.

## Flight & Human Trafficking – Prevention Awareness raising and Protection, Diakonie Deutschland, Germany

This project aims to support the German NGO network against trafficking in human beings (KOK), which is an umbrella network of organisations working with victims of trafficking in human beings, such as Diakonie Deutschland. The project has developed a set of activities to increase the network's knowledge about trafficking in human beings, which is one specific form of violence experienced by refugees arriving to Germany since 2015. These activities include workshops targeting the staff of counselling centers, youth welfare centers and the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees as well as webinars for employees in German refugee accommodation centers. In addition, policy papers and information flyers on the topic of trafficking in the context of flight were produced. Experts meetings at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) and joint workshops of the BAMF and counseling centers, provided the background for better cooperation among youth welfare services and social counseling centers at regional and local levels and have raised the awareness about trafficking among local actors.

The project started in May 2016 and will end in December 2019 with financial support of the Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration of the federal government.





© Helsingin Diakonissalaitos

## Table of members contributing to this study

- Strengthening working training - Stockholms Stadsmission, Sweden
- Baba – Advice and support unaccompanied children and young people, Stockholms Stadsmission, Sweden
- Crossroads – advice and support center for EU citizens and third country nationals, Stockholms Stadsmission, Sweden
- Flight & Human Trafficking – Prevention Awareness raising and Protection, Diakonie Deutschland, Germany
- Empowerment of Refugee Women, Diakonie Hessen, Germany

- Meeting Place and Cafe for job applicants (Bewerbercafe), Diakonisches Werk Gießen, Germany
- The way to talk (RedensArt) – Diakonie Hessen, Germany
- Perspective: New Home, Evangelische Jugendsozialarbeit Hof und Umgebung e.V, Diakonie Deutschland, Germany
- Trail of Involvement for immigrant youth, Helsingin Diakonissalaitos, Finland
- Agency for social legislation and rent law, Diakonie Österreich, Austria
- Humanitarian Admission Programme Syria 2014-2017, Diakonie Refugee Service Österreich, Austria
- TourIK – Tourism and Integration in Carinthia, Diakonie de la Tour, Austria
- Diaconia Valdese, Italy



## Member quote: Hildegund Niebsch, Diakonie Hessen, Germany

*For us, successful cooperation with local authorities is important to design and implement our services. In cooperation we can better meet the needs of refugees and migrants and make sure that nobody is turned away. For us it is important that authorities and civil society organisations respect each other's perspective and respective roles.*



## CONCLUSIONS AT A GLANCE

For local authorities, the benefits of cooperation with civil society actors include new expertise and solutions to challenges related to integration. CSOs and NGOs assure high quality of service provision and are often more responsive to changing needs and more flexible in tailoring their services to different target groups.

From the perspective of civil society, the benefits of cooperation include financial and administrative assistance to develop and implement services and programmes. Moreover, Eurodiaconia's members highlight the importance of cooperation for establishing networks among all stakeholders involved in integration.

The increased relevance of the local level in meeting the needs of migrants and refugees has also resulted in new challenges for local actors, including obstacles to cooperation. In practice, cooperation can be constrained by conflicting interests among local authorities and civil society actors. Especially a lack of dialogue can result in fragmented services.

To create effective integration models, Eurodiaconia and its members welcome policy documents that emphasize the important role of dialogue and active cooperation. Multi-stakeholder platforms can be one concrete measure to exchange knowledge among service providers and to ensure the contribution of civil society to integration policies.



## Eurodiaconia Connecting faith and social justice through action

Rue Joseph II 166 - 1000 Bruxelles - Belgium

**Tel:** +32 (0)2 234 38 60    **Email:** [office@eurodiaconia.org](mailto:office@eurodiaconia.org)  
**Fax:** + 32 (0)2 234 38 65    **Web:** [www.eurodiaconia.org](http://www.eurodiaconia.org)



Eurodiaconia is a federation of social and health care organisations founded in the Christian faith and promoting social justice.

Eurodiaconia is a registered aisbl in Belgium. This publication has received financial support from the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation "EaSI" (2014-2020). For further information, please consult: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/easi>. The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the European Commission.

Copyright © 2019 Eurodiaconia All rights reserved.