



Managing global flows at local level

# Workshop Report

## Civic participation

### Val de Marne 16-19

### January 2018

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## **Introduction**

The fifth workshop in the transnational programme for the Arrival Cities network took place in Val de Marne in January 2018. Delegates from all the 10 partners took part in a programme that focused on the sub-theme of Civic Participation

This was an issue that members of the Urbact Local Groups (ULG's) created by each partner had identified as one of the key issues that they wished to explore through a process of transnational exchange of practice and learning.

This report captures the work of this workshop. The report is designed to support the ULG's in the deliberation and development of their Integrated Action Plans.. In addition the report seeks to provide useful resources for wider dissemination beyond the Arrival Cities network.

The report is structured into the following sections:

- **Section One** provides an overview of the sub theme.
- **Section Two** provides examples of case studies undertaken to support the civic participation of migrants and refugees at a local level.
- **Section Three** provides some useful links and other resources related to the theme.
- **Section Four** provides details of the workshop in terms of agenda, presentations, and list of participants.

### **Section One: Civic Participation: An Overview**

#### **Introduction and General Context**

Whilst there is a generation consensus that securing work is the most effective way to secure the integration of migrants and refugees, there is also a growing realisation that many migrants and refugees will not enter into the labour market easily or at all. For this reason actions that support the civic participation of migrants and refugees are increasingly also recognised as an important tool to support the integration of migrants and refugees through providing access to “others” and serving as a means to promote core values alongside creating mechanisms for contributing to civic life at a local level.

One of the most common frustrations of newcomers and of the people in the receiving societies that come into contact with them, is the enormous waste in human capital (knowledge, degrees, job experience, networks, etc.) caused by the move from one place to another, especially for refugees and migrants . Where they have been carried out in close cooperation with interventions in other domains (language courses allowing for a faster levelling of the playing-field for newcomers, the creation of new legislative frameworks for the recognition of degrees or that allow them to enter the labour market more quickly and freely, etc.), civic participation actions have helped people regain momentum in their search for work. They tend to build on skills and knowledge that are considered “invisible”, so that these can be fostered and shared with the larger community. This way, they have helped people discover and gain new skills, or translate their skills into marketable activities – especially those that fall outside of the regular activation programmes, as they are hard to reach.

In any discussion about how to support migrants/refugees in getting involved in civic participation, there has to be first a discussion about civic participation in general as this effectively sets the context within which approaches to support migrants/refugees have to work.

How to secure more effective participation in civic life has become a major preoccupation at all levels of governance. The reasons are very clear. There is a growing alienation from political life. This is reflected in lower voter turnout but also in voters voting for “non -establishment “parties or personalities. The election of Macron and Trump are clear examples of this trend.

There is a decline of social capital. That is to say a decline in the numbers of people who through volunteering or directly as individuals get involved in discussions regarding local/national/European issues. Pick up any policy document or a party political publication and the issue of citizen/civic participation will be highlighted as a key goal.

However, despite this strong focus/high priority, there is very little evidence that shows any kind of significant reversal of the trends highlighted above. Indeed, if anything the evidence suggests at best stagnation (only reaching the “usual suspects”) or ongoing decline in participation.

The above description is of course disputable. In disputing the above depiction, particular recourse is made to the rise in numbers of people using social media in respect to “public issues”. That is to say, whilst less people are visible in local meetings and local groups, there is a growing virtual level of participation. This kind of “click activism” is particularly reflected in the growth of mailing lists centered on particular policy issues or specific issues or causes/campaigns.

The causes of the above trends are contested but they include:

- Apathy. Increasing numbers people have a strong tendency to be apathetic towards the democratic process, and are strongly disinclined to vote. There is also a strong element of complacency to aggravate problems caused by apathy. This is not restricted to the EU and to EP elections – it is true across the all nations and all elections, supranational, National and local.
- Pressures. Most observers would agree that it is the case that people are now subject to far more pressure (and in particular demands on their time) than ever before. All of these pressures strongly mitigate against any time consuming Involvement in the democratic process, and that lack of involvement in turn leads to absenteeism.
- Lack of identification. There is a general lack of identification with the EU and its institutions across all ages and all demographics.
- Rise of single issue groups. One other phenomenon in recent years has been the rise of single issue pressure groups. In the UK the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds has more than one million members. This is more than all of the political parties put together. Other pressure groups are international, environmental groups such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth have members and activists in all EU countries. If people identify with these single issue pressure groups, and give them their support and possibly their money, they are potentially less likely to engage with mainstream political parties.

In addition to the above specific causes of alienation there are also others which also account for the low participation of migrants.

- Poverty. Migrant workers often have a lower standard of living than the indigenous population. Although some are professional people (doctors, lawyers, accountants) many others are engaged

in unskilled or semiskilled manual labour. Poverty itself is one of the major inhibiting factors on turnout. If all of an individual's attention is concentrated on finding and keeping work, they have less time and energy to engage in the democratic process. Therefore the fact that migrants generally have a lower standard of living than the indigenous population means that they are less likely to vote.

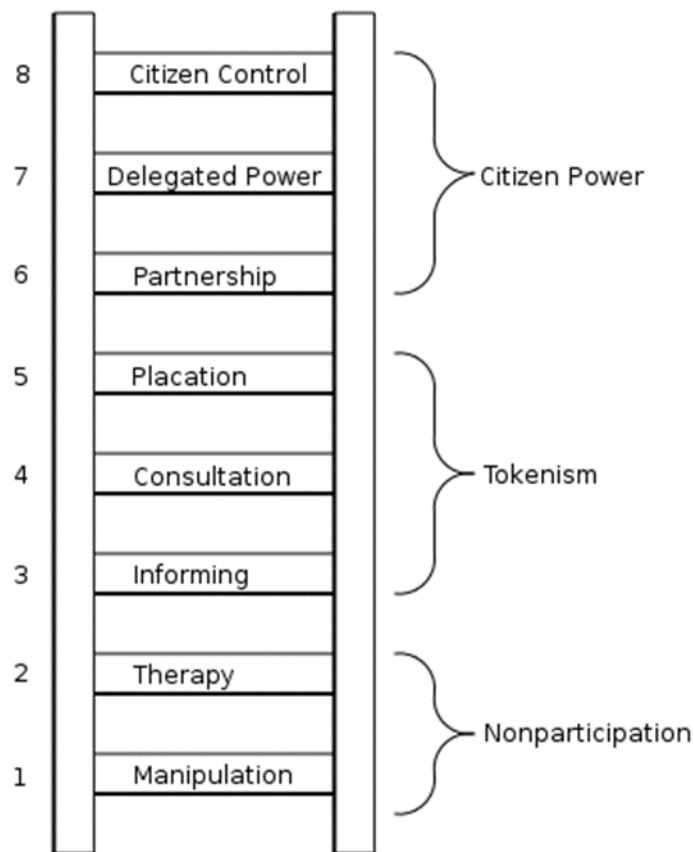
- Identification with original country. It is naturally the case that although migrants have "chosen" to settle in an EU country, they still strongly identify with their country of origin. This means that they feel less engaged with their country of residence, and therefore less inclined to engage in the democratic process.

### **The theoretical context**

Sherry Arnstein in a seminal paper written in 1969<sup>1</sup>, identified eight levels of engagement with citizens and structured these as a ladder. What Arnstein drew attention to was that participation and empowerment are not politically neutral concepts. For communities to be empowered someone else – perhaps an official, perhaps a politician has to give up some power. True participation can only take place where there is a recognition of the power relations that are involved and where power is shared. At the bottom of the ladder there is manipulation. What this means is that in the name of citizen participation, people are placed on rubberstamp advisory committees or advisory boards for the express purpose of "educating" them or engineering their support. Instead of genuine citizen participation, the bottom rung of the ladder signifies the distortion of participation into a public relations vehicle by powerholders.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.participatorymethods.org/sites/participatorymethods.org/files/Arnstein%20ladder%201969.pdf>



Level two is referred to as therapy. By this is meant that under a masquerade of involving citizens in planning, the experts subject the citizens to clinical group therapy.

Level Three is simply to inform. That is to say that citizens are informed of their rights, responsibilities, and options being considered. However, too frequently the emphasis is placed on a one-way flow of information - from officials to citizens -with no channel provided for feedback and no power for negotiation.

Level Four is consultation. That is to say that citizens are invited to give their opinions, but there is no assurance that citizen concerns and ideas will be taken into account. The most frequent methods used for consulting people are attitude surveys, neighborhood meetings, and public hearings.

Level Five is placation. It is at this level that citizens begin to have some degree of influence though tokenism is still apparent. An example of placation strategy is to place a few hand-picked "worthy" people onto advisory boards or even steering groups. However, as they are not accountable to a constituency in the community and are a minority they can be easily outvoted and outfoxed.

Level Six is partnership. However, for partnerships to work that has to be an organized power-base in the community to which the citizen leaders are accountable; and the citizens group has the financial resources to pay its leaders reasonable honoraria for their time-consuming efforts; and when the group has the resources to hire its own technicians, lawyers, and community organizers. With these ingredients, citizens have some genuine bargaining influence over the outcome.

Level Seven is Delegated Power. That is when an executive body with a majority of citizen representation is given delegated powers to act.

Level Eight is Citizen Control. This is when citizens have that degree of power (or control) which guarantees that participants or residents can govern a program or an institution, be in full charge of policy and managerial aspects, and be able to negotiate the conditions under which "outsiders" may change them.

### **European policy context**

The general public's trust in the European Union, as in other political institutions, has steadily eroded over the past decades, with a significant drop since the start of the financial and economic crisis in 2008. Jean-Claude Juncker, the President of the European Commission, acknowledged this worrying trend in his inaugural speech at the European Parliament in November 2014, when he set the tone for his 'last-chance Commission': 'Either we succeed in bringing the European citizens closer to Europe — or we will fail'.

When 27 of the European Union's Member States adopted the so-called Bratislava Declaration in September 2016, they presented a clear diagnosis of the reasons for the citizens' current disaffection regarding the EU: members of the general public are worried about what they perceive to be a lack of

control and influence over what is going on around them; and they are concerned about global issues such as migration, terrorism, security and economic and social insecurity.

These concerns have led to a loss of confidence in traditional political institutions, which include the European Union. Indeed, the 2014 European Parliament elections yielded strong results for populist parties. Populism finds fertile soil in

claiming that there is a conflict between the so-called will of the people, which is denoted as pure and honest, and that of the elites, who are portrayed as corrupt and self-interested. Political analysis of recent election results suggests that a significant proportion of voters worry deeply about the domestic effects of EU membership, as they perceive their lives to be in the hands of an 'alien' ruler.

The democratic deficit remains one of the recurring themes of the indictment of the EU. The facts are known. In the sixty years of their existence, the Brussels institutions have not managed to create an authentically democratic space specific to Europe. Despite its repeated and worthy efforts, the European Parliament has not truly managed to occupy this terrain, as illustrated by the weak participation every five years in EU elections. It is ultimately in the States themselves that debates find democratic legitimacy, even if their imperfect nature because they are incomplete is immediately obvious. Exchanges about the EU during the last French presidential campaign were highly revealing in this regard, showing the limited nature of proposals that are necessarily unrealistic for not having been perfected through open debate with the rest of the Europeans. The fact remains that the absence of channels between EU institutions and European citizens, capable of contributing ideas and objections characteristic of any democratic exchange, leads to weak political authority. This original flaw affects all decisions made nearly on a daily basis in Brussels. The new factor introduced by the current European crisis tends to indicate that this weakness, long attributed exclusively to Europe, now extends to the more general crisis of our Western democratic systems. Frustration with the elite coming from a growing part of the electorate both in European countries and the United States and linked to a sense of inability to understand one another and to share the same experiences, today nurtures a gnawing rancour against democratic regimes. This can be seen in a variety of behaviours – abstention, voting for extreme parties... – now openly expressing a rejection of past practices.



The EC has responded to these growing trends and has issued a White Paper on the Future of Europe in March 2017. This states: “Europe and its Member States must move quicker to interact with citizens, be more accountable and deliver better and faster on what has been collectively agreed. ” The White Paper has committed the EC to hold an ongoing process of consultations leading up to the 2019 EP elections. It is within this general context that the workshop in Val de Marne will take place. Our focus will be on how at a local level is it possible to create avenues for participation for migrants so as to facilitate their wider integration.

### **Specific Context in respect to migrants/refugees**

The need to engage migrants in civic matters has long been recognized at EU level.

In 1992, the Council of Europe adopted the Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level with the view to encouraging the active participation of foreign residents in the life of the local community and the development of its prosperity by enhancing their opportunities to participate in local public affairs. Article 6 of the convention grants foreign residents the right to vote and stand for election in local authority elections after 5 years of residency preceding the election.

In 2004, the European Council adopted the Common Basic Principles (CBPs) on Immigrant Integration and in 2005, in its Communication a Common Agenda for Integration, the European Commission developed these principles into a framework with action points at national and European levels.

Concerning immigrant social and political participation, the most central CBPs are:

- CBP1: A variety of measures are adopted by Member States to foster integration as a two-way process. However, to put this principle into practice in a meaningful way is a long-term challenge that requires further effort. Structural initiatives targeting the host population in order to reinforce its ability to adjust to diversity are still underrepresented in national strategies.
- CBP2: Basic values such as liberty, democracy, the rule of law and respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms are considered important elements of new policies. A number of Member States have introduced measures to provide knowledge on basic values in civic orientation programmes.

- CBP7: The importance of daily life interaction and the crucial role of local activities are stressed by most Member States, although the extent to which such activities are reflected in integration strategies varies widely. Measures that promote interaction between immigrants and host society, including setting up shared forums, are still limited.

- CBP9: Immigrant participation in the democratic process is increasingly perceived as a significant component of successful integration. In a growing number of cases, immigrant representatives are involved in the development/implementation of integration policies. In particular, there is a growing interest in active citizenship and naturalisation processes as tools to increase opportunities for involvement in the host society. A rather limited number of Member States provide third-country nationals with voting rights in local elections.

Moreover, CBPs 4, 10 and 11 are indirectly related to issues concerning immigrant social and political participation:

- CBP4: Most Member States consider basic knowledge of the host society language an essential component of integration. Many countries focus their integration strategies on introduction programmes, including (sometimes mandatory) language and civic orientation courses for the newly arrived. A growing number of Member States increase the flexibility of courses in terms of targeting specific needs. Only a few Member States carry out in- depth evaluation of these activities.

- CBP10: Most Member States have improved their capacity to mainstream integration into all relevant policies, while also developing targeted measures. However, effective information sharing, coordinating with all tiers of government and stakeholders, and paying due attention to the mainstreaming of gender equality and to the specific needs of immigrant youth and children, are still major challenges.

- CBP11: Member States increasingly perceive the need to enhance the capacity to collect, analyse and communicate integration-related information, including gender disaggregated statistics, in a more systematic way. More detailed data helps avoid confusion and render the contribution of immigrants to the host society's development more visible. Further progress is

necessary to monitor and evaluate integration policies and programmes and to identify specific indicators.

In 2007 the European Council's conclusions of June meant a change of course for the EU integration agenda by stressing the need to consider approaches to integration involving society as a whole and recognising that intercultural dialogue is an important instrument for fostering integration. This meant that the Commission would explore various notions of participation and citizenship, and examine their influence on the integration process: Platforms for discussion involving stakeholders and representatives of immigrants were encouraged at various levels. Furthering immigrants' access to rights as well as fulfilment of their responsibilities as citizens was seen as a means to create a closer connection with the host societies. The existing forms of participation and policies on citizenship were considered varied and insufficient. In order to further immigrant integration, immigrant participation in the democratic process was to be supported.

As such at EU level there is clear understanding that for the effective functioning of democratic systems it is important that individuals play an active role: as voters, community participants, workers, activists, political party members, etc. Therefore, it is important to also promote the civic and political participation of immigrants and refugees in the host country. Moreover, the civic and political participation of immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees, ultimately supports the diversity of the European community.

### **Some points for discussion/reflection**

- Civic participation in refugee community and migrant organisations can help newly arrived migrants and refugees settle and develop a social network. In addition, these organisations give refugees and migrants a voice. However, since 9/11, Madrid, London, Paris, Nice and other attacks, the fact that migrants and refugees organise themselves is not always seen as something positive, but rather a step towards self-chosen isolation, in particular Muslim organisations are perceived as negative and associated with terrorism and separatism.

- There is a wide range of ways in which immigrants may participate in civic life. The method of participation depends on a variety of factors, including their civic traditions, political structures in their countries of origin, and current capacity in the host country. Hence it is important to try and understand what is the meaning of civic participation in their culture?
- It is critical to appreciate the social organization of immigrant communities in order to understand the structures through which they participate. The organization may imitate that of an immigrant community's country of origin; more likely than not, however, it is a hybrid structure that builds on the traditions of their homeland and has been adapted to fit the "local way. "The social organization of an immigrant community becomes a way in which members provide support to and obtain assistance from each other, share information, and contribute to larger society. These structures that maintain the social organization are influenced by factors such as the characteristics of the different waves of immigrants (e.g., education, gender, age), the political context of their country of origin (e.g., civil war, natural disaster), the political and social climate in the host cities that received the immigrants and the availability of already established networks to welcome and support newly arrived immigrants. These structures become the immigrants' avenues for participation.
- Faith-based and spiritual institutions have different functions in different immigrant communities.
- Ethnic media provide another means to support the social organization of immigrant communities, primarily because the communication is conducted in the immigrants' native languages.
- Native Mother Tongue classes and citizenship workshops also provide a means to develop participation. These programmes often attract large numbers of immigrants, particularly recent newcomers and provide another way to reach them. A majority of these programs are conducted on weekends and evenings. Even though their primary intent is to teach new immigrants how to function biculturally, they can also become social support systems.

- Some migrant cultures promote values that are contradictory to democratic principles, for example, patriarchal structures that serve to obstruct the participation of women or promote the expectation that the leader will take care of everyone in the community. In other cultures in oppressed nations, members learned that participation in any action that questions their government would land them in trouble.

## Section Two: Local Actions to provide education services: Some Case Studies:

### 1. Participatory Citizenship Initiative 'Cidadania Participativa', Amadora (PT)

#### Background:

Cidadania Participativa is an initiative of the youth cultural organisation- Associacao Cultural Moinho da Juventude (ACMJ). ACMJ is a non-profit organization located in the neighborhood of Cova da Moura, in the city of Amadora. ACMJ's overarching mission is community development and empowerment through social, educational, economic and cultural programmes.

The municipality of Amadora has a population of 175,000, 18% of whom are immigrants. 42 different nationalities live in Amadora with the greatest proportion coming from the ex-Portuguese colonies of Cabo Verde (37%), Brazil (17%), Guinea Bissau (12%) and Sao Tome and Principe (6%). Cova da Moura has a population of 6000 with a very young population- 50% are under the age of 25. It is a multicultural neighbourhood characterized by strong relationships of mutual aid. The main challenges to integration in the neighbourhood are stigmatisation and racism, poverty and social exclusion, low level of education and qualifications and social discrimination.

#### The Action:

The objective of the Cidadania Participativa project is to combat poverty and social exclusion through the reinforcement of active participation in society, personal development and acquisition of professional qualifications. The project also aims to combat power imbalances by providing residents with the tools to advocate and fight for their rights and independently problem solve. This includes supporting migrants in acquiring legal documentation and also facilitating inter-generational dialogue through working with special facilitators called the Tandem Team. While the project is open to all it specifically targets immigrants and socially excluded residents.

The Tandem Team model of working is based on teams of 2 people- 1 of whom is an 'experience expert' ie has a migrant background and understands the challenges through their own experience of integration and the other who is an 'academic technician'- who has more of an academic knowledge of the social challenges of integration and broad knowledge of the way this is played out by the socio-political system. These 2 person teams target their work on specific neighbourhoods and help identify and tackle the wide spectrum of challenges faced by the communities.

Individuals are referred to particular services provided by ACMJ which can support their specific needs. Support includes:

- support with acquiring legal documentation around residence permits and the naturalisation process.
- support with employment and training

-social support and advice around the welfare system and health care

-supporting people in exercising their rights and legal disputes.

The project involves participatory group work using creative methods to support personal development and help build confidence of residents to become more confident and active in society



In combination all these actions coordinated by ACMJ support the various elements concerned with integration and help build the capacity of immigrants to participate and have more agency in Portuguese society.

#### **Further Links:**

For more information on ACMJ and Cidadania Participativa  
<http://www.moinhodajuventude.pt/index.php/projetos>

**Contact:** Reginaldo Spinola Coordinator of Citizenship Project ACMJ [cidpartmoinho@gmail.com](mailto:cidpartmoinho@gmail.com)

## **2. The Forum for Integration and Citizenship, Roquetas de Mar (ES)**

### **Background:**

Roquetas de Mar is located in the south of Almeria province in the region of Andalucia. The municipality is 60 square km in size and has experienced rapid population growth in recent decades from 28,000 in 1990 to 96,000 inhabitants in 2017. This growth has been stimulated by economic growth in intensive agriculture and tourism- in summer the population can reach circa 250,000. Roquetas de Mar has become one of the main settlement areas for migrants in Spain (27,454 inhabitants in December 2017). These migrants are attracted by the opportunities offered by the region's agricultural economy. Despite the economic crisis, migrants have continued to arrive. Many are also in Roquetas seeking the right to family reunion.

The migrant population is extremely diverse with the main EU migrant population coming from Romania and the main origin of third party migrants being Senegal, Morocco, Mali, Guinea Bissau and Ghana. The Municipal Office for Immigration was created in 1997 to lead on migrant integration policy and provide



integration support services. The main challenge is to eliminate inequalities between the migrant and Spanish populations through working in a coordinated way between departments and different organisations.

### **The Action:**

The Forum for Integration and Citizenship was established as a mechanism for all agents and organisations involved in migration management in the municipality to come together, discuss and input into policy and activity. It also coordinates the social integration of third country migrants and EU citizens staying in Roquetas de Mar. It's overarching objective is to support the integration of migrants as new citizens who actively take part in all areas of economic, cultural, civic and social life within the municipality.



More specifically the Forum aims to:

- Coordinate the various public and private entities acting in the municipality.
- Enable greater democracy in the development of programmes and actions.
- Carry out information and awareness campaigns around equality, racism and xenophobia.
- Participate in local, regional, national and international initiatives.
- Disseminate good practice.

In practice this involves facilitating the dialogue between migrant communities and the host society and acting to counteract racism and xenophobia including campaigns in the local media. It acts as a conduit through which the views and proposals of organisations working with migrants can be channeled into municipal policy and practice. It also helps share intelligence and broadly maps what is happening in this area. The forum also develops and maintains contact and information exchange with other similar bodies.

The forum holds at least 2 meetings a year with all its members which involves reviewing the current situation and actions taken by the municipality. It also involves reviewing and evaluating municipal plans for the future and therefore influencing and making recommendations for future action. Within this structure, working groups exist to focus on specific issues.



Experience has shown that the Forum has in particular been very useful when dealing with critical situations such as incidences of ethnic based violence. It has also been an effective vehicle to generate a number of new initiatives such as Healthy and Wealthy, Arrival Cities (URBACT) and EDUSI Roquetas 2020 (ERDF Operational Programme). However an issue or tension pertaining to such Forums has been how to avoid vested interests and political targeting by some members. Another issue has been how to ensure equality and participation of all, in particular in relation to NGO members. The Forum more recently became an enlarged advisory council within the municipality.

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### **3. Bringing Immigrants to the Polls, Vantaa (FI)**

Vantaa is the most multicultural city in Finland. 36,000 of a total population of 219,341 (16.6% of total population) have a mother tongue other than Finnish or Swedish. The city council (kunnanvaltuusto) of Vantaa is made up of elected members with elections taking place every 4 years. Those eligible to vote are citizens of Finland, other EU countries, Norway or Iceland and those from outside of these countries who have held a residence permit for at least 2 years. All voters must have lived in the municipality for at least 51 days.

In comparison to the national voting turnout, the City of Vantaa is comparatively lower than other cities. However, residents with immigrant backgrounds have a considerably higher voting turnout. 6 out of 67 city council members are from immigrant backgrounds- 3 males and 3 females. Despite this there are a number of challenges associated with election turnout amongst immigrants- lack of information; a lack of understanding of the implications of not voting; limited contact with candidates or political parties; language barriers and cultural differences.

#### **The Action:**

In response, the City of Vantaa undertook a number of actions to try and boost migrant political participation for the recent 2017 elections under it's Active Participation Strategy. It worked with NGOs to disseminate better information about voting through grassroots campaigns. It increased and improved it's use of social media to communicate this information as well. It ran a 'getting out to vote' campaign and all new voters were issued with information on how to vote and reasons for voting. Workshops and discussion groups on the theme of voting rights and the importance of voting were held. Vantaa municipality, in cooperation with local NGOs, organized several panel discussions on themes that the migrant population would be particularly interested in.

In addition, Vantaa also cooperated with the Ministry of Justice's campaign called "Kaikkien Vaalit". The 'Kaikkien Vaalit' campaign was created as part of the national iCount project in 2012-2015, whose main objectives were to promote social participation and citizen activity among migrants. The first Kaikkien Vaalit tour was organised before the parliamentary elections in 2015. Due to the very positive feedback and experiences from the tour, it was deemed important to organise a similar nationwide tour before the municipal elections.



Faisal Abdi, the first member of the City executive board with an immigrant background

The 2017 tour was part of the 'multicultural independence'-projects, which were coordinated by Moniheli ry and that belong to the official 'Finland 100'-programme. The implementation of the tour was supported by the Ministry of Justice as well as the National Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations. The objective of the 2017 Kaikkien Vaalit-campaign was to diversify the civil and social debate before the municipal elections, to enable a more diverse interaction with all the issues of the Finnish society. Furthermore, the objective was to encourage new Finnish citizens to utilise their right to vote as well as increase the interest in social participation.

#### **Further Information:**

For more information on the Ministry of Justice's campaign "Kaikkien Vaalit, see <https://moniheli-fi-bin.directo.fi/@Bin/e4049793dd543ea0217fbef1b86a5df2/1521534601/application/pdf/355145/Kaikkien%20Vaalit%20Raportti%202017.pdf>

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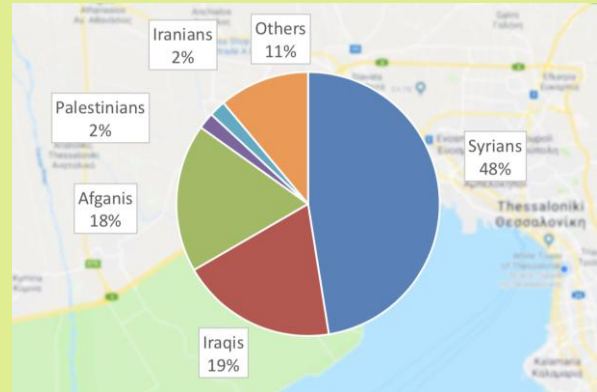
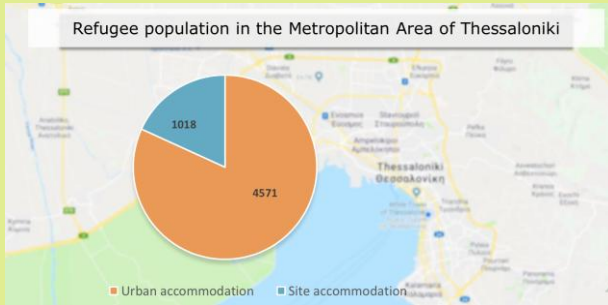
#### **4. The Migrants Integration Council, Thessaloniki (EL)**

##### **Background:**

With the closure and shrinking of camps within the region, there has been a transition from a camp management response to an urban response with the refugee population becoming increasingly urbanised within Thessaloniki. This has happened within the context of Greece being in its eighth year of deep financial crisis, high unemployment (24%) within Thessaloniki and limited resources available for social policy and integration activities. The refugee population in Thessaloniki is diverse- multicultural and multi lingual.

In April 2016, Thessaloniki was one of the first municipalities in Greece to implement a refugee accommodation scheme funded by the EU and implemented by the UNHCR. This meant that the municipality took over responsibility of ensuring the provision of 660 places in rented apartments for asylum seekers across the metropolitan area implemented through the REACT (Refugee Assistance Collaboration Thessaloniki) programme. The current target capacity of REACT is 830 places and it is expected to exceed 1000 during 2018.

While Greece has been perceived as a transit rather than destination country, this is shifting with many refugees likely to end up in Greece for the longer term. This has driven a need for policies and solutions in which refugees are stakeholders with political agency rather than simply being recipients of aid.



### The Action:

The Migrant Integration Council (MIC) has been set up at the municipal level as the formal and legitimate body to represent the migrant voice and express migrant concerns in Thessaloniki. The MIC has been operating since the beginning of 2017 and in July 2017, participation was opened up to refugees and asylum seekers. However a number of barriers have made refugee representation problematic both in terms of eligibility and accessibility:

- The meetings of the MIC take place in Greek.
- The majority of refugees and asylum seekers are still dependent in terms of accommodation and basic needs. As a result they are indifferent or reluctant to be included in a participatory procedure
- There are still not any official associations of recently arrived refugees that could designate a representative.

In response following a review of the MIC, a number of activities have been undertaken to improve representation of refugees and improve the municipality's democratic processes.

Special attention and effort was given to mobilizing the community, identifying eligible candidates and undertaking community engagement activities. An information campaign about the role of the MIC was conducted in refugee and community centres throughout the city. A meeting was then held for those who expressed an interest in becoming involved in the MIC. Although the language barrier still hugely limits the amount of people eligible and able to take part in the MIC, some migrants have become active. The MIC is now composed of representatives of the City Council, refugee community, Greek human rights NGOs, Thessaloniki's bar association and migrants associations. It has begun to better identify and tackle issues raised as a priority by refugees such as the issues created by not being to register as unemployed.

However the body continues to remain an advocacy body which has no formal decision making authority.

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## **5. Building the Bridge, Bristol (UK)**

### **Background:**

Bristol is a city in South–West England with a long history of immigration and an ethnically diverse population- 16% of it's 454,200 population belongs to a black or minority ethnic group. The Muslim population in Bristol is expanding and diversifying: in addition to Bristol's long established Muslim communities with roots in South Asia and smaller Arab, Turkish, Iranian and Kurdish populations, the settlement of Somali Muslims in the city has been a notable recent development, and Somalis now comprise the largest ethnic group of Muslims in the city. The number of those self-ascribing as Muslim has risen considerable in the last ten years from 2% of the population in 2001 to currently 5.1% (slightly larger than the UK national average of 4.8%).

A 2001 study of political representation and participation of BME communities suggested that ethnic minorities were effectively politically disenfranchised in Bristol. The study found that poor electoral registration rates, negative perceptions of the local authority, underrepresentation within the Council and statutory agencies, lack of consultation, leadership problems, racism and the absence of a politicisation of race were the main reasons for these participatory deficits. In the past 15 years this situation has improved and in the 2013 elections there was a rise in councilors with ethnic minority backgrounds, a Muslim lord mayor and an elected mayor with a Jamaican father. A number of initiatives have also helped to address the imbalance and lack of political inclusion, one of which has been Building the Bridge.

### **The Action:**

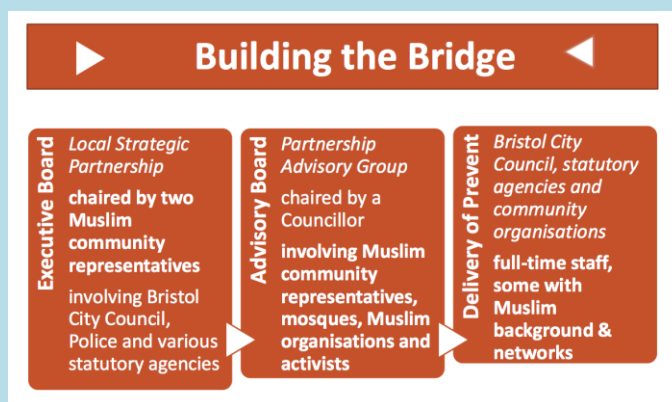
Building the Bridge was an organisation set up in 2008 in Bristol to deliver the Prevent agenda-part of the then UK governments counter terrorism and violent extremism strategy. The Prevent agenda was heavily criticised for it's focus on Muslim populations and was seen by some as a mechanism for extra surveillance of these communities and an instrument of discursive and institutional control. However there was a significant variation in the way Prevent played out at the local level with some funding and strategy devolved to municipalities. In Bristol a unique participatory approach was developed focusing on community engagement, collaboration and democratising and diversifying local decision-making. It went far beyond a narrow focus on prevention of extremism and instead sought to develop better representation of the Muslim communities in local democratic process and institutions.

Building the Bridge emerged as a participatory mechanism for community engagement that established a new institutionalised relationship between Bristol City Council, the Police, various statutory agencies and Bristol's diverse Muslim community. It provided several institutional mechanisms for Muslim community involvement, including leadership capacity-building, agenda setting powers and representation of a variety of perspectives in an advisory body.

The forum enabled the Muslim community to raise public authorities' awareness of community concerns and discuss the implications of local politics and policing practices. The ad-hoc organisational structure had a significant impact on the density of contacts and interactions between local authorities and the Muslim community, and thus addressed some of the previous deficits regarding Muslims' political representation in the city.

From the outset, Muslim community representatives were involved in designing Building the Bridge, not only through their presence at the table, but also by shaping its institutional design. One of the first initiatives was a community conference at which it was decided to change the name of the programme from Prevent to Building the Bridge. Great effort was put into ensuring community and Muslim representation through the institutional operations of the programme and partnerships. While this was met with some concern and nervousness from some within the council and police it was also generally acknowledged that this was the key to success.

It was also decided that the executive board would be chaired by a Muslim community representative. To allow for the involvement of the wider Muslim community a Partnership Advisory Group (PAG) was set up which consisted of a range of organisations and non-affiliated Muslim community representatives who were to advise the Local Strategic Partnership. Bristol City Council and the Police furthermore appointed full-time staff, in several cases themselves with a Muslim ethno-religious background, to administer Building the Bridge meetings and activities. The table below illustrates how multiple mechanisms of community involvement applied that allowed for power ‘checks and balances’ on the part of Muslim community members.



As well as bring together public authorities with Muslim communities, the forum also institutionalised the ongoing conversations across diverse Muslim communities in the city. It also paved the way for a range of public bodies in the city to develop greater representation from Muslim residents. During the mayoral election, Building the Bridge was instrumental in organising hustings specifically focused on Muslim community issues with all candidates who ran for Mayor and Police and Crime Commissioner.

Building the Bridge created a new ‘political opportunity structure’ for Muslim claims-making in the city, that enabled certain issues to be aired and addressed. However it has also highlighted some of the challenges inherent in expanding the voice of a diverse and multifaceted community. This includes the issue of representation with some groups getting more attention than others and the inequalities inherent within groups based on ethnicity, class and gender.

**Further Resources:**

A link to the a report on the full Building the Bridge Programme is here <http://www.publicspirit.org.uk/assets/Building-the-Bridge-Report-2014.pdf>

All Mosques Together <https://www.allmosquestogether.org/building-the-bridge/>

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## 6. Minderhedenforum (Minority Forum), Antwerp (BE)

### Background:

Antwerp is a port city is the Flemish speaking part of Belgium with a population of 520,504. Nearly 30% of it's population are foreign-born with these residents coming from over 170 different countries. Reflecting this large and diver population, there are over 120 ethno-cultural organisations in the city, including an 'Ethnic Minorities Council', an umbrella organisation with representatives from a range of minority organisations.

However, by 2010 this organisation was being increasingly viewed as polarising and ineffective in it's role and not regarded as a source of policy advice. A number of issues had come up including in 2009 controversy over a widespread ban on head scarf's in schools in the city and the banning of the wearing of religious symbols by city employees. This followed elections in 2006 resulting in a far-right Flemish nationalist party receiving 30% of the vote and the publishing of a report that indicating that Muslims felt little trust in the city institutions. The city decided that it had to significantly improve it's relations with minority groups and community organisations and support a new system of minority representation.

### The Activity:

In the face of these controversies and rise of right wing politics and in advance of 2012 local elections, the municipality approached the Brussels based umbrella organisation Minderhedenforum for support. This forum had been set up to help give a better voice to minorities in the political system and to provide a bridge between member organisations and governmental organisations. The organisation at the time represented 17 minority federations constituting over 1,500 organisations and had an established track record as a participatory organisation connecting with different levels of government.

The city invited the Forum to open a new branch in Antwerp with the following aims:

- To strengthen cooperation between existing federations through consultation and discussion.
- To expand and diversify networks including linking the federations to non-migrants organisations.
- To encourage participation in local government policy with a focus on the 2012 elections and organising a training programme for better political engagement.



While previously Minderhedenforum had focused on working with federations, in Antwerp it opened up participation to individuals not formally connected to member federations. This expanded the diversity of communities participating and being represented and better allowed the smaller minority populations to participate. In order to prepare minority communities for the elections, the Forum developed guidance and facilitated connections between voters, local minority organisations and politicians.



It developed tools to provide training for voters to share information around the local democratic process, the policies of different parties and process for registration and voting. The Forum also developed media workshops with young people and local journalists to promote a greater voice for minority youth.

Critical to the success of this new process of political engagement and representation was that Antwerp City Council recognised Minderhedenforum as an independent organisation with a critical and third party voice for minority interests. The Forum was clear from the beginning that it was not interested in short-term role but was interested in facilitating better representation of minorities in local government in the long-term and with an independent agenda. Following the 2012 elections, the city committed to working with the Forum over the longer-term. It has create a Memorandum for the upcoming 2018 municipal elections which it is hoped will act as a long-term basis for future administrations to implement and maintain a set of processes and practices to ensure the proportional and full participation of Antwerp's diverse minorities populations.



**Further Information:**

Minderheden (Minority) Forum <http://www.minderhedenforum.be/> This website links to the Memorandum for the 2018 elections (in Flemish)

**Contact:** [info@minderhedenforum.be](mailto:info@minderhedenforum.be)

## 7. Migrant Volunteer Programme, Prague (CZ)

**Background:**

According to 2017 statistics, more than 190,000 foreign nationals were living in Prague, making up almost 15% of the total population of the city. This represents more than 3 times the national average.

Immigrants living in Prague are a diverse group of people, in terms of countries of origin, economic status and level of proficiency in Czech. The study shows that, when it comes to migrants from outside the EU, Prague primarily attracts well-educated and economically active migrants who often move with their families to the Czech Republic where they stay for long period (8 years on average) and are integrated. Prague however also attracts migrants who are hired for precarious positions. Approximately, every fifth employed migrant in Prague performs an unskilled or ancillary labour. This group may be in danger of destitution and marginalisation, due to low incomes, uncertain residency status and limited knowledge of Czech.

### **The Activity:**

The Migrant Volunteer Programme was established by Prague based NGO AMIGA in order to support migrants to become active in Prague as volunteers in order to support integration and involve them more in the civic life of the city. It was financed by grants from the Prague 2 City District. The scheme aims to reduce isolation amongst migrant communities and create pathways for better participation in Czech society. It aims to support migrants to adapt to the new socio-cultural environment and build new networks as well as connect better to civic life. The NGO AMIGA have acted as a broker between potential migrant volunteers and organisations with volunteer opportunities.

AMIGA was established in 2010 by researchers based in local universities in order to support better integration of migrant populations and tap into the unfulfilled potential of migrants in the city to participate in the voluntary sector. The organisation created a volunteer centre targeted at migrant groups but open to all. AMIGA has coordinated with local organisations and local government to create a range of volunteering opportunities. The volunteer centre also provides a number of support services for migrants, including clubs and activities, courses and training, free legal advice and counselling support.



Between 2010-2015 a varied programme of volunteering was tried and tested. This was followed by a programme linked more specifically into improving the offer and quality of social services for older people called 'Volunteers with an Accent- Helping Seniors and Building Civil Society'. Volunteers have provided a range of support including personal assistance to elderly people, facilitating physical activity such as yoga classes, running cultural and educational activities such as cooking, language skills, handicraft and giving talks about their home countries.

While the expansion of the initiative has been limited by the fact that it is completely volunteer led- including overall project and financial management it has received positive feedback and demand from potential volunteers. A short documentary about the Project 'Elena' won first prize in the competition 'Migrants in the Spotlight' and it was nominated for the national award 'Nadezda' for best initiatives in the field of migrant integration.

### **Further Information:**

<http://amiga-migrant.eu/>

### **Contact:**

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## 8. Civic Leadership Programme, Birmingham, UK

### Background:

In the UK, just 4% of the national Members of Parliament (MPs) and local councillors originate from an ethnic minority background, despite minorities making up 14% of the wider population. The absence of ethnic minority leaders is common across other areas of public life too, including in local policing, education and the voluntary sector.

Operation Black Vote (OBV) was started in 1996 as a collaboration between two organisations: Charter88 which campaigns for democratic reform; and the 1990 Trust a national generic policy research and networking organisation. The overall aim of OBV is to support greater racial justice and equality throughout the UK working within the democratic and civic framework to deliver our objectives. They seek to inspire Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities to engage with public institutions in order to address the persistent race inequalities we face in areas such as: education, health and employment. Their work spans a number of areas including voter registration, lobbying politicians, mentoring schemes and political leadership programmes.

The Civic Leadership Programme is a methodology developed by Operation Black Vote who have worked with a number of local authorities across the UK to address the deficit of Black and minority ethnic individuals (BME) in all areas and at levels of civic and public life.

### The Activity:

The Civic Leadership Programme aims to tackle the under representation of BME individuals in many areas of civic and public life and also demystify the functions of key public institutions through training and work shadowing. The initiative has focused on giving participants first-hand knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of Board Members, Trustees and other public appointees and an insight into the systems and procedures of public bodies. Individuals were recruited through an open call for applications. Participants shadow officials for up to ten days over the course of six months, supported by additional practical training provided by OBV and by mentoring support to regularly assess their progress.



The main aims of the programme are:

- To gain invaluable experience of life as a Public Appointee.

- To give participants the opportunity to explore their chosen areas of public life.
- To obtain a variety of transferable skills and the confidence to use those skills to consider become a civic leader.
- To equip participants with both the knowledge and the confidence to speak to others about civic engagement, and how they may get involved.
- To improve the representation of BME communities in areas of public life.
- To give Public Appointees the opportunity to gain greater understanding of different aspects of the diverse communities they seek to serve.

Participants are encouraged to become Community Ambassadors, explaining and promoting the benefits of civic engagement and encouraging others to become involved in community affairs. The scheme gives Board Members and public appointees an opportunity to gain a greater understanding of BME communities.

Participants attend observation and training sessions that will allow them to become familiar with:

- How each area of public life works
- Roles and responsibilities of being a Public Appointee
- The process and procedures of each area of public life
- Benefit to the community of each area of public life
- How Public Appointments are made

The scheme also includes a learning seminar looking at areas such as:

- Developing leadership techniques
- Presentation and public speaking skills
- The importance of civic activism
- Issues regarding race, equality and BME representation

The programme was implemented in Birmingham in 2013 and set out to provide a fast track education in civic leadership. The programme in Birmingham introduced 40 potential ethnic minority leaders in Wolverhampton and Birmingham to the reality of public life in four main areas over a six month period:

- politics (through placements with local councillors);
- education (school governors);
- the criminal justice system (Safer Neighbourhood Teams); and
- the community sector (charity trustees).

The success of OBV's civic leadership programs has attracted numerous political awards including the UK Local Government Chronicle Award, the Channel 4 Political Award and the Ebony Business Recognition Award.

**Further Information:**

<http://www.obv.org.uk/what-we-do>

### Section Three: Additional Resources

This section provides access to additional background reports and also other case studies relating to the theme:

- [Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, \(2016\), Time for Europe to get migrant integration right, Issue Paper.](#)
- [Facing 2020: Developing a New European Agenda for Immigration and Asylum Policy](#)
- [WHITE PAPER ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE](#)
- [COMMUNICATING 'EUROPE' TO ITS CITIZENS: STATE OF AFFAIRS AND PROSPECTS \(Study\)](#)
- [Challenges to electoral participation in the European elections of 2014. Restoring Electoral Faith: Prospects and Risks](#)
- [Migration: root causes & migrants' civic participation in hosting communities](#)
- Current global research programme: [Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Democracy](#)

### Section Four: Workshop materials

This section provides access to the workshop material:

The [agenda](#) of the workshop

Presentations of Case Studies ([Amadora](#), [Roquetas de Mar](#), [Thessaloniki](#), [Vantaa](#))

Some [photo's](#) on our Facebook album.

This report has been produced by Haroon Saad (lead expert) and Ruth Essex (support expert) for the Arrival Cities Network.

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