

Europe for Citizens | Networks of Towns



International seminar - 22 and 23 March 2019

SUMMARY REPORT



Co-funded by the
Europe for Citizens Programme
of the European Union

Lead partner



Comune di
Chiesanuova

Associated partner



Methodological and technical support and facilitation

German University of Administrative Sciences, Speyer / Germany (DUV Speyer)

We would like to thank

all the participants in the seminar and the participatory project workshop.

Report by DUV Speyer: Constanze Janda.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

0. Introduction	4
1. International seminar Townlab_MEET	4
1.1 Plenary session	4
1.1.1 Participants	5
1.2 Participatory Project Workshop	6
1.2.1 Right and Duties	7
1.2.2 Reception and Solidarity	7
1.2.3 Social inclusion	8
2. Townlab_SCHOOL Creative Thinking Workshop	9

0. INTRODUCTION

The Townlab_MEET conference in Speyer set a focus on the reception conditions and integration requirements for asylum seekers and refugees in the states that are involved in the program. EU law has set minimum standards in the directive 2013/33/EC and 2011/95/EC. National law provisions, however, differ due to broad discretion, especially regarding the social rights of asylum seekers and migrants. By comparing the different schemes in national law, the conference aimed at identifying factors that foster or hinder integration of refugees and asylum seekers. In three workshops, experiences and practices of labour market integration, integration courses and refugee management were to be exchanged in order to prepare the Townlab_MEET position paper.

1. Conference Programme

Thursday, 21 March 2019

14.30 p.m. Welcome and Introduction

Prof. Dr. Constanze Janda, German University of Administrative Sciences, Speyer

Objectives and priorities of the European Project Townlab_MEET in the strand “Networks of Towns”

Dr. Cinzia Zugolaro, Sferalab Torino

15.00 p.m. Reception conditions for refugees and asylum seekers in national law (I) - Country reports Germany, Italy, Slovenia, Serbia

- Country Report Germany: *Leonie Zeißler*, German University of Administrative Sciences, Speyer
- Country Report Slovenia: *Maja Žunič Fabjančič*, Municipality of Novo Mesto [absent due to illness]
- Country Report Italy: *Annalisa Fontana*, S.P.R.A.R. Comune di Chiesanuova / *Daniela Di Rosa*, Associazione per gli Studi Giuridici sull'Immigrazione (ASGI)
- Country Report Serbia: *Ilija Djukanovic*, Municipality of Subotica / *Stanka Parac Damjanovic*, Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA)

- 17.00 p.m. Comparison and Discussion
- 19.30 p.m. Internal Meeting of the steering committee

Friday, 22 March 2019

- 9.30 a.m. Introduction to Workshops
- Prof. Dr. Constanze Janda*, German University of Administrative Sciences, Speyer
- 10.00 a.m. Workshops (I)
- „Social Agriculture“: Labour Market Integration of Refugees in the Agricultural Sector, *Tanja Iken*, Chamber of Agriculture Nordrhein-Westfalen
 - Integration Courses, *Wilfred Josue*, integration teacher, Brandenburg
 - Refugee Management and volunteer work, *Jana Pöhler*, German University of Administrative Sciences
- 12.00 p.m. Workshops (II) - Discussion of Results
- 14.30 p.m. Municipalities as actors in Migration Policy
- Prof. Barbara Oomen*, University of Utrecht
- 15.30 p.m. Discussion
- 16.30 p.m. End of the conference
- 17.30 p.m. Evening Programme

Saturday, 23 March 2019

Departure

2. Results

The conference has been devoted to the exchange of experiences among the project partners as well as with representatives of local authorities, civil society and science; among the participants were practitioners from Speyer and several municipalities in the German regions of Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, Hesse and Rhineland-Palatinate. After the welcoming and presentation of the aims of the Townlab_MEET project by *Constanze Janda* (DUV Speyer) and *Cinzia Zugolaro* (Sferalab Torino), the participants immediately set to work: Townlab_MEET followed a participative approach in order to facilitate discussions among all attendees.

a. Topics

At first, the project partners presented the legal framework on the reception of refugees in their respective countries of origin. *Leonie Zeißler* (DUV Speyer) presented the numerous changes of asylum and migration law that came into force in the so-called “refugee crisis” 2015 /2016. Legislation followed a rather restrictive approach on one hand, aiming at reducing the number of persons seeking international protection. For example, all states in the Western Balkan are now considered as “safe countries of origin”, which has severe socio-economic consequences for asylum seekers from these countries. They are forced to stay in reception centres until their asylum procedures have been completed; there they receive benefits in kind and only a small amount of cash to cover their personal needs, and are neither allowed to work nor to take part in language or integration courses. On the other hand, persons from countries with a solid perspective to be recognised as refugees (“sichere Bleibeperspektive”) can profit from integration measures even before their procedures have been decided. Hence, German asylum law became more open for some, but for the price of closing its borders for others. The differentiation between different groups of asylum seekers complicates administrative procedures and is an obstacle for the integration of those coming from “safe countries of origin”, even if their claim is recognised.

Maja Žunič Fabjančič (Municipality of Novo Mesto) provided us with a report on the situation in Slovenia. After the closure of Hungary's border in 2015 and 2016, about 470,000 asylum seekers have crossed the border, but only few applied for international protection in Slovenia. Two years ago, when another big flow of asylum seekers met the Slovenian border, the legislator set new rules on border control. The police has the authority to allow or refuse the entry of a migrant and to return a non-citizen even if he expresses his intention to apply for international protection if the police assumes that he may stay in the territory or is at the border illegally. Such provision is incompatible with the right to seek asylum and thus must not be entered into force, which after long discussions unfortunately did. Asylum seekers have the right to accommodation, meals, clothing, hygienic supplies and monthly pocket money, if they are without own resources. Nine months after the application has been submitted, the asylum seeker can work, if his identity is established and if the delay is not due to him. They have the right to primary, secondary and higher education. In practice,

integration measures appear to be insufficient, as the focus is on language learning only. Slovenia is faced with the absence of a comprehensive and coordinated strategic approach at the systemic level, the interconnection and cooperation of different services, and the insight into the need to transfer some integration measures to local communities. It is necessary to shorten the length of asylum procedures and it is important to eliminate stereotypes and prejudices of the majority population to be equipped with intercultural competences and prepared for life in a multicultural and inclusive society.

The legal situation in Italy was presented by *Annalisa Fontana* (S.P.R.A.R. C Chiesanuova) and *Daniela Di Rosa* (Associazione per gli Studi Giuridici sull'Immigrazione [ASGI]). The focus was on the 2015 and the 2018 reform. In 2015, *centri di accoglienza straordinaria* were set up in order to accommodate asylum seekers until free capacities in the reception centres have been established. However, in most cases, persons were staying in these centres until the termination of their asylum procedures. The 2018 reform has had a much stronger effect. It led to the abolishment of the *Protezione Umanitaria* (decreto legislativo n. 286/1998). Besides, the right to integration has been restricted to persons who are recognised as refugees, unaccompanied minors and a small group of asylum seekers. During the asylum procedures, there is no right to decent housing, education, language courses or treatment of psychological illnesses. The new system, according to which the legal position differs on before and after recognition has been criticised, especially since asylum procedures often last up to three years, which has a negative impact on municipal integration work.

The experiences from Serbia were highlighted by *Stanka Parac Damjanovic* (Association of Local Democracy Agencies [ALDA]). *Ilija Djukanovic* added the local practice in the municipality of Subotica. Being situated at the so-called "Balkan route", Serbia became a place of refuge due to the closure of the Hungarian external border. 2018 about 8,500 persons claimed international protection in Serbia. In March 2018, the Act on Asylum and Temporary Protection (ATPA) has been adopted. The new law inherits structures and procedures laid down in the EU asylum acquis, thus recognising Serbia's commitments in the negotiations related to its EU accession. Asylum procedures shall be determined within three months, an exception is foreseen in complex cases or in case of a large number of asylum seekers only. Free movement of asylum seekers may be restricted, for example in order to identify the person, for a maximum period of three months. During the procedures, asylum seekers are accommodated in reception centres; the conditions of living vary throughout the country, though they improved after the decrease in the number of refugees.

During the discussion, the participants exchanged their views on the notion of "integration", which must not be equated with assimilation, but relates to the knowledge

of the local language, the history and values of the country and the basic legal provisions and the creation of a feeling of belonging to society irrespective to one's origin and legal status. However, political tendencies to restrict the rights of refugees makes it difficult to foster integration, also on the municipal level.

It has been discussed whether common rules throughout the EU would limit so-called secondary migration, i.e. leaving the state in charge according to the Dublin-III-system for other EU member states. The Dublin system has been criticized since it overburdens the member states at the EU external borders and encourages tendencies of insulation of EU member states, which can be observed at the Hungarian-Serbian border.

Furthermore, the attendees reflected on factors that might foster integration, such as the size of a municipality, which may offer closer contact to the inhabitants in smaller cities on one hand, as well as access to jobs, infrastructure and social life in bigger cities, on the other.



The second day was devoted to workshops. They were organised as a “World Café” and thus enabled all participants to deal with all three topics. *Tanja Iken* (Landwirtschaftskammer NRW) dealt with the practical questions of labour market integration of refugees using the example of the agricultural sector. Strategies for matching employers and refugees were developed, which can be implemented in all participating countries. *Wilfred Josue*, integration teacher in Brandenburg, presented his experiences with the curriculum and time frame of the so-called integration courses. The participants concluded that integration cannot be taught within a few weeks, but needs time and the continuing efforts and contact with locals. *Jana Pöhler* (DUV Speyer) presented an excerpt from her work in the Fugatus project, in which she deals with refugee management and the involvement of volunteers. It was reflected on how professional and voluntary positions have to be set up in order to promote a

successful and sustainable networking between local authorities and volunteers. The discussion worked out that all three topics are closely interlinked and should therefore be approached in a holistic way. Concepts for integration should not be established "from outside" or "from above", but should be developed by the municipalities themselves in close cooperation with the refugees.



In the final speech, *Barbara Oomen* (Utrecht University, Netherlands), reflected on the ‘decoupling’ of municipal policies from the national standard. These trends depend to a large extent on political, social, economic but also personal factors. Municipal authorities have the chance to follow a human rights based approach, guaranteeing asylum seekers and refugees with those rights that are guaranteed in supra- and international conventions. If national law restricts, for example, access to social services or work, municipalities can provide benefits and services in order to fulfil those international obligations. It has been discussed whether “framework law” would facilitate such activities. However, leaving too much discretion to the local authorities might lead to huge differences, ranging from “cities of refuge” to “cities of refuse”, which shall be avoided according to the human rights of persons seeking for international protection.

b. Position Paper

In addition to the exchange, the conference served to prepare a position paper, which the Townlab_MEET project partners will develop. It reflects the requirements for reception conditions and integration measures for refugees, especially from the point of view of the municipalities. The participants claimed that rules regarding the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees shall not be established in order to limit the number of person entering the states. They shall rather reflect the expectation and needs of the refugees themselves and those involved in administration and

practically working with them. Hence, it is of outmost importance to involve refugees, volunteers and local administrations in the development of the rules related to the reception and integration of refugees.

<p>Workshop 1: Labour Market Integration</p>
<p>Getting in touch with employers in agriculture:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • professional associations, e.g. Chamber of Agriculture • trade fairs • press • economic promotion • round tables, online platforms
<p>Getting in touch with refugees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • schools • employment agency • church • interpreters
<p>Issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • motivation • trust • reliability • cooperation with authorities • duration of stay • qualification • language
<p>Workshop 2: language and integration courses</p>
<p>Challenges for teachers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • innovative teaching methods • financing and wages of integration teachers • rights and responsibilities • knowledge must be coupled with real-life experience
<p>Challenges for refugees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-motivation • self-organisation • self-empowerment • encouraging migrants to participate in local communities
<p>Issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • involving local economy • common values • financing, e.g. via European Social Fund • teaching concepts and curricula vs. encounter with locals
<p>Workshop 3: Volunteer Work</p>
<p>Situation in Germany, Italy, Serbia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lots of volunteers in Germany and Italy, several only in Serbia • strong public financing of volunteer initiatives in Germany, weak support in Italy • strong support by municipalities, churches and NGOs in Germany, self-organisation in Italy
<p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • coordination of different initiatives • long-term structures and involvement • recruiting of new volunteers • bias between professionals in municipalities and volunteer workers, danger that volunteers carry out tasks that are supposed to be carried out by the state

- excessive demands, lack of supervision for volunteers

Chances

- encounter between migrants and local
- possibilities for migrants to engage in order to help other migrants with their experiences
- taking care of local specificities
- developing common goals
- activation of mothers, retirees, ...



c. Further Steps

The next meeting will take place in June 2019 in Marnaz / France and will focus on the integration of children and young persons.

3 Participants

The event was attended by **33 persons** belonging to different types of categories (public bodies, private sector, non-governmental organizations, etc.) and with the representation of five different nationalities (Germany, Italy, Serbia, Slovenia - the representative has been absent due to illness - and the Netherlands).

Since the focus of the seminar was a discussion on the existing legal framework for the reception and integration of refugees in the different countries, most of the participants were researchers. **Universities** thus represented **43%** of all participants. Representatives of **local authorities** accounted for **30%**, of which 60% from Germany, 30% from Italy and 1% from Serbia. Besides, several representatives of **NGOs** took part in the seminar, corresponding to **14%** of the audience. This allowed for a very fruitful exchange of experiences and a sound discussion about the gap between theory and practise.

With respect to civic participation, a broad share of the participants, especially those from the universities, represented **citizens**, which are also involved in volunteer work with refugees. **3%** of the participants work as **teachers** for integration and language classes, another **3%** represent the **legal sector**. Finally, due to the focus on labour market integration, we welcomed one representative of the **agricultural sector**, accounting for **3%** of all participants.

Categories present at the international seminar





