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POSITION PAPER



TownLAB-MEET



Comune di Quincinetto



Assessorato
alla gentilezza



PALCOSCENICO
DEL CANTO
E DELLA
MUSICA



UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI
DI TORINO



NCEO
MECTS



Gemellaggio Quincinetto -
Marnaz



L D A
Local Democracy Agency
Central Balkans Network
Subotica



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0. PREMISE - BACKGROUND RATIONALE

- ★ Townlab_MEET project aims to promote the creation of inter-institutional networks, fostering multi-stakeholders cooperation and replication of transnational cooperation activities, with the aim of achieving the adoption of good practices in management and regulation of the immigration phenomenon.
- ★ Among the most debated issues at EU level, due to the complex management of reception and its impact on social integration, immigration is one of the most tangible phenomena at local level, with direct repercussions on the daily life of each community. Assuming that one of the pillars of the European Agenda for Immigration is “honouring the moral duty to protect: a strong and well-established common European asylum policy”, that the reception is important but not sufficient, the position paper aims to promote the existent and introduce innovative participatory mechanisms for intercultural exchange and fusion and building social cohesion at local level, so as to prevent the spread of xenophobic discourse and intolerance undermining our shared democratic values.
- ★ The critical aspects concerning social inclusion are multiple: difficulties in integrating within local communities, residents' distrust and low propensity to dialogue, phenomena of racism and xenophobia, slow procedures for entering into the world of work, long procedures for acquiring refugee status, non-recognition of education and qualifications, etc.
- ★ The reception of refugees is an opportunity for avoiding the accentuation of critical dynamics at the demographic level (ageing population), as well as on socio-economic level (depopulation of small remote villages, especially those in mountain areas) and for improvement of processes at the employment level (integration of the workforce into the most critical sectors lacking the labour force). Furthermore, integration of migrants in inland and rural areas (where the number of inhabitants is lower) could bring benefits in terms of enhancing the social, economic and cultural resources in respective local communities, if it takes the form of widespread reception in the territory and does not take on the fringes of ghettoisation.
- ★ With adequate reception policy measures, the municipal authorities will be enabled to systematically enforce a human rights based approach, providing asylum seekers and refugees with the rights guaranteed in the European standards.
- ★ Reception system in remote areas context are of strategic importance for consistent facilitation and migration management skills development at local level, promotion of human rights in local inclusive development policies and certainly for avoiding the marginalization. In this context it is crucial to understand that “integration” of migrants does not only impose obligations on them but also on the welcoming society.

3 POSITIONS 9 TOPICS 17 PROPOSALS 10 REPLICABLE MODELS

POSITION 1 “Rights and Responsibilities ”

HEALTH and HEALTH INSURANCE



- Maintaining standards that ensure good levels of health for migrants, by comparing governmental regulatory approaches regarding the supplied health services to asylum seekers and refugees, including health care for traumatized persons or other persons with specific needs.

EDUCATION for INTEGRATION



- Encouragement and creation of sufficient capacities of language courses for refugees and asylum seekers, in order to facilitate the integration process.
- Implementation of training courses for refugees, with civic education lessons (e.g. content of the Constitution, history and culture of the host country, etc.).
- With regard to minors, integration of foreign students into classes of the same age, in order to provide language courses integrated with the ministerial education.
- Sport, art and cultural activities to strengthen the community and offer asylum seekers and refugees to use all this in practice.

COOPERATION and NETWORKING



- Defining common standards and rules and managing emergencies efficient and fast through cooperation between all member states, and through international decentralised cooperation approach.

REPLICABLE MODELS

- ★ The healthcare system in Italy guarantees equal treatment of citizens and persons with international protection and permits for humanitarian reasons.
- ★ The Judgments of the European Court of Justice in the matters of right, welfare and social inclusion can represent a step to harmonise the national regulatory system.

POSITION 2 “Reception, Integration and Solidarity”

VOLUNTEERING



- Promoting different approaches applied by the European countries, with evaluating the effectiveness of a wide range of policy measures encouraging and facilitating voluntary activities with the reimbursement of expenses, coordination of volunteers and their cooperation with the municipalities.
- Educating for active citizenship about the importance of participating in solidarity initiatives in the field of reception of disadvantaged people from other countries.
- Enhancing the support from non-governmental organisations and civil society in solidarity and voluntary actions.

GOOD LOCAL PRACTICES in RECEPTION



- Improving the organisation and management in the course of the two most critical phases (upon arrival and the reception) by giving priority not only to humanitarian aid and accommodation, but also to intercepting needs, expectations and requirements.
- Promoting and enhancing of models of widespread reception on national and transnational level, by replicating the collaboration between networks of the European cities.

AWARENESS-RAISING



- Struggling against misinformation and media campaigns that fuel racism and xenophobia, in order to avoid the spread of fears reverted against the presence of asylum seekers and refugees.
- Promoting integration and social cohesion between the local community and the refugees through cultural events, conferences and debates on problems and criticality and exchange projects with institutions and the world of associations.

REPLICABLE MODELS

- ★ The experience of Chiesanuova (Italy) in the framework of the Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees is a model of widespread reception.
- ★ Community Center “Stavrodromi” (Greece) represents a good practice on integration of migrants.
- ★ Volunteering actions of civil society organisations in cooperation with local authorities to provide aid to the migrants moving along the border areas with the EU and across the Balkan route could serve as an example of local community engagement to help these people in need.

POSITION 3 “Social Inclusion”

SOCIALLY USEFUL WORK AND EMPLOYMENT



- Promoting professional training and job placement of refugees (ensuring good working conditions and fair remuneration as well) not only in a form of employees, but also by supporting self-employed business activities and with prior preliminary census of their skills and previous experiences.
- Encouraging the multi-stakeholders approach and cooperation to promote social cohesion, cultural and economic integration of migrants and to employ coherent policy measures to the benefit of entire local community.

INTERCULTURAL ENCOUNTERS



- Fostering initiatives aimed at encouraging solidarity through diverse cultural expressions, including public events promoting and their broad advertising among the local population (customs and traditions, traditional food fairs, music programmes, social community theatre, etc.).

ASSOCIATIONS AND NGOs



- Providing support to activities of associations and non-governmental organisations in the field of integration and inclusion, with building articulated networks which act in synergy and agreement with public institutions.

REPLICABLE MODELS

- ★ The pilot project "Lab Fraternité/Fraternità" has been promoted within the framework of the Call "Twinning between cities" of Europe for citizens and it is a good example of transnational cooperation between municipalities, NGO and civil society (Quincinetto/Italy and Marnaz/France).
- ★ The non-governmental sector in Slovenia is a key partner to the public sector. Through government co-financing to support asylum seekers and refugees, it implements programs and offers free legal counseling, non-formal education, initial integration courses, language courses, in short, comprehensive soft content support for social inclusion.
- ★ Social Community Theatre and Performing Arts are good practices to engage communities with different cultural backgrounds in sharing life and culture and they impact effectively on the social inclusion of migrants.
- ★ "School of good will" promoted by Sombor Education Centre (Serbia) includes education and cultural integration assistance to migrants and asylum seekers living in temporary shelters in border areas with the EU.
- ★ Inclusion of diasporic community into integration processes.