



# FINAL REPORT: WELCOMING INTERNATIONAL TALENT TO MEDIUM-SIZED CITIES

D 4.1 WELCOMING INTERATIONAL TALENT

V2.0

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

International skilled migration has increased in the last decades and has become a key feature of a globalising and increasingly knowledge-intensive economy. In many cities, policymakers consider international skilled immigration as relevant factor for urban competitiveness, especially after Richard Florida singled out “talent” to be a driver of urban economic success. Medium-sized cities (from a European perspective), so far have received little attention in the debate about skilled migration. But in the last decade, many of these cities have experienced a growing influx of skilled migrants, mainly international students and academics, but also middle-class migrants hired by local branches of international companies, or independents.

Where Europe’s larger cities are used to absorb an international population, for many medium-sized university cities, internationalisation is a relatively recent challenge. Increasingly, these cities deploy active and coordinated policies to attract, facilitate and incorporate international talent. Skilled international migrants are actively welcomed for several reasons: to counter the trend of an ageing population, to address skills shortages in the labour market, or as a way to make the city or region more culturally diverse, lively and hence attractive for other skilled workers.

This report discusses how to effectively set up coordinated talent management programmes in medium sized cities, and provides practical guidelines and checklists. We define coordinated international talent management (CITM) as ***coordinated efforts by urban stakeholders (government, business, the knowledge sector, civil society, and citizens) to attract, facilitate and/or incorporate skilled international migrants.***

This report is organized as follows. In chapter 2, we wonder who the international talents actually are: we highlight their diversity and present a number of typologies. In the subsequent chapters, we deal with five specific sub-topics of coordinated international talent management:

Chapter 3. Branding & marketing: how to identify target groups, set up campaigns, online & offline methods to get into contact with them and understand their needs

Chapter 4. Access to facilities: providing effective access to housing, medical services, amenities, help with bureaucracy

Chapter 5. Social & cultural integration: making internationals feel welcome, promoting integration in the social and cultural life of the city

Chapter 6. Labour market integration: taking care for a longer-term integration in the labour market of expats and their spouses.

Chapter 7. Governance (as cross-cutting theme): creating effective and sustained strategic stakeholder collaboration to develop and implement welcoming policies, involving the target groups.

This report is based on the WIT (Welcoming International Talent) city network<sup>1</sup>. WIT ran from 2018 until 2021 as URBACT-funded exchange network of seven medium-sized European cities that shared knowledge and experiences about attracting, retaining and integration international talents in the city. The participating cities are: Groningen (lead partner), Bielsko-Biała, Debrecen, Leuven, Magdeburg, Parma, and Zlin. Many of the examples presented in this report are derived from our exchange.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://urbact.eu/welcoming-international-talent>

## 2. INTERNATIONAL TALENT: A COLOURFUL CROWD

### INTRODUCTION

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International talent comes with a wide variety in terms of migration motives and migrant types, migration origins and destinations. The traditional elite corporate expats are joined by migrants from middle classes, seeking international jobs to boost their career, and independent workers. And a growing number of people migrate to cities for lifestyle rather than career reasons<sup>23</sup>. Several refined typologies of skilled migrants have been proposed in the literature. In this chapter, we present a number of them.

This is useful because for cities that want to develop welcoming policies, it is evidently important to know which types of internationals they already have, which ones they would like to attract, and also, to understand their needs, their problems, and their aspirations.

### INTERNATIONALS AS TRAVELLERS

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Mahroum (2000)<sup>4</sup> identifies 5 types, depicting international talent as different types of travellers:

1. Accidental tourists: company managers of international companies, temporarily posted abroad by their employers
2. Economy class passengers: Engineers, technicians and other professionals with skills that can be deployed worldwide; they go to places where their qualities are in demand and paid well.
3. Explorers: entrepreneurs or investors that introduce their new ideas and companies into places where they see market opportunity
4. Pilgrims: Internationally mobile academics and scientists, attracted by the quality of scientific institutions rather than the characteristics of the country or city
5. Passengers. Students that participate in international exchange programmes offered by universities.

The last group can be further subdivided into degree students and exchange students, or categorized based on their motivation.

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<sup>2</sup> Florida, R. (2002). The Economic Geography of Talent. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* (Vol. 92). Retrieved from <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/1467-8306.00314>

<sup>3</sup> Scott, S. (2006). The Social Morphology of Skilled Migration: The Case of the British Middle Class in Paris. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 32(7), 1105–1129. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830600821802>[https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830600821802](https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830600821802org/10.1080/13691830600821802)

<sup>4</sup> Mahroum, S. (2000). Highly skilled globetrotters: mapping the international migration of human capital. *R and D Management*, 30(1), 23–32. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9310.00154>

Regarding the motivations of students to study abroad, Choudaha, Orosz, & Chang (2012)<sup>5</sup> identify four groups:

- 1) Strivers: they are very high on ambition, and selective in terms of university they choose (preferring highly ranked institutions), but can be low on financial means;
- 2) Strugglers: they have limited resources, but are less selective concerning their institutions;
- 3) Explorers: They not only have academic interests, but see studying abroad as a personal experience. They tend to go to 2nd tier institutions, and
- 4) Highflyers: They tend to be wealthy, and are prestige-seeking, and typically target the highest ranked universities.

### LIFESTYLE CHARACTERISTICS

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In the typologies presented above, study and career motives dominate as drivers for international skilled migration. Scott (2006)<sup>6</sup> challenges this perspective and proposes a typology that is based on a wider set of motivations. Besides careers, he identifies lifestyle or relationship motives as drivers of contemporary skilled migration. Moreover, his typology is based on commitment to the host country/city (permanent, temporary, circular), and family status (single, family or empty nesters). He ends up with four broad categories (note that it is not a static typology, as during their life path, people typically move between categories). The following categories are distinguished:

- Expatriates: They live with spouse or family, work (or worked) for international companies, and stay for a longer time or even permanently
- Nomadic workers: they migrate for career or lifestyle reasons, they stay relatively short term, and tend to be single. Two subgroups are “young professionals” (career driven) and “graduate lifestyle migrants”, typically younger creatives not working for an international employer, in their 20s and 30s as a stage in an increasingly fragmented career life path
- Bohemians: They migrate for lifestyle reasons, and emplaced themselves to become permanent settlers permanently in the host city.
- Mixed-relationship migrants: they settle permanently following their partner who originates from the host country/city.

Lifestyle-driven migrants (bohemians and subgroups of the nomadic workers) prefer global metropolises with a rich cultural tissue and a distinguished reputation, and are unlikely to be drawn to the medium-sized cities that we focus on in this thematic chapter. In medium sized cities, migrants mainly come for career, for study, or because of a relationship. A case study on skilled Indian migrants to Wroclaw (Poland) illustrates motives and experiences of international skilled migrants into a tertiary city. Most of the migrants came for career reasons, they had applied for a job at a multinational company, and then happened to be located in Wroclaw<sup>7</sup> or were intercorporate transferees. They did not know much about Wroclaw (or even Poland) before they arrived there.

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<sup>5</sup> Choudaha, R., Orosz, K., & Chang, L. (2012, August 1). Not All International Students are the Same: Understanding Segments, Mapping Behavior. Retrieved from [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2185422](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2185422)

<sup>6</sup> Scott, S. (2006). The Social Morphology of Skilled Migration: The Case of the British Middle Class in Paris. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 32(7), 1105–1129.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830600821802org/10.1080/13691830600821802>

<sup>7</sup> Jaskubowski, K. (n.d.). Indian middling migrants in Wroclaw: A study of migration experiences and strategies.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0117196817705777>

## THE EXPAT INSIDER TYPOLOGY

Every year, the international organization InterNations conducts a survey among expats worldwide. They discern 10 types of international, depicted in figure 1.

Figure 1 Types of internationals



Survey Report 2016

www.internations.org/expat-insider

## HOMEWORK QUESTIONS FOR MEDIUM SIZED CITIES

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Do you know which types of internationals you have in your city?

Do you know why they came?



# 3. ATTRACTING TALENT THROUGH BRANDING & MARKETING

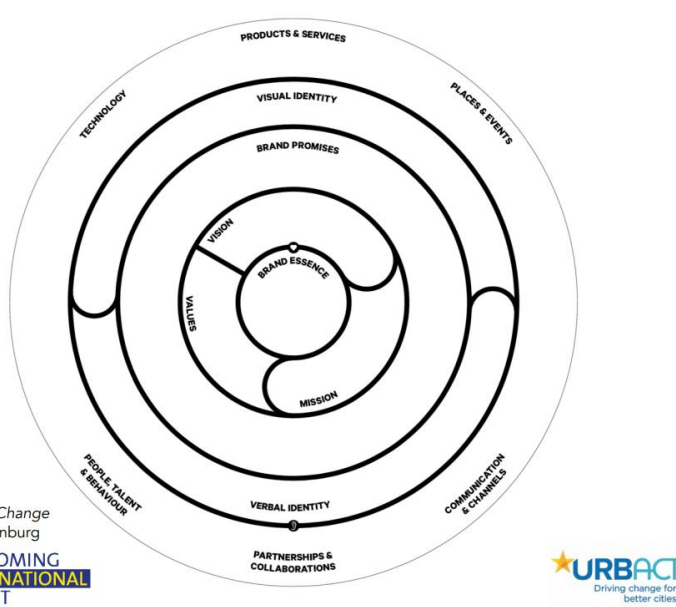
## INTRODUCTION

City branding and marketing are deployed by cities to attract international talent. But what are effective ways to achieve this? Unlike capitals, medium sized cities often lack a “brand name” and do not automatically emerge in the picture for target groups of internationals. What can marketing and branding mean for such cities, and how can stakeholders collaborate to harness these? This chapter describes and discusses approaches and policy options. It presents some cases, and contains a practical checklist for cities.

## THE WHY OF BRANDING & COMMUNICATION

Branding experts always argue that “branding is more than a logo”. The core of branding is the brand essence, the identity of what is to be branded. In the case of cities, this already starts to be complicated: cities do not have a single identity, they consist of many actors and communities with their own stories and interests. When it comes to branding the city as attractive place for talent, there is a multitude of voices.

Branding experts also say that branding and communication efforts of any kind must be embedded in a wider vision in order to be effective. The basic “why” question must be answered: **why do we want to attract talent? And by the way, who is “we”?** Around that, several more layers of branding must be loaded: the brand promises (what do we offer), the verbal identity (how do we talk about ourselves), the visual identity (how do we present our offer visually, including logos). The outer layers consist of concrete actions, events, partnerships and places where the brand comes to life.



Source:  
Brand the Change  
Anne Miltenburg





**Parma:** “Parma focuses on its identity, made of original and impossible to imitate experiences, to build and consolidate its local and international reputation.”

## MULTI-STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION IN MARKETING AND BRANDING

Why would collaboration in urban marketing and branding for talent make sense? And if so, how should it be done?

Urban stakeholders have their own specific reasons and methods to attract various types of international talent. Companies might need to attract foreign talent because they cannot find specific competences locally. Multinational companies often circulate their staff from location to location to let them work on specific projects, or develop their career. Scientific institutions increasingly seek to attract productive foreign scientists and compete in a global market for talent. Universities are interested to attract more international students, for various reasons: financial reasons (in case they pay a sufficiently high fee; otherwise they are a bleeder for the university); to enhance cultural diversity (helping education to become more intercultural); or to improve quality (in case international students have a high level or are more motivated).

City governments also may want to have more internationals. One reason is to counter the trend of an ageing population. Another is a local shortage of skills, in general or in specific fields (such as IT and R&D expertise). Attracting international talent can also help a city or region to become more diverse (in terms of culture); this might be relevant for relatively mono-cultural cities that have difficulties to compete in the global market for talent because expats cannot easily plug into city life. Finally, internationals could help to improve a city or region’s image abroad, and be the basis for future trade relations and investments, when they become ambassadors after they move out again; this is especially important in cities whose image as knowledge location is not optimal.

**Magdeburg:** “We need international talents for a longer stay to support and advance the regional labour market. Therefore, we need a clear acquisition strategy to find the right talents which are fitting to the universities, the city and the local companies.”

Larger players (big firms, universities) often have their own channels and tools to recruit and retain their international talents. Some have become very professional in this respect, and developed deep knowledge on the channels to approach talent, and smart ways to keep them (and their families) happy and support them with access to housing, facilities etc. How important is inter-organisational collaboration in this respect? In most cases, a company-based approach makes sense for the recruitment of talent, because each organisation has its own specific demands. At the same time, collaboration could be fruitful:

- To co-develop “common stories” with stakeholders about the city (as is done in Genoa, Italy), in order to have a more unified verbal identify
- To co-develop all sorts of promotional material that can be used by all stakeholders for recruitment (as done by Linköping, see next section)
- To join forces in organisation trade missions, online campaigns or other promotional events
- To bundle and share recruitment actions (as is done in Eindhoven, see next section)
- To identify common issues and problems regarding talent retention, and then take joint action (Leuven has a regular meeting of HR managers)
- To improve the quality of urban services and amenities for internationals

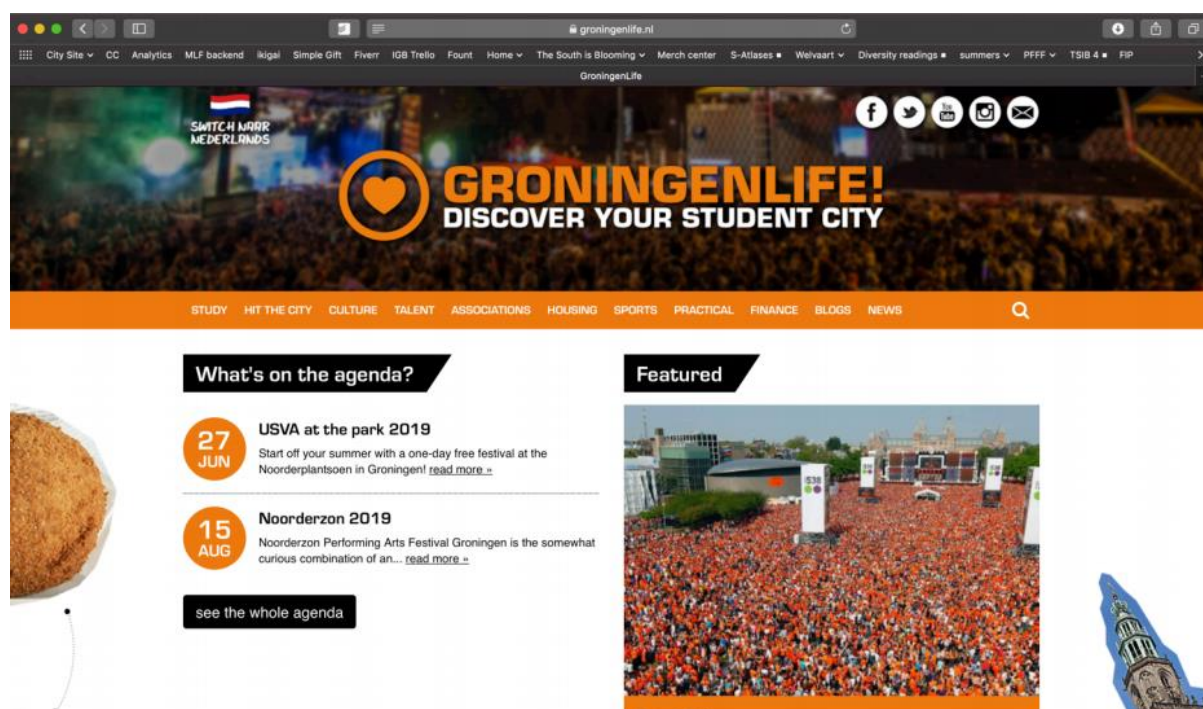
This requires the formation of multi-stakeholder branding/communication platforms or working groups.

## CASES

Some cases are described below to demonstrate the scope of talent marketing and branding activities.

**Groningen** has recently abandoned its “city of talent” programme, after 10 years. The content of the messages was seen as too much “sender centred”, developed by official organisations, and not in line with the needs and experiences of the target group. The target groups were treated as passive and receiving entities rather than active co-developers. The project is now replaced by a new approach that adopt a “tell don’t sell” approach, in which different groups are much more involved in the design of the messages. The website Groningen.nl is being developed as a single point of entry for different groups, and the design is user-based. It contains a combination practical information and storytelling, and residents are involved in the latter. The platform was developed by a mixed group of various stakeholders and citizens.

Groningen also has a very active and user-central approach towards students. The Groningen Live project (Groningenlive.nl, funded by the universities) is a lively and interactive platform with all kinds of information for students. Most of the content is generated by students or student unions, and the project in entirely run by students themselves, creating a large sense of ownership, and enhancing the credibility of the information on the platform.



The Italian city of **Genoa** seeks to capture the potential of social media for city branding in a systematic way. It organises dialogues with local stakeholders to develop a shared vision of the communication actions to be implemented. A Social Media Team was set up, to follow how locals and foreigners speak about Genoa online. It actively develops and maintains relations with “ambassadors” from several segments of society, or linked to events (Rolli Ambassadors, Erasmus Ambassadors). Also,

when there are larger events in the city, stakeholders come together to discuss how to communicate about them in social and traditional media.

The Dutch city of **Eindhoven** has a large tech sector and is in great need for international talent. In close collaboration, regional stakeholders developed the Brainport Talent Attraction Program, with many activities. All English-language tech and IT vacancies from the region are bundled on the international Brainport Eindhoven website so that foreign talent can see at a glance what the region has to offer him or her. Testimonials of expats are created and put online to show what it is like to live and work in Eindhoven. An Employer Branding Toolkit was developed for companies to use in their own labour market communication. Companies work together to retain talent for the region through 'talent sharing': if an excellent candidate at a certain moment is not chosen for a position at company x, the company is asked by that company to be allowed to share his resume with other companies in the region, or is motivated to go to the English-language Brainport website and apply for a job opening in the region. Also, a strong network of HR professionals has been developed, in which they share experiences with each other. Brainport Eindhoven offers various (paid) additional options for employers who want to invest extra intensively in talent attraction, such as participation in targeted promotional campaigns for groups of companies inspired by (one-off) opportunities on the international labor market.

In **Linköping** (Sweden), stakeholders joined forces and created a Talent Report, as a tool to attract skills for companies in the region. It describes the priority target groups and what is good to think about when marketing efforts are going to be done (see <https://mjardevi.se/new-talent-report-puts-light-on-trends-behaviors-and-attitudes-that-affect-the-regions-talent-attraction/>)

**Debrecen:** “We used interview and online questionnaire techniques to have an objective view how the internationals assess Debrecen and the available facilities. “

## CHECKLIST FOR CITIES

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With the checklist below (based on the insights above and outcome of the discussions), cities and their stakeholders can analyse where they stand in terms of the recruitment of international talent. It should be merely used to stimulate the discussion between stakeholders to identify gaps and develop joint actions.

### *Before they come*

We know why we want international professionals, students and researchers

We know which type of international professionals, students and researchers we want (professions, study fields, level, etc.) see chapter 2

We understand our target groups; we know what they find important in choosing a foreign company/city/university

Our internationalisation actions are in line with our core vision and strategies regarding education & research and economic development

We provide the right information for the right groups (professionals, students, parents)

Information for the target groups is not only provided by official organisations, but also user-created

We have a clear and founded strategy how and where to recruit them

We have identified a set of common/shared interests between stakeholders when it comes to attracting talent

We have a clear and agreed division of tasks between city, universities, companies, student unions, other relevant local stakeholders and national organisations regarding recruitment

### *When they are here*

We can serve our international talent in foreign language, not only in education but also in practical matters

We help them deal with the officialdom

They can easily plug in with local communities, clubs or unions

We deliberately create an inclusive city, campus and company culture

We invite internationals to hear their experiences, challenges and problems

We follow their Facebook and LinkedIn groups

We involve them in internationalisation policies, actions and events

We encourage them to become active citizens and develop initiatives

We provide support for spouses and families

We have actions in place to integrate them with locals

We have a clear and agreed division of tasks between city, university, companies, student unions and national organisations regarding hosting them

### *After they are gone*

We keep track of our internationals

We support an active international alumni network

We make most out of our international alumni

We involve international citizens and alumni in recruitment of new talents

We have a clear and agreed division of tasks between city, companies, universities, student bodies and national organisations regarding alumni actions

## 4. ACCESS TO FACILITIES

### INTRODUCTION

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Before and upon arrival, skilled migrants face several challenges. It can be difficult for them to:

- 1) Find adequate housing
- 2) Understand how to comply with formalities
- 3) Access public facilities (public transport, culture, sports, events, etc.)
- 4) Access medical assistance and insurance

A lack of English-language information in all these domains is a main generic barrier.

This chapter focuses on facilities for internationals: how to enable access to housing, medical services, amenities, and help with navigating the bureaucracy. In most cases, universities and larger employers have their own support structures in place to help “their” internationals. Universities have support desks for students, helping them to find housing, insurance, etc. and finding their way through the bureaucracy. Some cities have set up more collaborative and streamlined actions in the field of facilitation. A typical form is though Welcome Centres, Expat Desks, or International Houses. But at the same time, immigrants strongly rely on social media as resource to prepare themselves and navigate bureaucracies.

This chapter describes and discusses approaches and policy options. For each subtheme, we discuss the problems and challenges that medium-sized cities face in this respect (based on what we know from the literature and from the partners in the network); also, for each sub-topic we describe the policies of Groningen to address the issues.

### HOUSING

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How can internationals find adequate housing at a reasonable price? There are several challenges in this respect, depending on the local housing situation and contingent on the type of international. International students (exchange or degree) rely on the supply of student housing, which is sometimes provided by (or through) the university in dormitories, or through the private sector. In the case when students can rely on university dormitories, there are few problems; universities provide information in English, and prices tend to be reasonable. In recent years, private suppliers have entered the student housing market, catering for a growing need of more luxury student housing solutions (student hotel is a good example). For students that need to rely on the “regular” private rental market, the problems are bigger. First, the supply is often fragmented and hard to find for students, not in the least place because the offers are typically advertised in the local language; second, there is always the risk of exploitation by indecent landlords.

**Parma:** “Private homeowners are reported to be very reluctant to rent to foreigners, making it difficult for the growing number of international migrants to rent a decent house.”

Also, there are reports of reluctance of homeowners to rent rooms to international students. For foreign employees, independent workers or entrepreneurs, the same problems may apply, although larger employers (such as universities or big firms) tend to offer support for “their” internationals.

It is important to note that a large influx of internationals has an upward effect on housing prices, as was recently noted in Debrecen where the announcement of a large investment by BMW caused a sudden increase in real estate prices of about 10%.

**Solutions by Groningen:** In Groningen, the housing problem for internationals, especially for students, is pressing. The numbers of incoming students have risen so fast that supply has not been able to catch up with demand. At the start of the fall semester of 2018/2019, the city and the university had to put up tents to accommodate hundreds of students who had not been able to find a home in time.

Thus, finding suitable housing is a major problem for international students in Groningen. Additionally, foreign students suffer more disadvantages due to their lack of knowledge of the local market. They more often 'scammed' with non-existent rooms, pay inflated rental prices, and lack knowledge of their rights and responsibilities. This problem is addressed by the At Home in Groningen project, which consists of, in phased order:

1. A working group housed at the municipality who address quality control and other problems with existing housing
2. An English language website to provide information and support on housing matters
3. Actual housing offering for students on the website. Shortage of student housing remains a major problem in the city and this is being addressed with larger-scale building projects.

At Home in Groningen was initiated by the internationalisation team at the municipality, and members of the working group are drawn from the universities and the housing department of the municipality. International student interns have also been involved in research phases of the project. More information can be found here: <https://www.athomeingroningen.com>

## FORMALITIES AND BUREAUCRACY

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Especially for non-EU immigrants, it can be challenging and time consuming to deal with residence permits, work permits, visa and other formalities. Some issues can be solved back home, but typically many permits require face-to-face interactions with official agencies. EU internationals (including Norway and Switzerland) benefit from the free movement within the EU area and face much less issues. Here again, larger organisations –universities, large employers- offer support for the internationals that they attract; but for independents, it is more difficult to find their way.

**Solutions by Groningen:** Groningen set up the International Welcome Centre North (IWCN) in 2014. The IWCN is an expat centre, providing new residents with a 'one-stop shop' when they arrive in the Northern Netherlands. Included in their services are streamlined government formalities such as resident permits, tax and address registration, as well as information services, referrals to affiliated service providers and social activities. The IWCN is self-contained, but housed within a municipality building in Groningen, and hosts an employee from the national immigration services on site. The IWCN serves knowledge migrants over the three Northern provinces but also supports companies who are looking to hire international workers. IWCN is also very active in regional development programmes: the business manager of IWCN is also leading the 'Top Dutch talent' programme – see more on this below. The development of the IWCN was very much in line with, or even slightly behind, the establishment of expat centres all over the Netherlands. At the time of its development, the Northern Netherlands was the only region in the country which did not yet have such a centre. Such centres are driven by the nationally shared goal of attracting and retaining international knowledge migrants. Providing sufficient support and streamlining official procedures on arrival is seen as a key means to achieve this. IWCN is financed by the three northern provinces of the Netherlands, the



municipality of Groningen, the two local universities as well as the national immigration services, and commercial partners (affiliated commercial service providers such as tax and law offices).

Relevant link: <http://www.iwcn.nl>

**Magdeburg** also developed a welcome centre: “Our foreigners authority and the Citizens' Office together looked for a new location for a "Welcome Authority"; we were able to jump on the bandwagon with our idea of a Welcome Center. From this the idea for the International House was born. Another key moment was when the basic structure for the International House was in place and we were able to prepare the draft resolution for the city council, which then agreed to our project without much discussion.”

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### PUBLIC FACILITIES (PUBLIC TRANSPORT, CULTURE, SPORTS, EVENTS)

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Access to public facilities is mainly hampered by language problems; In many cases, information is only available in the national language, making it difficult for internationals to access the facilities. In addition, sports and cultural clubs tend not to be prepared to receive internationals in their communities, for the obvious reason of language again.

**Debrecen:** “Thanks to the project, we have been able to make some improvements in accessing some facilities. Most importantly, English-language information is now available on the public transports and its construction works. Moreover, we researched all the websites that are related to some extent to the Municipality whether information is available in English. By doing it we pointed out that some of them are lagging in this field and drew the attention of the decision-makers to it.”

**Leuven:** “More than before the URBACT exchange program, city services as well as service providers have an international reflex i.e. they are aware that the target audience also includes internationals and that the needs of this segment are different. A major deliverable has been providing information about city services in English, directly on the website of the city. Also other city projects now get a translation or summary in English. A striking example was the city’s communication and community support platform created at the start of the covid-19 crisis; it was almost immediately made available in English.”

**Solutions by Groningen:** Here&Now is an online portal for all cultural events which are either in English or accessible to international residents (language no problem). It arose after a conversation between an international student and the municipal Akkoord secretary. Existing online cultural agendas were solely offered in Dutch, and do not include smaller community-based events such as games meet-ups which are typically only shared on Facebook. These events are very popular with international residents as they offer low-threshold social contact. It was decided to develop the idea into a full proposal by taking the student on board as an intern at the municipality. From this position the proposal was developed and funding was secured for the start-up period from the Akkoord of Groningen. The portal was launched in September 2018, and in the first six months attracted 3.500 – 4,000 unique site visits monthly. Unexpectedly, a large share (40%) of the users are Dutch. The site offering is currently now being extended to cover other cities in the region (Leeuwarden and Emmen). Structural funding for the platform is still being sought from the Akkoord partners as well as cultural stakeholders. What also remains to be seen is how this new, in many ways disruptive, cultural platform will find its place alongside existing agendas run by more established organisations such as Marketing Groningen. This is an ongoing topic for discussion. More info can be found at <https://here-and-now.nl>

## ACCESS TO MEDICAL ASSISTANCE AND INSURANCE

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For EU residents, access to medical assistance and insurance is not a mayor problem, because insurance is equally applicable in any country. But foreigners from outside the EU must familiarize themselves with the national health system, which can be a challenge. On top of that, in some cities we had reports that doctors or dentists do not take any more patients (because of shortages), and internationals can become victim of that. And finally, in many countries, medical staff is not able to communicate in English (or other foreign languages) in a sufficient way.

**Parma:** “We’re working on a platform or an online welcome kit that can offer all the information required to live in our city: from housing to healthcare and all the services that internationals need when they come to Parma”.

### **Solutions by Groningen**

Groningen provides detailed info on the medical system in The Netherlands, via website of the university and the city. Moreover, medical doctors are required to master English.

<https://www.rug.nl/education/bachelor/international-students/study-in-the-netherlands-groningen/living-in-the-netherlands/health-services>



## 5. THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL INTEGRATION OF INTERNATIONALS

### INTRODUCTION

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This chapter deals with the integration and incorporation of international talent into the local society. This is a large and complex topic, and many questions can be raised: what do we mean by “integration”, what is the difference with assimilation, and when is the integration successful? Is it enough to have a job or study, or should the migrant also speak the national language, engage in local societal life, have local friends? And if one agrees on what integration is, why would it be important for the local society and for the migrant? Then, the integration process itself, how does that work: how is the interplay between the host community and the migrant, what barriers may exist that hinder integration, where are the touchpoints between locals and internationals?

Of course, there is no such thing as “the” skilled migrant: as we have seen in chapter 2, they come in a big variety, from widely different cultural backgrounds, with different motives and time horizons, and they will all integrate (if so) in another way; this raises the question if we can discern some common patterns, and also how much we actually know about them. Last but not least, there is the policy question: what actions can and do local stakeholders (employers, city administrations, universities, clubs and other local organisations) take to foster integration, and what can cities learn from each other in this respect?

We cannot claim to answer all these questions, and refer the reader to a large literature on immigration, integration and incorporation (Glick Schiller & Çağlar, 2009<sup>8</sup> provide a good overview). In this chapter, rather than extensively engage with the academic debates, we reflect views and discussions as they emerged in the WIT network on integration and related policies. In fact, this chapter focuses on the policy aspect, taking into account the underlying complexities and ambiguities of immigration and integration processes. We define social integration policies broadly as policies directed to improve contacts and connections between migrants and locals. It includes a broad range of interventions that help migrants and their relatives, once they arrived, feel welcome, at home and at ease in the host city, and lead a productive and social life. A distinction can be made between economic integration (finding a job or otherwise participating in the urban economy) and social integration (participating in the civic life of the city, engaging in local social networks). In this chapter, we focus on the social aspects.

### INTEGRATION: DRIVERS AND BARRIERS

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The question why integration is relevant and important can be approached from various angles. First, we can observe, at least in some cities, a shifting societal reception to internationalisation. There are signs of an emerging resistance in local population (in and outside the university) or even discrimination: for a variety of reasons, foreigners are then seen as “the other”, not belonging or not even wanted in the city. Prejudices can be persistent, especially when there is no personal contact.

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<sup>8</sup> Glick Schiller, N., & Çağlar, A. (2009). Towards a Comparative Theory of Locality in Migration Studies: Migrant Incorporation and City Scale. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 35(2), 177–202.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830802586179org/10.1080/13691830802586179>

Integration can be seen as important or even necessary for the city to keep its social cohesion and reduce emerging tensions. One may also take a more economical perspective: a lack of integration of internationals might affect the sense of well-being and productivity of internationals, and reduce their period to stay. Social integration also is an important precondition for the happiness and job satisfaction of expats and their families, increasing the chances that they stay longer. For cities or employers that increasingly rely on a foreign workforce, a lack of integration thus represents a substantial cost. From a social/cultural perspective, one may argue that social integration can enrich locals and internationals alike in various respects: They can learn from each other's culture, observe and absorb new ideas and ways of living, engage in new friendships; Integration can contribute to mutual understanding and respect between nations and cultures.

The literature suggests that the workplace or study place is the main driver or "engine" of integration<sup>9</sup>. Larger employers realise that, and typically have initiatives to promote cultural exchange and introduce internationals into local customs and traditions. In higher education, mixing national and international students in university classes can enrich the learning experience of both: local students become more curious and engaged when they are in the same classroom as internationals; it offers a comparative lens on subject matters, which stimulates debate and learning.

Several barriers can stand in the way of integration. Skilled migrants experience barriers to integration such as **deskilling**<sup>10</sup> and **discrimination**<sup>11</sup>. Frequently mentioned barriers are **mistrust** or even **racism and hostility** from the part of locals; a general **lack of interest in each other**. Also, **traditions and institutions and closed local social networks** can stand in the way. "Local" students tend to gather in the traditional local student unions and venues, whereas the international students have their own international students' clubs; there might even be physical segregation, when internationals are housed in separate student flats. Segregation is often replicated in the classroom where students often don't mix either. There can also be barriers for skilled immigrants to participate in local in cultural and sports associations and local politics.

**Bielsko-Biala** supported up a dedicated NGO called MyBB, to support the integration: "Despite the fact that the city of Bielsko-Biala is historically characterized by multiculturalism, there was a concern about the reaction of local residents to the increasing number of foreigners. Therefore, from the very beginning myBB tries to integrate foreigners with the local inhabitants. The invitation to participate in multicultural picnics, shows, sports activities is addressed to all residents of the city regardless of their origin. The period of the center's operation has shown that the city's residents are willing to integrate with foreigners. All together they take part in organized integration events, which are a great opportunity to break stereotypes and learn about other culture or tradition."

And skilled migrants can face difficulties to plug into relatively **closed local social networks** that are typical of many medium sized cities. In contrast to world cities, medium sized cities lack well-established expatriate clubs or immigrant organizations; migrants must create their own spaces and places of belonging, and may depend more on local networks. **Language** is a key generic barrier: communication and contact is the basis for integration, but this is difficult when the internationals do

<sup>9</sup> Van Riemsdijk, M. (2014). International migration and local emplacement: everyday place-making practices of skilled migrants in Oslo, Norway. *Environment and Planning A*, 46, 963–979. <https://doi.org/10.1068/a46234>

<sup>10</sup> Purkayastha, B. (2005). Skilled migration and cumulative disadvantage: the case of highly qualified Asian Indian immigrant women in the US. *Geoforum*, 36(2), 181–196. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.GEOFORUM.2003.11.006>

<sup>11</sup> Nagel, C. (2005). Skilled migration in global cities from 'Other' perspectives: British Arabs, identity politics, and local embeddedness. *Geoforum*, 36(2), 197–210. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.GEOFORUM.2003.06.003>

not speak the local language, or when large parts of the local population do not speak English (assuming here that the international talents do speak English). Internationals, especially short stayers, are not always facilitated or motivated to learn the local language. And even if they do, they may find it hard to practice it, because often they live in English-language local enclaves (international student unions, networks with other expats, internationals companies). Furthermore, especially when internationals have temporary assignments, the incentive to integrate is less.

**Leuven:** “Make sure that existing clubs, unions and social initiatives (sports clubs, culture, events etc) in your city become more open to internationals. This is probably the most effective way to make sure that they will integrate in the city.”

## POLICIES AND INITIATIVES

Stakeholders in the cities that participate in the WIT project believe that active social integration policies should be part of international talent management. Table 1 gives an overview of initiatives/policies to foster integration in the cities that participate in the WIT project.

*Table 1 Policies and initiatives for integration*

Type of initiative/policy	Example
Spouse programmes	Partner coaching: finding the right job, course, volunteering opportunity (IMEC, Leuven)
Student buddies programmes	Buddy programmes, connecting local students with international ones (in Magdeburg, Zlin, Leuven and other cities)
Cultural exchange & learning initiatives	Festival of Cultures (Magdeburg) Student unions organising local trips for mixed student groups (Groningen, Zlin, Parma) My Local Friend; Fietsvriend (Groningen) Multicultural picnic, Mural creation workshops, Fairytale week for children, Mountain hiking, Afternoons with board games (Bielsko Biala)
Local friends/buddy initiatives	My Local Friend (Groningen): linking citizens to internationals to chat in Dutch Christmas dinners for international students in local families (Magdeburg) Creative classes (dance, painting, theatre,...) in easy Dutch – pilot project in Leuven Project “Stand up for your Neighborhood” – neighborhood initiatives with up to 18.600€ financial support (Leuven)
Language courses	Official (free) language courses for internationals: all cities Promotion of active local language use: My Local Friend and Lekker Kletsen (Groningen); Conversational Walks (Bielsko Biala)
Other	Lectures about integration/inclusion/interculturality (Leuven) ‘About Belgium’ lectures for university staff (Leuven) MyBB: Centre for Integration of internationals, Bielsko Biala

The cities vary in their approach, depending on the local challenges and issues. In Parma and Magdeburg, the main perceived problem is the negative perception of (parts of) the local population

regarding foreigners. Magdeburg addresses this issue by supporting activities aimed to reduce prejudices and create mutual understanding, such as the bi-annual Festival of Cultures where many nationalities present their music, cuisines etc. to the public. In Parma, many locals are also sceptical regarding internationalisation. Private homeowners are reported to be very reluctant to rent to foreigners, making it difficult for the growing number of international migrants to rent a decent house. In Bielsko Biala, Zlin and Debrecen, the numbers of foreign talent are much smaller, many of them come from Eastern Europe (mainly Ukraine) and work in medium-skilled jobs in the industry. Language barriers and deskilling are the most significant issues here. In Leuven, with a big and growing population international talent, the question is urgent how to counter the emergence of parallel societies, and to avoid that skilled internationals leave prematurely for social reasons.

Cities develop or support all sorts of initiatives that foster social interaction of all kind between locals and skilled immigrants. Magdeburg's universities initiated a buddy system, linking foreign students to local ones, who can help him or her find the way. Parma University set up a programme where international students visit primary schools to tell about their home country and their immigration story. In Parma, international migrants are actively recruited to join refugee support organisations as volunteers. The city of Groningen supported a start-up company that developed Here & Now in Groningen, an English-language cultural and nightlife agenda, to open the cultural institutions to non-Dutch speaking audiences. Also in Groningen, international residents reported difficulty to integrate into city life, to meet Dutch people, and to learn speaking Dutch. A South African expat set up "my local friend", to match locals and internationals.

**Bielsko-Biała:** "we have implemented The Centre for the Integration of Foreigners called "myBB" which is a solution based on the Groningen's best practice "International Welcome Centre North". While launching this Centre we have adjusted the original idea to make it more fitted to our local needs. The main goal of the centre is to integrate foreigners living in Bielsko-Biała with the local community. The Centre support foreigners in many different aspects. Beside the fact that the Centre helps them to feel more like at home it also helps them with difficulties on the local labor market and have a positive impact on the cultural diversity of the city".

MyBB's activities also include:

- residence counseling,
- specialist advice, including legal, psychological and career guidance,
- cultural and social initiatives and promotion of civic attitudes among foreigners,
- cooperation with employees of public institutions and companies.

To help partners of migrants, spouse programmes have become common in some case cities. Leuven is the most advanced case. A recent local study indicated that the unhappy spouse is the main reason for expats to quit their job and return home, with high costs for the employer. The major international players set up a network in which HRM managers share information, challenges and solutions regarding their international staff, including their partners. In Bielsko Biala, free language courses have been developed for internationals, to facilitate their local integration.

In some fields, tensions exist between the facilitation of skilled migrants on the one hand –providing them with access to facilities- and integration on the other. International schools are recognized in our case cities as important facilities to attract and retain skilled migrants (and they invest in it), but at the same time they may work against integration and stimulate separate local expat societies. Kindergartens and primary schools are important contact zones where skilled migrant parents and their children develop relations with locals.

The initiatives described in table 1 underline the prevalent assumption in medium sized cities that social integration is desirable (for the city and for the migrants alike), and that it should be promoted by policy actions that bring locals and internationals together. But for internationals, social interaction with fellow internationals (from the same nation or profession) is at least equally important, reflected in growing levels of self-organisation and expat community formation that we observed in our case cities.

#### DO WE KNOW ENOUGH ABOUT OUR MIGRANTS?

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The initiatives described above are targeted at various type of skilled migrants. In fact, they all have their own background, migration history, motives, ambitions, time horizons, and reasons to stay (or not). The integration process of skilled migrants is not a linear and predictable path; there is a very large variety of integration processes. Some cities seem to attract more repetitive migrants, and others less so. Figure 1 shows the migration history of two “typical” migrants, who live (for now...) in Manchester and Dortmund respectively (Based on a study of Jorg Ploeger).

Graphs can be drawn up to identify, for different migrants, where their most important friends and social relations are: the wider the circle, the further away (see figure 2). Again this reveals a wide variety; some skilled migrants had no important relations at all in the city where they currently lived (the left-upper case); others show a more mixed picture. This research raises the important question if cities / stakeholders engaged in internationalisation policy know enough about their internationals talents to understand what could really boost their integration. Although the basic statistics are typically there, there is a lack of qualitative and quantitative information about internationals, their location patterns, their preferences and their appreciation of their current hometown. The universities know roughly where their international students and staff come from, there is rich but tacit information in the heads of people who work with them (at international offices etc). But there is very little systematic analysis that gives more precise information about their motives for coming, staying or leaving, barriers or problems they face, etc. The same is true on the reception side (local population, companies, sports clubs, civil society): as a basis for good integration policy, it is needed to have more solid and grounded information about the barriers to receive and integrate foreigners.

Figure 2 Two typical migrants in Manchester and Dortmund

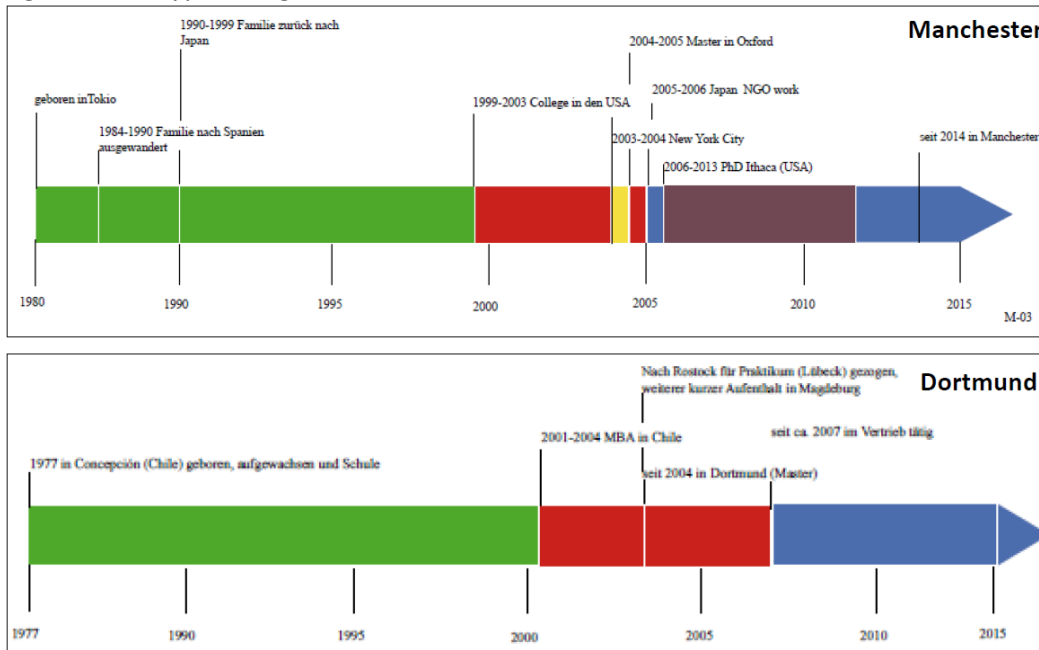
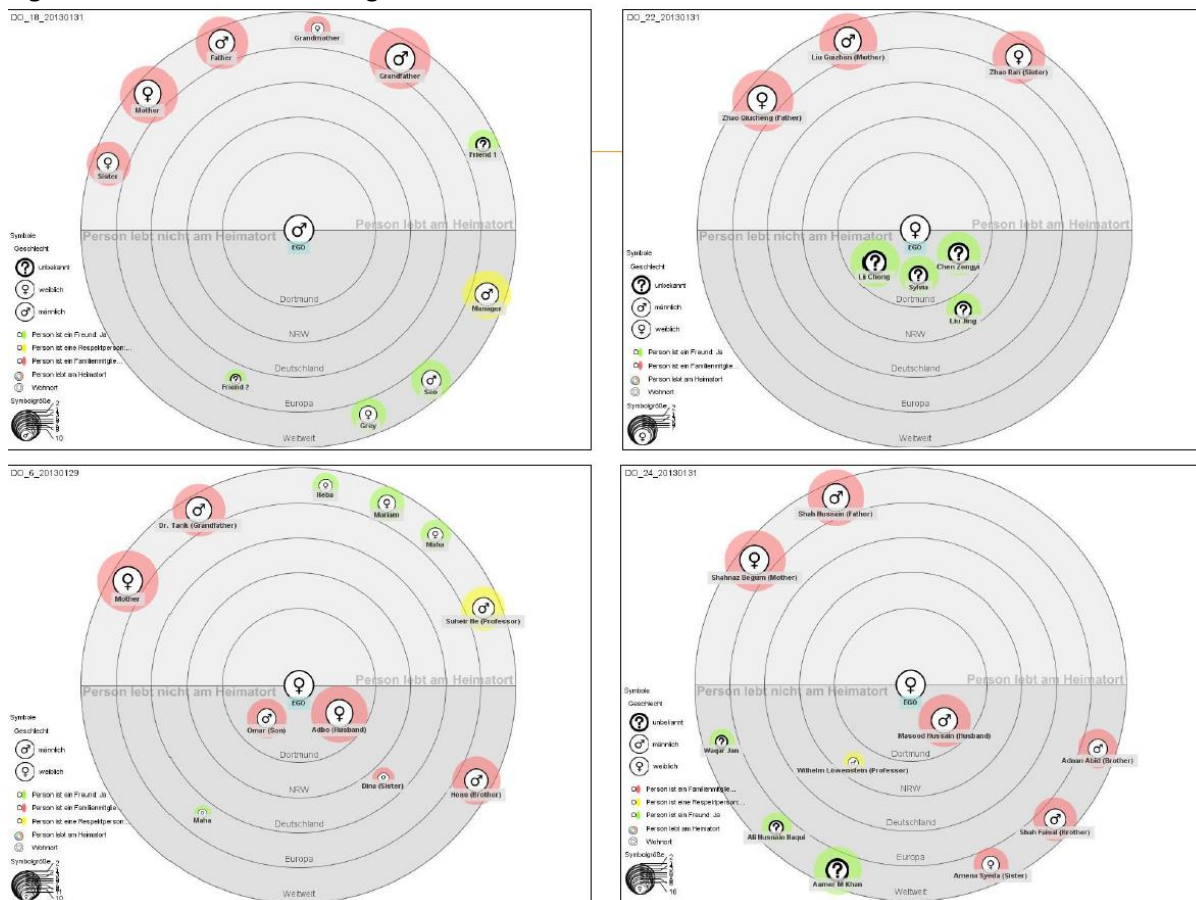


Figure 3 Social networks of migrants

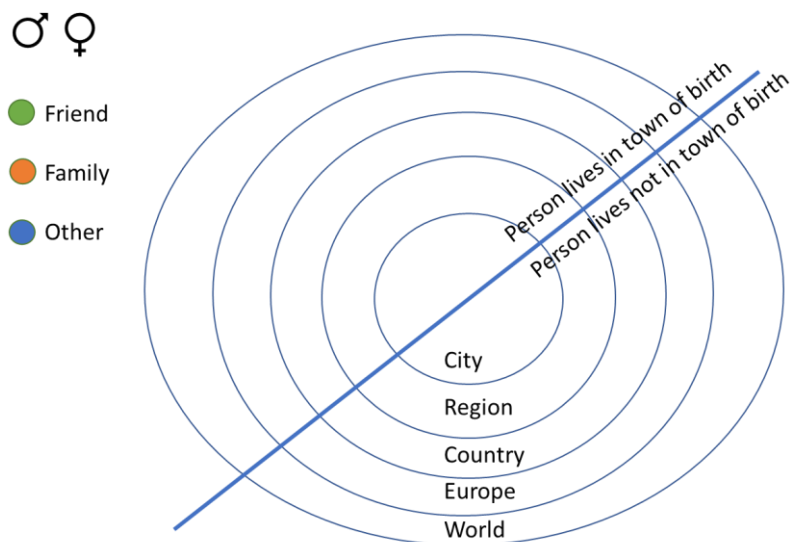


Both graphs are from a presentation of Jorg Ploeger presented in Magdeburg, 19-9-2019

## EXERCISE: UNDERSTANDING THE SOCIAL NETWORKS OF INTERNATIONALS

Organise a meeting with a number of internationals in your city

1. Let each international draw his or her migration history, using Figure 1 as template. Then share the drawings as a means to get to know each other
2. Ask each international to draw his or her social network, based on the “dartboard” model below:



And then start the discussion:

- how did people develop their local networks?
- what was easy, what was difficult?
- what would make them feel more at home socially?



## 6. LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION OF INTERNATIONALS

### INTRODUCTION

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This chapter deals with the question of integration of international talent into the local labour market of medium-sized cities. This is a large and complex topic, and many more questions can be raised, such as:

- How are different types of internationals integrated or embedded in the local labour market?
- Deskilling: to what extent are the competences and diplomas of internationals recognized locally?
- What policies do city authorities and other stakeholders design to improve this? Are they effective? What hurdles and barriers must be overcome?
- How to increase the labour market participation of international students? Internships can be an important first step to win them for the regional labor market, but there are many barriers to be removed.
- How to effectively integrate lower skilled talents? In booming regions, labour shortages in the medium and lower segments of the labour market are becoming more pressing, asking for new professional mobility policies that go beyond the high skilled academic target group.
- Discrimination or different treatment: To what extent do foreign talents face discrimination when finding a job?
- Career making: are there barriers for internationals to make a local career, and if so, how to break them? Most universities have high numbers of international PhDs, postdocs, and staff exchanges, but it is much harder for foreigners to obtain permanent/full academic staff positions.
- Spouses/partners: how can they be helped to find a job?
- The workforce: how to create a welcoming culture in organisations, where internationals can flourish? Is that also possible for smaller companies?
- Demand and supply: what is the (mis)match between the demand for skills in the local economy, and the local “supply” of international labor? Can it be steered or influenced on the local level?

As we have seen in previous chapters, there is no such person as “the” skilled migrant: they come in a big variety, from widely different cultural backgrounds, with different motives and time horizons, and they will have a different position in the labour market.

In this chapter, rather than extensively engage with the academic debates, we reflect views and discussions as they emerged in the WIT network on integration and related policies. In fact, this chapter focuses on the policy aspect, considering the underlying complexities and ambiguities of immigration and integration processes.

### WHY IS LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION IMPORTANT?

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There are several reasons to actively promote the integration of internationals in the local and regional labour market. First, in cities with labour market shortages, internationals are needed to fill vacancies and keep the economy afloat. In most member cities of the WIT network, shortages are noticeable





especially in the booming sectors of ICT and engineering, and employers are eager to find qualified staff.

For internationals, having meaningful work is not only important in its own right: it contributes to social integration. The literature suggests that the workplace or study place is the main driver or “engine” of integration<sup>12</sup>. Larger employers realise that, and typically have initiatives to promote cultural exchange and introduce internationals into local customs and traditions. In higher education, mixing national and international students in university classes can enrich the learning experience of both: local students become more curious and engaged when they are in the same classroom as internationals; it offers a comparative lens on subject matters, which stimulates debate and learning.

**Leuven:** “It’s important to look at your labour market with a very critical eye. What exactly are the opportunities for internationals? Is the labour market sufficiently open for non-native speakers? Wishful thinking doesn’t help anybody. The bulk of the task may well be advocating a bigger investment in language classes and networking with potential employers.”

There is a shifting debate regarding the role of international students in the economy. In several countries, there is a growing public concern that too much tax money is spent on higher education for foreigners that leave after graduation and do not contribute to the economy. In many EU countries, tuition fees are far below cost price, or even zero. Governments increasingly seek ways to integrate international graduates in the labour market, in order to recoup these investments. The Danish government has even introduced a new funding incentive: 7.5% of university funding for students depends on the question whether they find a job or not after graduation. This incentivizes universities to reduce student numbers in study fields where job chances are bleak, but also has a significant impact on their policies towards international students: it becomes more important to make sure that they stay in Denmark after graduation and find a job.

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#### INTEGRATION: BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES FOR DIFFERENT GROUPS

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When speaking of labour market integration of internationals, a variety of subgroups can be distinguished. Each subgroup has its own motives, and faces particular barriers and challenges regarding the labour market. Below, we discuss the following groups: International students, academic staff, professionals (expats) and refugees.

**International students** form a significant group of the international population in most university cities. They primarily come to the host city to take a Bachelor’s or Master course, or as exchange students). During their studies they can already become part of the local labour market through taking on student jobs, summer jobs, or internships. Most international students leave after graduation, but a substantial percentage of them would like to stay, find a job or start a business. In cities with labour shortages or aging populations, there is an explicit policy ambition to retain international students to contribute to the local economy and society. Table 1 shows the most important types of labour market integration, and barriers that can stand in the way.

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<sup>12</sup> Van Riemsdijk, M. (2014). International migration and local emplacement: everyday place-making practices of skilled migrants in Oslo, Norway. *Environment and Planning A*, 46, 963–979. <https://doi.org/10.1068/a46234>

Language is a very important factor in each situation, and encouraging students to learn the national language is therefore paramount. In smaller countries, students are less inclined to learn the language than in bigger ones. An internship is an important catalyst for students to learn the language, get to know the business culture, and for networking. But obtaining internships can be hard for international students; many of them fall back to the option of returning to their home country for the internship. Mixing nationals and internationals in education is an important vehicle to improve integration and facilitate language skills.

Table 1 Labour market integration of international students

	Type of labour market integration	Barriers
During studies	Internship	Language; lack of English language internships Pathfinding: how to find an internship? Reluctance of SMEs to hire internationals
	Study job, summer jobs	Language Pathfinding
	Start a company	Language: most incubator programmes are not in English
After graduation	Find a regular job	Language: For most jobs you need to speak native language Reluctance of SMEs to hire internationals Culture: lack of understanding of local business culture Presentation: need to present yourself effectively to employers
	Become entrepreneur	Language: most incubator programmes are not in English

**International academic staff** are a second category. Academia has always been a very international sector where it is common to spend part of your career abroad, but internationalisation has gained pace, and many universities have growing numbers of foreign PhDs, visiting scholars, or even permanent international academic staff. This is especially the case in North-Western Europe, and somewhat less in Central and Southern Europe. International academics have a paid job and are integrated in the regional labour market. The problem for them can be to make a career in the local university. For flexible time-bound positions (PhD, postdoc) it has become very common to hire foreigners, but for the fixed, permanent staff, universities tend to fall back on nationals. Moreover, academic staff face cultural barriers: it is not always easy to become a full-fledged part of the host society.

The third category are **professionals from abroad (expats)**. These are foreigners working for international companies, permanently or temporary, or independent professionals that take advantage of certain skills gaps or opportunities. Again, for these groups, economic integration is not the problem, because they have a paid job –that’s what they came for in the first place. They rather face questions of social and cultural integration like the ones described above. Also, there is the question much integration is really needed if they stay only for a very limited period. Moreover, skilled

migrants may experience barriers to integration such as *deskilling*<sup>13</sup> and discrimination<sup>14</sup>, especially when they come from outside the EU. And their spouses/partners may find it difficult to find a job locally.

A fourth category are *refugees*. We did not elaborate too much on their situation during our meetings, but several points came up. They are in a different “policy silo”: refugee policy, that is not always so connected with regular labour market policies, and has its own policy rules, legal frameworks and incentives. The integration of refugees in local labour market can be controversial, as some of them might need to return soon to their home country. Moreover, for those who obtained refugee status, it can be difficult to assess their qualifications.

## POLICIES AND INITIATIVES

### National level

National legal frameworks set the margin for the options of non-EU internationals to work; every EU member has its own rules. A recent tendency for EU states is to increase the opportunities for foreign talent, especially for the higher educated and in fields with labour market shortages. In Germany, university graduates can stay 18 months after graduation (if they actively look for a job); The country offers a temporary residence permit for qualified skilled workers. The Netherlands also has a grace period for international students, and introduced a special permit for international entrepreneurs. The Czech Republic introduced its “Regime Ukraine” programme in 2016, a national programme to attract professionals from a limited set of countries (the Ukraine, Mongolia, Serbia, and the Philippines). In Hungary, from 1st July 2016 a government decree is helping the employment of Ukrainian citizens in Hungary; the permission process takes max. 2-2.5 weeks for professions for which there is a shortage.

### Local/regional level

Stakeholders in the cities that participate in the WIT project believe that active labour market integration policies should be part of international talent management. Table 2 gives an overview of the types of initiatives/policies in place, with some examples in the second column.

Table 2 Policies and initiatives

Type of initiative/policy	Example
Spouse programmes	Partner coaching in finding a job, a course, or a volunteering opportunity (IMEC, Leuven)
Connecting students to labour market	Institutionalized „dating service“ connecting companies with migrants (Magdeburg) Project „Partner von morgen“, a program for small and medium-sized companies in Sachsen-Anhalt (international students have the possibility to apply for an internship); (Magdeburg)

<sup>13</sup> Purkayastha, B. (2005). Skilled migration and cumulative disadvantage: the case of highly qualified Asian Indian immigrant women in the US. *Geoforum*, 36(2), 181–196. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.GEOFORUM.2003.11.006>

<sup>14</sup> Nagel, C. (2005). Skilled migration in global cities from ‘Other’ perspectives: British Arabs, identity politics, and local embeddedness. *Geoforum*, 36(2), 197–210. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.GEOFORUM.2003.06.003>

Physical centres/desks with info on jobs and education	Informagiovani: a service centre in the city centre for those aged 13 to 35 years, offering info and support on topics such as work, post-diploma (University, vocational training, courses and scholarships) and active citizenship (Parma) MyBB: Service point for internationals (Bielsko-Biała)
Start-up policies	Specialized start-up counselling for migrants; international startup school (Magdeburg); Startup Visa Groningen ( <a href="http://startupvisagroningen.nl/">http://startupvisagroningen.nl/</a> ), a collaboration between startup facilitators in the Groningen region and International Welcome Centre North (IWCN)
Visa & work permit speed-up	International Welcome Centre North, where local stakeholders and national government support fast work permits & visa process (Groningen)
International job portals	Internet portal of the Career Service with job offers of regional companies and information about career events in the region (Magdeburg) Make it in the North, an online job portal with regional vacancies in English, but also career events, a digital map of regional businesses, and internship placements (Groningen)

## CHALLENGES

The following specific challenges are identified regarding labour market integration:

- In all cities, it is far from easy to connect more traditional SMEs to international talent; company cultures are still highly nationally oriented. More knowledge exchange of best practices and experimentation is needed in this field.
- Employers would benefit from a more rapid and smooth process of work permit provision, but they entirely depend on national agencies (Groningen is the only city that found a way out through its IWCN); inter-city collaboration could help to put pressure on national agencies.
- Deskilling is a persistent problem, especially for internationals from outside the EU; there are (so far) very few local policies to address this. This is something to be considered by the WIT partners.
- Many companies recruit lower-skilled internationals, some even in great numbers. However, they are often reluctant to take responsibility by investing in their education and further development, or offer them language courses. This reduces the opportunity of those people to develop themselves and become more locally integrated.
- There are strong indications that many cities have large numbers of people working temporarily (on tourist visa), or even illegally. However, cities have very little information on the size of these groups and the problems it entails (exploitation, poor working conditions, health/safety issues, nuisance for locals).

# 7. EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE FOR WELCOMING INTERNATIONAL TALENT

## INTRODUCTION

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This final chapter synthesises the previous chapters and deals with the governance questions related to international talent. Several organisations in the city might have a stake in a well-organised and coordinated talent management policy. How can they collaborate to achieve that? To address that question, we first define international talent management, proposing a distinction between international talent management (ITM, conducted by individual organisations) and coordinated international talent management (CITM), in which urban stakeholders collaborate. Then, we describe and compare the coordination models that cities have put in place for CITM. Finally, this chapter identifies several challenges and suggests how to address them.

## INTERNATIONAL TALENT MANAGEMENT

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A distinction can be made between international talent management (ITM, practiced by individual organisations) and coordinated international talent management (CITM, in which several stakeholders collaborate).

**International talent management** is practiced by individual organisations that employ foreigners (typically multinational firms, universities or knowledge institutes). ITM may include the attraction of talent, setting out development paths or relocation opportunities, ensuring a welcoming, inclusive multicultural working environment, or practical support for foreign staff for housing, access to amenities etc.

**Parma:** “The biggest companies in Parma, the University, many of the local stakeholders have their own strategy to attract international people. The difficulty is to collaborate together to have a unique tool, useful for everybody.”

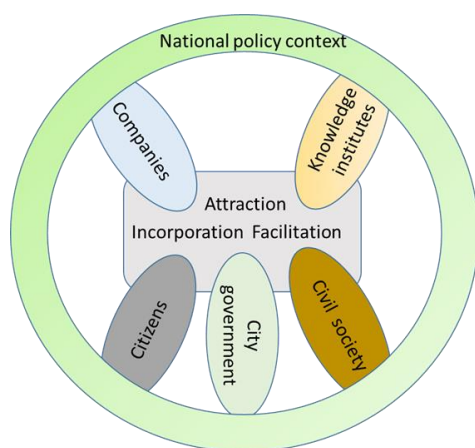
**Coordinated international talent management (CITM)** is a coordinated effort by urban stakeholders to attract, facilitate and/or incorporate skilled international migrants. CITM results from the recognition of a shared interest or common challenge that the participating stakeholders cannot (or do not want to) address individually. Within ITM and CITM, a further distinction can be made between the attraction, facilitation, and incorporation of international talent. **Attraction** includes marketing efforts such as information campaigns, online and social media activities or other actions aimed to attract skilled migrants from specific countries, particular professions, or other segmentations as outlined in the previous section. **Facilitation** includes initiatives to help skilled migrants to deal with bureaucracy upon arrival (visa, permits etc.), or to ease access to basic amenities such as accommodation, health care, education and public services. **Incorporation** includes a broad range of interventions that help migrants and their relatives, once they arrived, feel welcome, at home and at ease in the host city, and lead a productive and social life. We make a distinction between economic integration (finding a job or otherwise participating in the urban

economy) and social integration (participating in the civic life of the city, engaging in local social networks). Figure 1 shows how each type of individual organisation/stakeholder in the city plays a role in the three aspects of talent management. Figure 2 graphically depicts that in case of collaborative international talent management, the players collaborate in some respects to solve common problems or challenges in the fields of attraction, facilitation and incorporation, but keep their own activities as well, working in the wider context of national immigration policies and initiatives.

Figure 1 Talent management

	<b>Attraction</b> Talent marketing	<b>Facilitation</b> Bureaucracy & procedures Housing & facilities	<b>Incorporation</b> • In labour market • In society
(Big) firms	Corporate recruitment	Corporate expat support	Corporate spouse programs; contact with colleagues
Knowledge institutes	Recruitment of scientists	Facilities/amenities for international scientists	
	Recruitment of international students	International desks; student housing	Language courses; International job fairs
City gov	City marketing	International desks for public services Information in foreign languages	Cultural, social and economic policies towards internationals
Civil society		Informal support and activities in student unions, migrant organisations, sport clubs, churches, facebook groups etc.; Integration through informal networks	
Citizens		Activities/initiatives by active (migrant) citizens to support internationals	

Figure 2 Collaborative talent management



### WHY IS CTM IMPORTANT FOR CITIES?

In many cases, CITM emerges as a response to the recognition of common problems and challenges by city administrations, international companies, and knowledge institutes/universities. Growing numbers of international migrants increased the urge to engage in some kind of joint approach, but the catalysts for coordinated action may differ. In Leuven, on top of the growing internationalisation of the university, the number of foreign engineers and scientists has increased dramatically over the last two decades, employed by the fast growing science-based industry in the city, sparking the

development towards more systematic and collaborative approaches. In Parma, the establishment of the European Food and Security Agency (EFSA) in 2003 was the prime catalyst: the agency has about 600 highly skilled employees, most of them foreigners, and generated a large and sudden influx of skilled migrants. In response, the city invested in an international school, and started to consider policies to integrate the internationals more in civic life. In the cases of Magdeburg and Groningen, the universities have been important drivers behind CITM. They experienced a strong growth of international student populations (both from EU and non-EU countries), partly due to an overall growth of international student mobility and partly as a result of aggressive marketing policies. In Zlin, Debrecen and Bielsko Biala, economic growth was the main trigger. A growing number of foreigners were attracted to the booming local economies, as employers could not fill their vacancies with locals any more.

City administrations set up CITM initiatives in response to pressure from universities and companies, but also for other reasons. CITM is often framed as a strategic urban policy instrument to compete with other cities in attracting skilled labour, to promote economic development or prevent urban decline.

**Magdeburg:** “The main challenge is that very different project partners, such as the university or the city administration, have to work together. Different structures and mentalities come together”.

Policymakers indicate that CITM is important because skilled migrants help their cities to become more diverse and cosmopolitan, and diversity is regarded as important factor to compete in the race for investment and talent (following Florida’s influential prescriptions). Inspired by the example of Canadian and Australian cities, higher education is increasingly regarded as an important growth industry in its own right, with “export potential” in the form of international students. Another often stated rationale for CITM is to counter the trend of an ageing population (strong in Groningen, Magdeburg, both situated in regions with a declining population); Cities are happy to welcome new skilled inhabitants who provide substantial purchasing power and can sustain local amenities. CITM is also seen as instrumental to support regional labour markets; all case cities report skills shortages (in particular in specific fields such as IT, R&D and engineering), and see incoming skilled migrants as a solution.

## GOVERNANCE MODELS

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We defined CITM as coordinated efforts by urban stakeholders to attract, facilitate or incorporate skilled international migrants. In this section, we describe coordination models that cities deploy. We discuss two main types: the strategic model, and the light coordination model.

**Strategic models** include a systematic, comprehensive and coherent set of programmes and projects towards all aspects of ITM, embedded in wider urban/regional development strategies, and backed by the top level of the participating organisations. Stakeholders systematically set joint priorities, align their interests, frame their collaborative efforts, and define projects or actions.

In **light coordination models**, stakeholder collaboration is based on the recognition of common interests, rests on a light framework (if institutionalised at all), and typically takes the form of working groups in which departments of the various stakeholders participate in projects. There is less of a common vision and strategy, and the scope is urban rather than regional.



## SOME EXAMPLES

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**Groningen** is a typical example of a strategic approach. Launched in 2016, The “International Groningen” programme is a common, comprehensive strategy, with a set of concrete and funded actions. At a strategic level the entire programme is supported by the Akkoord van Groningen, a partnership between the municipality, the province (recently joined) and the higher educational institutions in the city to develop Groningen as leading knowledge city. The main ambitions are to attract more internationals, to retain them (by opening up the local/regional labour market for them), to improve the availability of good-quality housing, to brand Groningen as international city, and to integrate internationals better in society. The programme is overseen by a steering committee, formed by the mayor, the chairmen of the universities and academic hospital and the Kings Commissioner. Under this strategic umbrella, several project teams have been created, in which a wider set of stakeholders work together (international students, expats and policy workers from both universities and the local government) and implement the various projects in the four target fields of housing, work, city living and communication. Each project is developed and implemented by mixed teams of municipal, provincial and university employees, international residents operating on a freelance basis, international students and interns. Projects are based on perceived needs of the stakeholders, and discussed in focus groups consisting of international residents and local student project groups to better understand how internationalisation is experienced and what the key challenges for the city are. To monitor the programme, the city collects data on stay rates, participation, commissions a biannual International Student Barometer (which measures satisfaction for housing, social inclusion and career prospects).

The city of **Magdeburg** took a lighter coordination approach. Here, stakeholders meet in thematic working groups to align their approaches. For example, to reduce administrative complexities for internationals, the cities’ Foreigners Authority holds regular consultations with the International Offices of both universities and with all responsible staff of the other scientific institutions. Also, there are mixed working groups that organise welcome events and social-cultural activities aimed at the social acceptance and integration of international talent in the local society. The Mayor’s Office plays an important role in the overall coordination of all activities in the field of CITM. Recently, this office stepped up efforts towards a more strategic approach; plans are developed to open an international house in the centre of the city, that should serve as a centralised one-stop-shop for all kinds of services for internationals; it should also become a “landmark” to underline the cities’ openness to foreigners, and become a place for social events where locals and internationals can meet.

**Parma** has a similar structure of working groups that coordinate joint projects and programmes to welcome and integrate internationals; in a joint working group, the university and the EFSA (European Food and Security Agency) identified common challenges that “their” internationals encounter: finding adequate housing, overcoming language barriers, and discrimination. The city, university, EFSA and some mayor employers took some first steps to develop a more comprehensive internationalisation strategy aligned to the economic strategy of the city, that focuses on gastronomy, food and culture.

## CHALLENGES AND HOW TO ADDRESS THEM

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The following specific challenges can be identified regarding the governance of coordinated international talent management policies:





**Finding common ground.** Stakeholders in the city or region must have a shared interest to start to collaborate. But who exactly are these stakeholders, and what exactly is this shared interest? This is not always clear. As a starting point, it can help to organise well-moderated workshops in which various urban stakeholders (including at least universities, international companies and various city departments) make explicit what their own interest is in internationalisation, what problems and challenges they perceive, and then in what field or domain they might want to collaborate with others (a common website, a shared welcome package, an international house, integration programmes for spouses etc.), and also in which field they prefer to work more individually. This point is also relevant for cities that already have strategic partnerships in place: even then, it makes sense to evaluate from time to time how well the partnership still addresses the common issues.

**Leuven:** “It works well to adopt an ‘hourglass model’ with three stages: 1) Go big, engage a large group of stakeholders to explore the issue; 2). Slim down: select high impact strategic partners and work with them on concrete results; 3). Go big again: build on the successes and expand again”.

**Setting a modus of collaboration.** If partners have identified common ground to take action, the next question is how. Here, a variety of options are open, from formal to informal, from lightly structured to heavily institutionalised, from integrated to more task-based. Also, much depends on the local context, culture of collaboration, and mandates of the local government vis-à-vis other government agencies. Having said that, some considerations can be made in general. First of all, it helps to create a small strategic group in which welcoming activities are coordinated, preferably by a respected group of persons on a sufficiently high position in their parent organisations. This helps to avoid fragmentation, improve embeddedness in broader policies, and gives a clear mandate for the people in working groups that do the work on the ground. Second, it can make sense to create different sub-groups for different types of actions/tasks, because not every action needs the same approach. In early stages of collaboration, setting up “light” working groups can help to let stakeholders get to know each other, build trust, and understand each other’s challenges. Also, a broader range of stakeholders can be invited in such groups. Third, on the political level, it helps if the mayor or an alderman/women actively champions the welcoming activities.

**Involving internationals.** A key lesson from Groningen is that the involvement of internationals in any kind of action or working group is key. They are the target group, and their insights are invaluable to do the right thing. Their involvement can go from brainstorming sessions about what to do, to active co-creation (as in the case of the Groningen international cultural event calendar).

**Zlin:** “It is important to involve relevant stakeholders and don’t forget local expats who can have a very valuable insight.”

**Set clear roles and responsibilities.** Integrated welcoming policies rely on voluntary multi-stakeholder collaborations, in which partners have made commitments but there is typically no clear hierarchy, control, “boss” or other strong enforcement mechanisms. This always brings the risks of freeriding and freewheeling in which partners do not live up to the expectations or promises they made. Formal agreements or commitments (such as the Akkoord van Groningen) can help here, in which key partners make clear what they will commit to in the longer run, and how they collaborate. A more formalised and professional take is especially important for more strategic actions in which stakeholders make larger investments, such as the creation of a joint International House.

**Secure long-term funding.** In principle, welcoming policies have a longer-term perspective, and hence should not be organised on a project basis, with funding limited to the duration of the project. For such policies, it makes sense to have structural or at least programmatic funding for several years from the city, plus large organisations with a big stake in internationalisation (typically the university, development companies, the province, plus perhaps large companies or research institutes). On top of that, funding from smaller stakeholders can be collected in various forms such as man-hours, contributions to specific sub-projects, or membership fees.

**Establish links with refugee and immigrant integration policies.** In many cities, there is a sharp policy dam between talent management & attraction policies (for the higher skilled) and integration/refugees' policies. Talent attraction is about pro-actively rolling out the red carpet for much-needed "internationals" that support the local economy, whereas integration and refugees policies are more reactive policies to address problems of housing and integration for unregulated migrants (refugees) or immigrant communities that are in an unfavourable position. Differences between both subgroups exist and must be reflected in policy, but the distinction should not always be that sharp: first of all, many societal integration problems for both groups might be similar; second, international talent is everywhere, also among immigrant communities and refugees; and third, many legal and bureaucratic issues are the same for both groups, especially when the immigrants are from outside the EU. Hence, cities are wise to reflect how their co-ordinated talent management policy can be combined with refugees and integration policies; within the city administration, this asks for collaboration between social and economic departments.