



# Local Strategies for Effective Migrant and Refugee Integration



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# WHOLE-COMM: MIGRANT AND REFUGEE INTEGRATION IN SMALL MUNICIPALITIES

The Whole-COMM project is funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program. The project focuses on the integration of post-2014 migrants in small and medium-sized towns and rural areas (SMSTRAs) in Europe. It proposes an innovative whole-of-community (WoC) approach to analyse this integration, considering the integration of migrants and refugees as a process of community-making. This process:

- takes place in specific local contexts characterized by distinct configurations of structural factors like the local economy and labour market, demographic composition and trends, and levels of socio-cultural diversity;
- involves interactions among multiple actors, including individuals, organizations, institutions, and corporate entities, which shape the local community with their multilevel and multi-situated relations, networks, interests, and resources.

This project has gained significance in light of the increased migration to SMSTRAs in Europe, especially since 2014–2015, when these areas began to receive more migrants from regions experiencing political and humanitarian crises. These communities, which had minimal experience with asylum-seeking migrants, are now navigating complex challenges exacerbated by factors like austerity measures, political polarization and declining social cohesion.

The Whole-COMM project also emphasizes the increased relevance of these challenges in the post-COVID-19 era, particularly in sectors with high migrant employment, such as agriculture, food processing, and tourism. These sectors are crucial in SMSTRAs and underscore the urgency for a deeper understanding of migration governance and integration processes in smaller localities. Through its comprehensive approach, the project aims to generate insights and strategies to facilitate better integration of migrants, contributing to the strengthening of local communities in Europe.

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# LOCAL STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE MIGRANT AND REFUGEE INTEGRATION

## Introduction

Over the last few years, the European Union (EU) has received unprecedented numbers of migrants and asylum seekers, often in an unorderly way. The result has been a growing migrant presence in unprepared small- and medium-sized towns and rural areas (henceforth SMsTRA). Although there is no doubt that migrant integration takes place at the local level, scientific research still faces challenges in properly ‘going local’ — that is, explaining how local integration policies affect local communities and the impact on migrants’ integration trajectories and experiences (Caponio & Pettrachin, 2022).<sup>1</sup>

This toolbox is a comprehensive resource tailored to support small and medium-sized towns and rural areas across Europe in developing inclusive and efficient migrant and refugee integration policies. The toolbox enables stakeholders at the local level (e.g., policymakers, local government officials, municipal departments, service providers, civil society organizations, and employment agencies) to adopt local innovative measures and policies for the inclusion of migrants and refugees in line with EU and international standards. The objectives of the toolbox are two-fold:

- **Self-evaluation.** Policymakers and integration authorities can apply this toolbox to assess and monitor existing integration policies at the local level. By using and adapting this toolbox, policymakers can critically assess their performance and identify their strengths and weaknesses.
- **Self-reflection and Self-improvement.** Policymakers, authorities, service providers and civil society organizations can also utilize this toolbox as a planning tool to develop new strategies, policies and projects that embrace a comprehensive approach to integration.

The toolbox focuses on five main dimensions of policymaking vis-à-vis migrant and refugee integration: governance, employment and vocational training, education, welfare and health, and housing and urban planning. Each dimension addresses the key aspects of integration in greater detail and provides a framework for stakeholders to evaluate their policies and practices.

This self-evaluation exercise is important because it empowers stakeholders to make informed decisions and undertake targeted actions to improve integration policies and practices. Benchmarks in this toolbox help stakeholders identify their constraints and allow them to take tangible steps towards creating and sustaining welcoming and inclusive societies where everyone, regardless of their background, can reach their full potential.

Recognizing the potential disparities in resources, infrastructure, and challenges between large urban hubs and small rural towns, this toolbox proposes strategies and benchmarks adaptable to different contexts. In addition, problems arising from the limited competencies of localities in some areas are also taken into consideration. However, evidence of good practices in numerous localities shows that some of these challenges can also be circumvented at the local level with creative policymaking (see Memişoğlu & Yavcan, 2022).<sup>2</sup> This toolbox, therefore, not only offers practical solutions but also emphasizes the crucial role of advocacy in driving systemic change.

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<sup>1</sup> Caponio, T., and Pettrachin, A. (2022). A whole-of-community approach to study post-2014 migrants’ integration in small and medium-sized towns and rural areas: State of the art, concepts, theory and methodology. Turin: Whole-COMM project.

<sup>2</sup> Memişoğlu, F., & Yavcan, B. (2022). Beyond ideology—a comparative analysis of how local governance can expand national integration policy: the case of Syrian refugees in Istanbul. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 48(3), 503–523.

Small municipalities, often perceived as having limited influence in migration and integration, actually possess significant power to advocate for transformative change. This toolbox encourages local stakeholders to critically evaluate and apply these benchmarks while also engaging in advocacy to address wider issues. Advocacy activities and initiatives at the local level are vital in addressing broader issues, such as the administrative status of migrants and refugees, the injustices of a financialized housing market, the inadequacies of current job markets, and the limitations of international financial schemes that favour national over local governments.

At its core, the toolbox:

**Addresses Diverse Municipal Needs.** The socioeconomic fabric of a municipality plays a significant role in shaping integration strategies. Understanding that solutions suitable for medium-sized towns might not resonate with smaller villages, the toolbox offers varied strategies, ensuring inclusivity irrespective of a municipality's size or resource availability.

**Identifies Diversity in Migrants and Refugees.** This toolbox emphasizes the importance of personalized integration approaches tailored to the needs of all groups by highlighting the diversity of migrants and refugees. It is designed to assist localities in providing tailored solutions while addressing specific challenges and needs of migrants and refugees.

**Encourages Multi-sector Collaborations.** The toolbox underlines the cross-sectoral nature of integration and encourages localities to approach integration as a harmonized strategy and foster collaboration between all relevant departments.

**Flexible Implementation.** Recognizing that change does not happen overnight, the toolbox offers flexible timelines, phased approaches, and iterative strategies. Municipalities can adapt these based on their capacities, priorities, and evolving needs.

**Acts as a Bridge.** In an era where national and European migration policies are becoming increasingly restrictive, the toolbox seeks to bridge the gap between macro-level policy discourses and the micro-level realities municipalities grapple with daily.

**Promotes continuous learning.** By integrating stakeholder feedback, real-world experiences, and best practices, the toolbox is not a static document but a living resource, reflecting the evolving nature of migrant integration.

**Addresses Complex Challenges.** Integration has multi-faceted challenges, such as housing segregation and unequal access to healthcare, which are usually caused and exacerbated by national and supra-national phenomena. This toolbox provides strategies to develop practical solutions for these challenges.

**Promotes Migrant and Refugee Involvement.** The toolbox highlights the importance of migrant and refugee participation in community projects, not only as recipients but also as contributors. By giving migrants a voice and harnessing their skills, backgrounds, and viewpoints, localities can create deeper, more diverse communities.









**Showcases Inspiring Examples.** For municipalities looking for inspiration or contextual clarity, the toolbox offers a collection of real-world examples.

## HOW WAS IT DEVELOPED?

As a tool to facilitate the integration of migrants and refugees within SMSTRAs, the toolbox was created to align with EU and international recommendations while also incorporating the insights and needs of local stakeholders, including policymakers, service providers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the business community. The development process can be divided into distinct phases, each contributing to the robustness and relevance of the final product.

### Benchmarking Integration Policies

The initial step in this process involved the formulation of benchmarks. These benchmarks were intended to serve as a foundational reference point, facilitating the development of innovative measures for the inclusion of migrants in SMSTRAs. To create these benchmarks, the Migration Policy Group (MPG) meticulously reviewed a comprehensive array of sources on integration policies. These sources included:

-  Insights from the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) and the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) were considered, ensuring alignment with international standards.
-  The UNHCR/MPG handbook: Effective Inclusion of Refugees: Participatory Approaches for Practitioners at the Local Level.
-  MIPEX-R Handbook for Self-Assessment: A Step-By-Step Practical Guide For The Improvement Of Regional Integration Practices.
-  MIPEX-L: Local Indicators of Integration Policies and Practices.
-  Valuable reports and briefs from renowned international organizations such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the UN, and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) were examined to gather insights.
-  The Local Inclusion Action Tool (LIAT) developed by the OECD, the MPG, and the Welcoming International and Intercultural Cities/Council of Europe.
-  Policy reports and recommendations from prior Horizon 2020 projects (2014–2020) were studied to build upon existing knowledge.
-  Valuable research findings from Whole-COMM project partners and various working packages further enriched the benchmarking process.



## Engaging Local Stakeholders

A bottom-up approach involving the engagement of local stakeholders and the whole community has been adopted in creating these benchmarks. To realize this approach, mixed working groups were formed consisting of Whole-COMM researchers and key local actors, including policymakers, service providers, NGOs, and others. These groups were strategically selected from the local communities (in Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, Austria, Germany, and Belgium) that were the focus of the research in the Whole-COMM project.

These diverse working groups participated in a series of workshops aimed at refining the list of actions initially drafted. These workshops were instrumental in producing a contextually relevant and dynamic Whole-COMM policy toolbox. The workshop sessions started with the proposed set of actions, which were then iteratively modified and expanded upon to align with the unique needs, challenges, and characteristics of the SMsTRAs.

## Workshop Collaboration

The workshops were a collaborative effort conducted both locally within each community and at the European level in Brussels. This dual approach ensured that the resulting toolbox was not only responsive to local nuances but also reflective of broader regional dynamics. Through this cooperative process, a revised set of actions and specific sub-recommendations emerged, with a strong emphasis on fostering a whole-of-community (WoC) approach to migrant integration and social cohesion in the SMsTRAs.

In conclusion, the development of the toolbox was a co-creation process that brought together diverse insights from all relevant stakeholders. As an end product of benchmarking, active engagement with local stakeholders, and collaborative workshop sessions, this toolkit exemplifies a comprehensive and adaptable resource for enhancing migrant integration and social cohesion in the SMsTRAs.



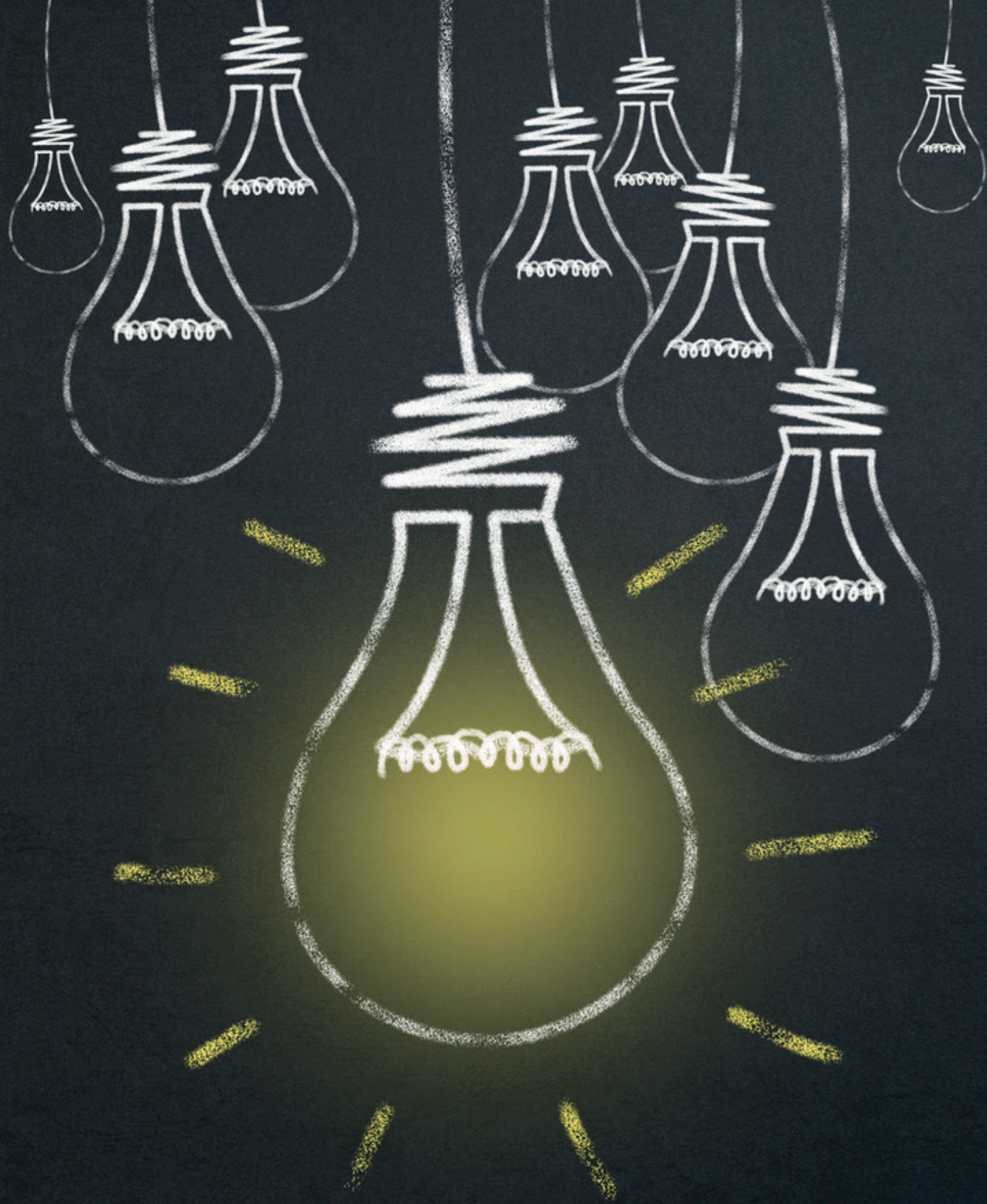
## WHO IS THIS TOOLBOX FOR?

The Whole-COMM toolbox is designed for a diverse array of stakeholders involved in the integration of migrants and refugees in small and medium-sized towns and rural areas. This includes local policymakers, service providers, NGOs, community leaders, and educators. It serves as a practical resource for anyone committed to building inclusive, cohesive communities and enhancing the integration process of migrants and refugees in smaller localities.



## HOW TO USE THE TOOLBOX?

- 1. FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH THE TOOLBOX.** Begin by thoroughly reading and understanding the contents of the toolbox. Gain a clear understanding of its purpose, the checklist format, and the six main dimensions it covers.
- 2. START WITH SELF-ASSESSMENT.** Before diving in, evaluate your municipality's current integration strategies and challenges. This initial assessment will help tailor the toolbox's recommendations to your specific context.
- 3. NAVIGATE BY CATEGORIES.** The toolbox is organized into multiple sections, from housing and education to health and employment. Based on your current focus, jump to the relevant section. Remember: Integration is interconnected. Ensure a holistic view by exploring multiple sections over time.
- 4. ADAPT TO YOUR MUNICIPALITY'S SIZE AND NEEDS.** Recommendations are differentiated to cater to both urban centres and smaller villages. Look for the tips and adaptations that suit your municipality's scale.
- 5. ENGAGE WITH REAL-WORLD EXAMPLES.** Throughout the toolbox, you will find case studies and real-world examples that provide context. They will help you to understand practical applications.
- 6. ENGAGE WITH STAKEHOLDERS.** Integration is a collective effort. Engage local stakeholders, migrant communities, and other relevant actors to review and adapt recommendations collaboratively.
- 7. ITERATE AND ADAPT.** Migrant integration is a dynamic challenge, and solutions may need to evolve. Regularly revisit the toolbox, incorporate feedback, and adjust strategies accordingly.



# KEY INTEGRATION STANDARDS AND PRINCIPLES

1. Governance
2. Employment and Vocational Training
3. Education
4. Health
5. Housing and Urban Planning

# 1.

## GOVERNANCE



Governance is a system of values, policies and institutions through which a society manages its economic, political, and social affairs with interactions between the state, civil society, and the private sector. The aspect of governance in this section focuses on the frameworks, regulations, and procedures in place to support the local integration of migrants and refugees. It assesses the efficiency of coordination mechanisms, governance frameworks, and the participation of relevant stakeholders in decision-making processes. The existence of inclusive integration strategies, resource allocation, coordination between various levels of government, and engagement with migrant and refugee communities are important factors to take into account within this dimension.



Since it lays the groundwork for inclusive policies and practices, the governance aspect is essential for successful migrant and refugee integration. Strong governance allows integration efforts to be coordinated, supported by adequate resources, and directed by a clear vision and strategy. Effective governance structures make collaboration between the various governmental levels, relevant institutions, and citizens possible.

### COMMON CHALLENGES






- Lack of actionable, clear integration plans and strategies.
- No assigned roles for overseeing implementation of integration plans.
- Limited Stakeholder Involvement in policy-making processes.
- Insufficient participation in advocacy and knowledge-sharing initiatives on integration.
- Challenges in allocating time, personnel, and financial resources efficiently, especially in smaller municipalities.
- Insufficient acknowledgement and implementation of diversity and inclusion policies.
- Lack of specific needs- and rights-based training at all levels and departments of local governments .
- Lack of robust, local-level data leading to uninformed policymaking.

## Key Benchmarks to Consider



### STRATEGIC PLANNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

-  Develop and adopt a clear vision of integration with an accountable and useful strategic integration plan (e.g., a plan that is forward-looking, data-informed, comprehensive, and inclusive) that outlines responsibilities, timelines, and actions.
-  Assign dedicated persons or roles, such as engaged mayors or members of local councils, to be responsible for monitoring, evaluating, and overseeing the implementation of the integration plan.




### COORDINATION AND COOPERATION MECHANISMS

-  Systematically involve all relevant stakeholders (e.g., municipal and provincial offices, migrant and non-migrant NGOs, labour organizations, migrant and refugee consultative bodies, civil society, private companies, and research institutions) in the different phases of the policymaking process.
-  Advocate for multilevel coordination and support from national and international bodies through local government associations and networks, enhancing the voice and influence of small municipalities.
-  Participate in city-to-city knowledge sharing, advocacy, and capacity-building initiatives on migrant and refugee integration.
-  Leverage each other's strengths and expertise through collaborative networks to create "short lines" between collaboration partners.
-  Establish well-functioning cooperation and coordination within municipalities and with external partners in alignment with the vision/policy and defined responsibilities.

### INFORMED POLICYMAKING

-  Collect data on the impacts of integration measures on the lives of migrants and refugees at the local level to monitor and evaluate integration practices.
-  Systematically use relevant and robust data to inform the decision-making process in order to adopt evidence-based integration measures.

### RESOURCE ALLOCATION AND FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

-  Collaborate through networks to advocate before national governments and international organizations for appropriate resources, competencies, and support. Collective advocacy efforts aim to empower small municipalities to implement effective migrant and refugee integration strategies.
-  In the case of small and medium-sized towns, prioritize efficient use of resources for monitoring and evaluating integration initiatives.
-  Maintain separate budget items concerning migrant and refugee integration to avoid merging with general social expenditure, ensuring transparency and accountability.

## INNOVATIVE INTEGRATION PRACTICES

### **POLI (POLES), SUSVA VALLEY, ITALY**

The POLI initiative, launched in June 2021 by the Municipality of Avigliana, represents a significant stride in empowering migrants within the Susa Valley in Italy. This project builds on the successful MAD (Micro Accoglienza Diffusa – Diffused Micro Reception) reception project, expanding its network to include a broader range of local actors.

POLI's core objective is to provide comprehensive support to migrants, encompassing legal assistance, job guidance, housing mediation, and orientation to local services. What sets POLI apart is its inclusive approach, offering support and services not only to migrants but also to local community members in need of information or guidance on migrant-related issues, such as employers, landlords, and volunteers. This fosters a WoC approach, ensuring that the benefits of the project extend beyond the migrant population to the wider community. The project involves a collaboration of various partners.

For more information, visit > [POLI – Legal Desk and Migrant Orientation Desk](#).

### **VIELFALTSGESTALTER\*INNEN (SHAPING DIVERSITY), DESSAU-ROSSLAU, GERMANY**

This initiative aligns with the 'Governance' section of a toolbox, focusing on training officials and promoting the benefits of migration and diversity. The Vielfaltsgestalter\*innen alliance, comprising administration, civil society, business, and cultural groups, aims to foster harmony in a diverse community. Their approach includes addressing not only migration but also diversity in age, social class, gender, sexual orientation, and ability. Projects include social events and cultural activities to connect people, such as Eat&Meet events and concerts. A key initiative is the Vielfaltsmontag (Diversity Monday) workshops for the local administration and major employers, focusing on the implications of diversity for governance. Additionally, the alliance conducts workshops for new trainees in local administration, emphasizing diversity understanding and its relevance in Dessau-Roßlau.

For more information, visit > [Die Vielfaltsgestalter\\*innen Dessau-Roßlau](#).



## 2.

EMPLOYMENT AND  
VOCATIONAL TRAINING

The employment and vocational training dimension elaborates on the opportunities and support available for migrants and refugees to access employment and gain the necessary skills for the local job market. It looks at the effectiveness of employment laws, employment services, vocational training programmes, recognition of former qualifications, and actions to combat discrimination and advance equality in the workplace.

The aim is to ensure that migrants and refugees have access to decent employment and can support the local economy. By promoting social integration and economic independence, employment and vocational training play a crucial part in integrating migrants and refugees. This dimension encourages equal opportunities and fosters social progress by addressing obstacles to employment, such as discrimination and a lack of skill recognition.

## COMMON CHALLENGES

- Limited access to employment opportunities and vocational training.
- Presence of discriminatory practices and inequalities in the workplace.
- Varied and unique regional challenges affecting employment conditions.
- Diverse needs of different migrant and refugee groups necessitating individualized support strategies.
- Lack of enhanced collaboration with local entities to foster migrant and refugee employment.
- Limited availability and accessibility of optimized language courses for different migrant and refugee groups.
- Challenges in promoting responsible entrepreneurship with comprehensive training and risk management.
- Lack of a focused, collaborative, and inclusive overarching strategy to address diverse needs and foster economic and social progress effectively.

## Key Benchmarks to Consider

### FOCUSED INITIATIVES, COLLABORATION, AND ADDRESSING LOCAL NEEDS

- ✓ Given the higher levels of unemployment among migrants and refugees and locals in smaller localities, develop programs to address the unique challenges in these areas to facilitate labour market integration, with an emphasis on improving overall employment conditions
- ✓ Considering the diverse living situations, programs should be tailored to urban and rural needs, ensuring they reach all areas effectively and accommodate the varying needs, knowledge, and goals of migrants and refugees, such as those of migrant/refugee women and individuals with higher education backgrounds.
- ✓ Develop and distribute programs encouraging hiring migrants and refugees in cooperation with local organizations like chambers of commerce and tradespeople rather than relying solely on local policymakers.
- ✓ Shift the focus more towards employers, ensuring active participation and flexibility in employment terms.
- ✓ Introduce specific actions to eradicate labour market exploitation, address the segmentation of public sector jobs along ethnic lines, and resolve migration background disparities.
- ✓ Promote and support migrant entrepreneurship with targeted and comprehensive programmes aiming to improve skills through business training, legal advice mentoring and coaching.

### EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND RECOGNITION OF PRACTICAL SKILLS

- ✓ While focusing on formal qualifications, also consider the academic knowledge and practical skills of migrant and refugee workers, offering internships or entry qualifications before starting vocational training or employment in specific sectors.
  - ✓ Develop language courses tailored to different groups and purposes (e.g., negotiation skills in the local language and basic economics in the local language), offering intensive courses for younger persons or those with a 'higher' education background, offering childcare for women with children and accommodating working individuals with evening courses.
  - ✓ Conduct advanced training for employment agencies, work coaches, and advisers to align opportunities with individual needs more effectively.
-

### TARGETED PROGRAMMES

- ✓ Raise awareness of the importance of the contribution that migrants and refugees make to local development and develop targeted programs and incentives to encourage the hiring of migrants and refugees within private companies, social enterprises, and public institutions.
- ✓ Undertake measures to significantly boost the inclusion of migrants and refugees in vocational training courses, apprenticeships, and degree programmes.
- ✓ Set up initiatives allowing migrants and refugees to gain initial work experience and language acquisition, coupled with supportive mentoring.
- ✓ Initiate collaborations between schools and the private sector to introduce migrants and refugees to diverse career paths from an early stage.
- ✓ Advocate the benefits of multilingualism to employers through municipalities and relevant bodies.

### SUPPORT TO SMALL BUSINESSES

- ✓ Address specific needs and limitations of small, family-led businesses in SMsTRAs, considering their limited resources and potential reluctance to hire migrants and refugees due to integration challenges.
- ✓ Employers (especially small and family-led businesses) require increased support and flexible initiatives, which may involve assisting in properly integrating migrants and refugees with limited language knowledge and addressing uncertainties regarding job permanency.

### CUSTOMIZED AND INCLUSIVE SUPPORT

- ✓ Provide customized support for labour market integration, considering a person's background, aspirations, and personal or family decisions, ensuring respect for phases of absence from the labour market and accommodating the needs of migrant and refugee women and migrant groups with special needs (e.g., persons with disabilities, the long-term unemployed and those with poor or no literacy).
- ✓ Address the limitations of national programs in reaching rural areas and ensure that well-designed programs for migrants' and refugees' labour market participation are accessible in all regions.

## INNOVATIVE INTEGRATION PRACTICES

### UNG KRAFT (YOUNG POWER), HUDIKSVALL, SWEDEN

The Ung Kraft program in Hudiksvall, Sweden, represents a remarkable initiative aimed at facilitating labor market inclusion for unaccompanied youths as they transition into adulthood. Spearheaded by the director of the municipal civil service using a discretionary budget, this program was adapted from Save the Children's 'Ung Kraft' concept.

Key features of the program include individual counseling, strategic collaboration with municipal schools, and proactive outreach to the private sector. Remarkably, the efforts of just one staff member led to securing stable employment for almost the entire target group of unaccompanied youth in Hudiksvall. This achievement is particularly significant considering Sweden's temporary asylum legislation, which posed a risk of deportation for (former) unaccompanied minors unless they secured stable employment within six months after completing upper secondary school. As a result of this initiative, most of the 46 individuals who arrived in Hudiksvall under these circumstances were able to legally stay in the municipality, and in Sweden, thereby avoiding the need to resort to undocumented status.

The success of the Ung Kraft program in Hudiksvall has led to its implementation in seven other municipalities across Sweden, most of which are small- or medium-sized, demonstrating its adaptability and effectiveness in diverse local contexts.

For more information, visit > [UNG Kraft](#).



## 3.

## EDUCATION








The main objective of the education dimension is the integration of children, youth, and adults from migrant and refugee backgrounds into the local educational system. This dimension evaluates the inclusiveness of education strategy and pays special attention to parental involvement, linguistic support, intercultural integration and a holistic approach to diverse needs. This dimension seeks to advance educational opportunities that help migrants and refugees gain the expertise, credentials, and knowledge essential to their continued personal and professional development.

## COMMON CHALLENGES




- Lack of adequate resources to cater to the diverse educational needs of various migrant and refugee groups in both urban and rural areas.
- Language barriers
- Lack of effective engagement and comprehension from migrant and refugee parents about the educational system.
- Communication barriers with diverse parent communities due to language differences
- Limited or lack of intercultural training opportunities for educators
- The challenge of ensuring smooth and supportive transitions between different educational levels for migrant and refugee students.

## Key Benchmarks to Consider



### ENSURING EQUAL ACCESS AND TRANSITION SUPPORT

-  Expand the definition of education beyond formal schooling to include community-based educational activities, like workshops and extracurricular activities, particularly beneficial for children and families from diverse backgrounds.
-  Offer inclusive school places to all children, including undocumented, avoiding segregation and focusing on enhanced transitions between kindergarten and school.
-  Develop robust early language support programs to aid students, especially newcomers, in learning the primary language(s) of instruction, ensuring that they do not lag behind due to language barriers.
-  Provide specific courses for adult illiterate migrants and refugees in basic skills such as literacy, language learning and numeracy.
-  Promote specific initiatives to encourage refugees and vulnerable groups of migrants to enrol in higher education.

### PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

-  Cultivate a reciprocal and interactive relationship between schools and migrant and refugee families by actively involving parents and welcoming their input in shaping educational practices.
-  Encourage parent associations to embrace diverse perspectives and facilitate communication in multiple languages to acknowledge and value the cultural richness that migrant and refugee families bring to the school community. Strengthen the role of families in the educational process by promoting family-oriented activities and learning opportunities outside of school, such as those offered by cultural centres and libraries.
-  Develop mechanisms for disseminating clear, multilingual information about the school system, early language support programs, and the transition phases.

### TARGETED FINANCIAL AND FAMILIAL RESOURCES

-  Allocate resources to address educational needs and support community and city-wide educational initiatives that complement formal education.
  -  Focus on adequately distributing resources to educational institutions in urban and rural areas, ensuring every student has access to quality education.
-

## PROMOTION AND INTEGRATION OF INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION

- ✓ Advocate and integrate intercultural education within learning materials, requiring the encouragement and involvement of national ministries in curricular development.
- ✓ Conduct continuous training for educational staff in intercultural competence and inclusiveness, ensuring the integration of diverse cultures within the learning environment.
- ✓ Utilize community resources such as cultural centres and libraries to provide intercultural learning experiences, fostering a broader understanding of diversity.

## FEEDBACK AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

- ✓ Establish channels for students, parents, and educators to provide feedback on the integration process, identifying areas of improvement and success stories.



## INNOVATIVE INTEGRATION PRACTICES

### BRIDGE FIGURE, FLANDERS, BELGIUM

The aim of the project is to create a new partnership model among parents, children and the school. This is done in the first place by creating awareness among school teams about the home situation of children and working on their image of families. Second, the bridge figures act as confidants for every parent and child, regardless of background or values. They focus on understandability and therefore confidence in education. After all, a child develops optimally in a context where school, family, and neighbourhood work collaboratively in partnership.

For more information, visit > [Brugfiguren](#).

### VOCATIONAL TRAINING TO UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN AND SCHOOL SUPPORT TO REFUGEE CHILDREN, LARISSA, GREECE

The Municipality of Larissa has committed to enhancing the integration and support of unaccompanied children and refugee children. This initiative includes providing vocational training focused on digital skills and offering after-school academic support. The program, advised by the Migrant and Refugee Integration Council (MRIC), aims to improve academic performance and employability of these children, who reside in local shelters. The training and support activities are conducted at the municipality's Lifelong Learning Center, reflecting Larissa's dedication to assisting vulnerable youth in overcoming educational and vocational challenges.

For more information, visit > [Local Action](#).



# 4. HEALTH



The provision of healthcare services to migrants and refugees is assessed under the health dimension. This dimension evaluates whether social assistance benefits, healthcare services, mental health support, and trauma-informed care are available, affordable, and culturally appropriate. In order to ensure that migrants and refugees have access to social protection and high-quality healthcare services, the health dimension addresses their well-being.

## COMMON CHALLENGES

- Overcrowding and Resource Strain in health services in small localities
- Lack of comprehensive and culturally sensitive training programmes for healthcare providers
- Lack of targeted healthcare and mental health support for vulnerable groups
- Limited tailored communication strategies
- Lack of resources for quality interpretation services



## Key Benchmarks to Consider

### ENHANCED ACCESSIBILITY AND EQUALITY

- ✓ Advocate for equal access to the health care system for all, addressing issues such as long waiting times for appointments that affect migrants, refugees and natives and alerting relevant stakeholders to address them.
- ✓ Strive for unconditional access to medicine and healthcare services for migrants and refugees, recognizing that health is predominantly a topic for higher levels of government but necessitates concerted efforts from all levels.

### PROACTIVE HEALTHCARE APPROACH

- ✓ Implement early screening for all recently arrived migrants and refugees to detect and address health conditions promptly, preventing long-term deterioration and complications.
- ✓ Develop strategies to bridge gaps in knowledge about services and the utilization of the health care system, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of available services.

### LINGUISTIC ACCESSIBILITY

- ✓ Ensure the provision of free linguistic interpretation and cultural mediation services, addressing the expectations in doctor's practices for accompanying interpreters and ensuring migrants and refugees can secure appointments.

### INFORMATION DISSEMINATION AND AWARENESS

- ✓ Create easily accessible, multilingual health brochures and disseminate information proactively about healthcare entitlements and access to health services.
- ✓ Establish extensive multilingual information campaigns detailing health and safety procedures during crises/disasters, ensuring widespread understanding and preparedness.

### TARGETED SUPPORT FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS

- ✓ Allocate specialized resources and services focusing on the mental health and psychosocial well-being of migrants, especially addressing the needs of vulnerable groups such as refugees, victims of gender-based violence, victims of torture, and migrants with disabilities.

### ENHANCED TRAINING FOR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

- ✓ Promote continuous training programs on interculturality and diversity for healthcare staff and social workers, focusing on migrants' and refugees' rights and entitlements to foster a more inclusive and understanding healthcare environment.
- ✓ Advocate for enhanced awareness among healthcare providers regarding the unique challenges and needs of migrants and refugees, ensuring a supportive and accommodating healthcare experience for all.



## INNOVATIVE INTEGRATION PRACTICES

### **PSYCHOSOCIAL CENTER ROSTOCK FOR REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS, ROSTOCK, GERMANY**

The Psychosocial Center Rostock provides special psychological counselling and psychotherapy for refugees and migrants. What is special about the facility is its holistic perspective on the living situation of forced migrants, combining treatment of flight- and war-related traumas and support with practical problems, such as finding a flat, unsure legal status, problem with family reunion and so forth. It provides a pool of translators who support communication between doctors and clients, which is the main barrier to access other health services. The facility also offers special types of therapy, such as art therapy and special therapies for children. Psychosocial Center Rostock treats people regardless of health insurance or legal status.

The project began in 2015 as a joint initiative of volunteer doctors and the health department of the city of Rostock to provide ad-hoc support for the high numbers of arriving people. Since then Psychosocial Center Rostock has developed, and has been financially independent since 2021, drawing on private donors, foundations, and the regional government. The aim of the facility is not to provide a parallel structure to the health system but to support refugees in accessing healthcare.

For more information, visit [Psychosocial Center Rostock for refugees and migrants](#).

### **PROVISION OF HEALTH, COMPREHENSIVE MENTAL HEALTH AND REHABILITATION SERVICES FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES, SULTANBEYLI, TURKEY**

The Refugees Association in Sultanbeyli currently operates a notable initiative providing comprehensive health and rehabilitation services to Syrian refugees. This project, designed as a broad-spectrum rehabilitation effort, offers critical mental health services and physical rehabilitation for refugees and asylum seekers. It emphasizes the importance of mental health care, acknowledging the profound psychological impact of displacement and trauma. In addition, the initiative provides essential physical rehabilitation services to those who have suffered injuries or are living with disabilities.

A key aspect of this program is its focus on enhancing the quality of services through strategic planning and capacity building, ensuring healthcare providers are well-equipped to meet the diverse needs of the refugee population. This all-encompassing approach to healthcare not only aids in the physical and mental recovery of refugees but also supports their integration into the local community, setting a commendable example for similar efforts in refugee support worldwide.

For more information, visit [Refugees Association](#).

# 5.

## HOUSING AND URBAN PLANNING



The housing and urban planning dimension examines the availability of affordable and adequate housing options for migrants and refugees and suitable living conditions. It evaluates housing policies, anti-discrimination laws, and social housing availability and considers cultural diversity when making urban planning decisions. This component seeks to build inclusive, long-lasting communities where migrants and refugees can live safely and comfortably.

For migrants and refugees to have access to safe, suitable housing options, housing and urban planning are essential. Stability, a sense of belonging, and social integration are all aided by having access to adequate housing. Urban planning that is inclusive and considers inhabitants' cultural diversity, promotes social cohesion and prevents segregation.

### COMMON CHALLENGES

- General shortage of rental and affordable housing due to competitive housing markets in small localities
- Residential segregation
- Lack of social housing in some localities
- Lack of language proficiency
- High rental prices
- Hard-to-fulfil requirements

## Key Benchmarks to Consider

### ANTI-SEGREGATION MEASURES

- ✓ Enhance urban planning to reduce segregation in housing and communities, focusing on policy, infrastructure, and community involvement. Prioritize improvements in informal settlements and the strategic design of reception facilities to ensure equitable access to services and foster community integration.
- ✓ Design municipal housing projects to address integration as a cross-cutting issue, involving various stakeholders and departments to ensure comprehensive solutions.

### BALANCED AND EQUITABLE ACCESS TO HOUSING

- ✓ Address barriers and access requirements that discriminate against migrants and refugees in accessing public housing, removing intentional or unintentional discriminative access requirements.
- ✓ Proactively address the housing crisis by implementing regulatory measures such as rent control, limiting property ownership concentration, and setting specific conditions for rental agreements.
- ✓ Go beyond collaborating with local stakeholders to actively shape housing policies that counteract the dominance of large investment entities and ensure the availability of affordable housing for all community members, including migrants and refugees.
- ✓ Engage with public housing authorities to ensure turnover and accessibility of housing to newcomers and advocate for equitable housing policies considering the needs of both natives and migrants/refugees.
- ✓ Extend support beyond the exit phase from reception facilities, especially in small municipalities lacking accessible housing services.
- ✓ Prioritize specific interventions for different migrant and refugee groups, acknowledging their diverse needs and implementing services that provide differentiated support.
- ✓ Develop strategies targeting smaller municipalities to utilize available private housing stock, establishing direct relationships with the private sector and landlords to remove discriminatory practices.
- ✓ Improve public transportation to avoid excessive disparities between housing, education and employment locations.

### PROACTIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- ✓ Involve migrants and refugees not only as participants but also as organizers and service providers to foster genuine interactions and positively impact the perception of newcomers.
- ✓ Facilitate multifunctional neighbourhood centres bundling services in one location, especially in smaller cities with limited infrastructure and initiatives for migrants and refugees.
- ✓ Ensure the strategic location of reception facilities, considering their potential to foster segregation and activate inclusion processes, and balance settlement related to spontaneous migration and that driven by reception facilities.

### CROSS-FUNCTIONAL COLLABORATION

- ✓ Advocate for a holistic approach to integration that involves various municipal departments, local stakeholders, and the community in planning and implementation processes, ensuring the development of comprehensive and sustainable solutions.



## INNOVATIVE INTEGRATION PRACTICES

### MULTIFUNCTIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE, COEVORDEN, THE NETHERLANDS

In Coevorden, the Multifunctional Neighborhood House exemplifies innovative community integration. This unique center consolidates key services and activities, including a local language school and diverse volunteering opportunities like a sewing workshop and vegetable garden. It's not just a hub for newcomers and refugees but a communal space fostering interaction and connection among all residents. This approach facilitates accessible services, encourages cultural exchange, and strengthens community bonds, making it a model of inclusive integration. Discover more about this inspiring initiative and join the conversation at [Ravelijn Verbindt on Facebook](#).

### DE NOMADE, LEUVEN, BELGIUM

De Nomade, established in 2019 in Leuven, is a welcoming hub for adults over 18 years, focusing particularly on those with a refugee background. This centre stands as a pivotal resource in the city, offering a place of connection and assistance. It serves as a key destination for both newcomers and their support networks to access vital information. At De Nomade, various essential services converge weekly, ensuring efficient and effective assistance to newcomers. These services include the Flemish Service for Employment Mediation and Vocational Training (VDAB), the Public Centres for Social Welfare (OCMW), among others, all aimed at supporting the integration and welfare of the newcomers.

For more information, visit [De Nomade](#).

### DIVERSITY CAFÉ, ST. PÖLTEN, AUSTRIA

The Diversity Café started as a local civil society initiative in 2016, aiming to establish a place where locals and refugees can meet. It focuses on the support of refugees, and the involvement of relevant institutions and interested individuals. The Diversity Café is an open meeting place for interpersonal exchange between different groups of migrants and locals with the aim to connect people and organizations that are committed to a democratic, humane and inclusive urban society. There is an organisational team made up of locals and refugees. The scope of activities has been adapted to the needs and for different target groups. Initially, this included German-language courses, leisure activities, such as dancing, painting and sports, as well as events to celebrate Austrian and Islamic holidays. It shifted and expanded to information on COVID-19 regulations, housing and job offers as well as coping with conflict and stress due to pending asylum procedures, financial worries and social isolation.

Interested private individuals and people who are active in various groups, initiatives, institutions and associations meet here to receive information about organizations, services and leisure activities in the town. The meetings for a coffee continue to take place every Saturday from 10.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. They are an opportunity to talk to everyone present over coffee, tea, cake and fruit, helping to turn strangers into acquaintances. The Diversity Café is funded by the municipal diversity office.

For more information, visit [Diversity Café](#).

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