URGENT

Urban Regeneration: European Network of Towns

SURVEY ANALYSIS: URBAN INCLUSION OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS

HOW LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS ARE REACTING/RESPONDING TO THE NEW CHALLENGES INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION POSES TO EUROPEAN CITIES

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

BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT

This survey analysis is part of the URGENT Project co-financed by the Europe for Citizens Programme of the European Union. URGENT is a two-year project led by ALDA – the European Association for Local Democracy (France), and involving 12 other European partners. The aim of this survey analysis is to present the results of the consultation held across Europe on the reactions and responses of local stakeholders to the new challenges posed by international migration.

Reuniting three local authorities, four associations of local authorities, four civil society organisations, an academic institution and a foundation, the main objective of the URGENT project is to improve social cohesion in local communities by promoting migrants' integration through the development or urban policies fostering intercultural dialogue and the use of common spaces. Implemented from September 2016 to August 2018, the URGENT project focuses on "local paths" implemented in one city per each partner country (except in Italy, where activities take place in two cities). During these local paths the cities get familiar with migration issues at local level in order to then elaborate pilot project ideas for intercultural dialogue in deprived and conflicting areas and finally implement these pilot projects on the ground. In between the three phases of the local paths, international events are organised in different countries for partner cities to compare their situation, share problems and potential solutions.

There are four main objectives in the URGENT project:

Objective 1: To create spaces of discussion and mutual learning among citizens from different socio-cultural backgrounds and from different countries of Europe.

Objective 2: To foster active citizenship and co-creation of policies and services n local societies, particularly for citizens who are often excluded from the decision-making processes.

Objective 3: To enhance the capacity of local institutions to be "multipliers" in their own communities in order to engage a wide range of stakeholders.

Objective 4: To provide a new impetus to the EU enlargement process, contributing to the establishment of a long-lasting thematic network of cities that are strongly active and committed as key players in Europe.

Leading partner: ALDA – the European Association for Local Democracy – France

Project partners:

SSIIM Unesco Chair, Iuav University of Venice - Italy
Local Democracy Agency Mostar – Bosnia and Herzegovina
Association of Albanian Municipalities – Albania
SPES – Associazione Promozione e Solidarietà – Italy
SOS Malta – Solidarity Overseas Service – Malta
Fundación Privada Indera – Spain
Municipality of Kumanovo – Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation Amphictyony – Greece
Kallipolis – Italy
Rede DLBC Lisboa – Portugal
City of Strasbourg – France
Municipality of Novo Mesto - Slovenia

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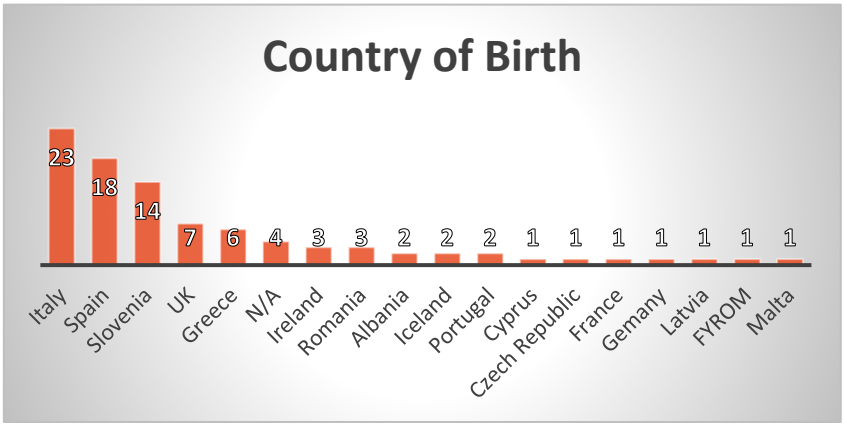
INTRODUCTION

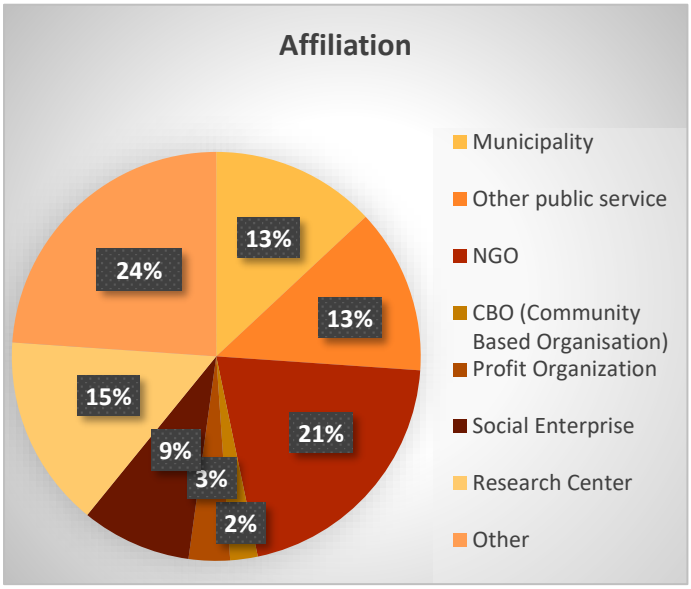
In today's Europe, we are reaching alarming levels of urban fragmentation, inequality and structural socio-spatial divisions within our cities, feeding extremism and radicalisation. Most vulnerable people are often bound to concentrate in disadvantaged areas where social exclusion and deprivation usually overlap with multi-ethnicity, which further challenges social cohesion. Increasingly marginalized and stigmatised, these areas and their inhabitants are pushed into a vicious circle of poverty. In this context, and through a bottom-up approach to raise local awareness on the urgent need to establish new connections among inhabitants of marginalized neighbourhoods and those of central areas, URGENT aims at tackling the growing fear of immigration, which feeds Eurosceptic attitudes.

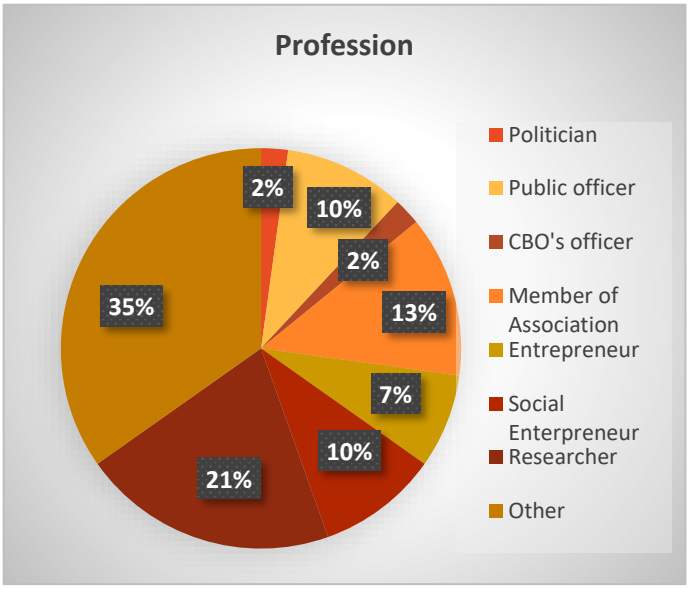
Part of its activities, URGENT launched a survey to investigate how local stakeholders are reacting/responding to the new challenges international migration poses to European cities

METHODOLOGY

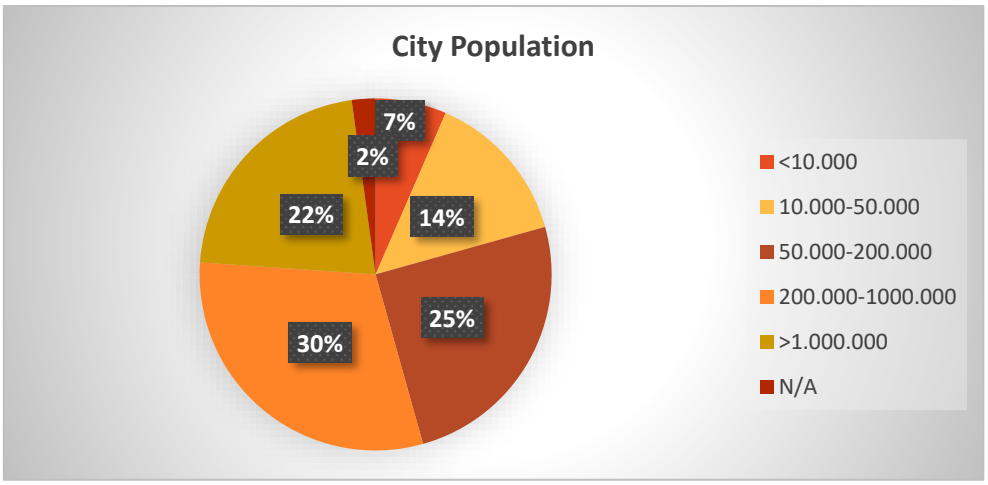
The survey was taken by a sample of 92 respondents (politicians, public officers, members of associations, entrepreneurs, researchers, students, private or public-sector employees, etc.) from 18 European countries. Italy, Spain and Slovenia are the countries more than 50% respondents come from representing various sectors such as NGOs, municipality, CBOs (Community Based Organisations), social enterprises, research centres, etc.



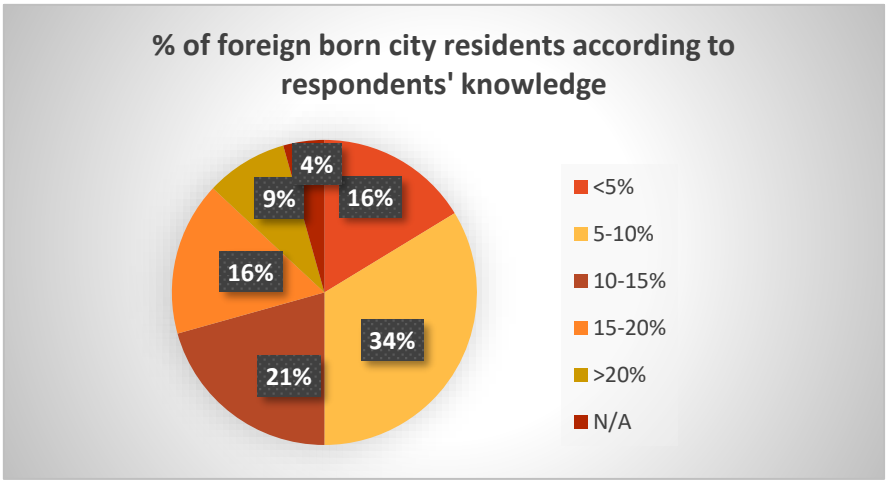


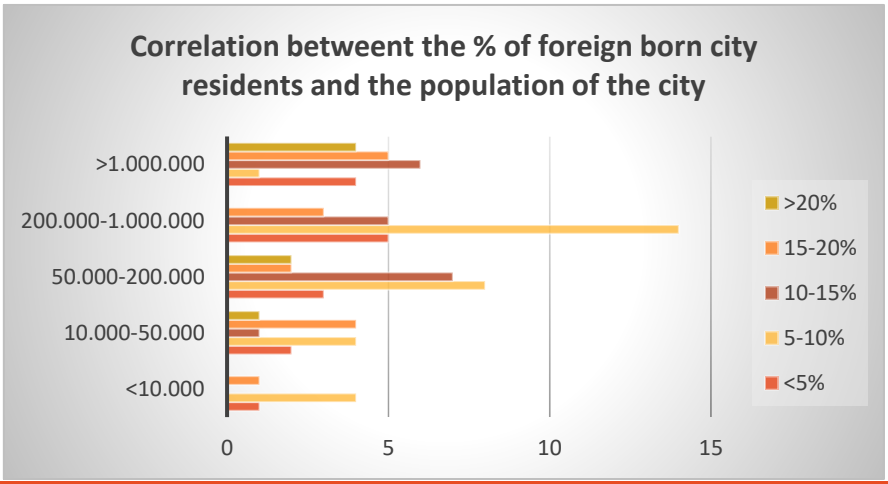


More than 50% of the participants at the survey come from medium (200.000-1.000.000) and large (>1.000.000) cities while the other half of the respondents represent cities with less than 200.000 inhabitants.



The survey shows that 35% of the respondents perceive the percentage of foreign born city according to their knowledge of about 5-10%. This being particularly characteristic for small and medium cities. 21% of the respondents consider the rate being higher, of 10-15% which can be correlated with cities having a population larger than 1.000.000 inhabitants.

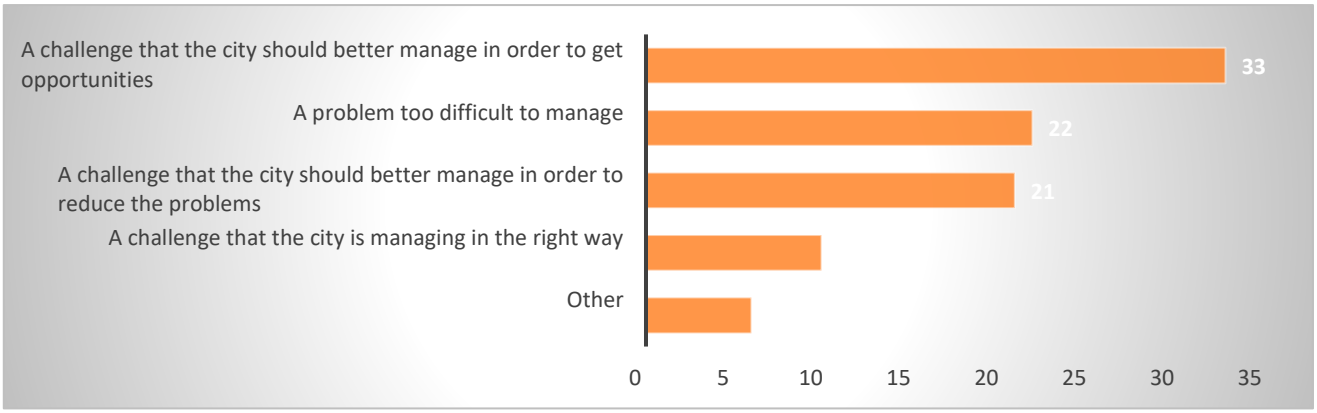




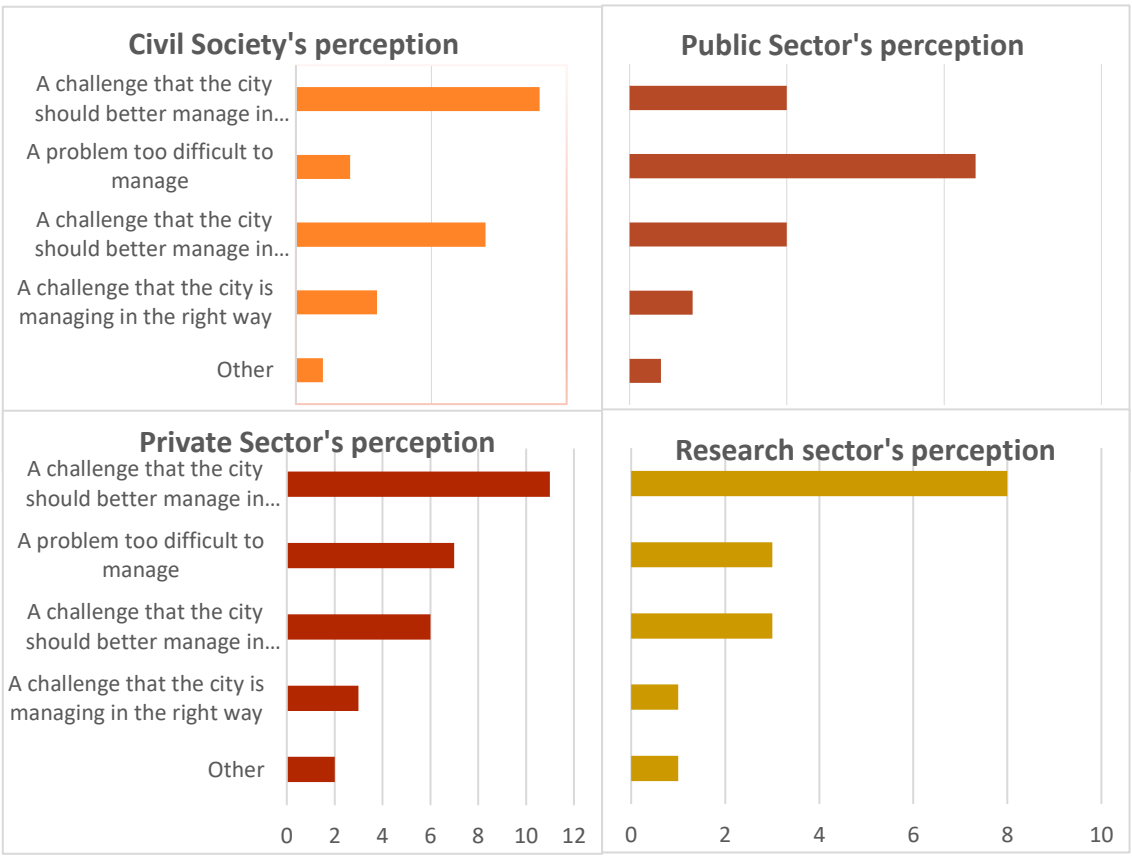
SURVEY RESULTS – PART 1

Aiming to explore the problems and perceptions of the respondents, the first part of the questionnaire raises the awareness and explores the opinions on how international migration is perceived in different cities.

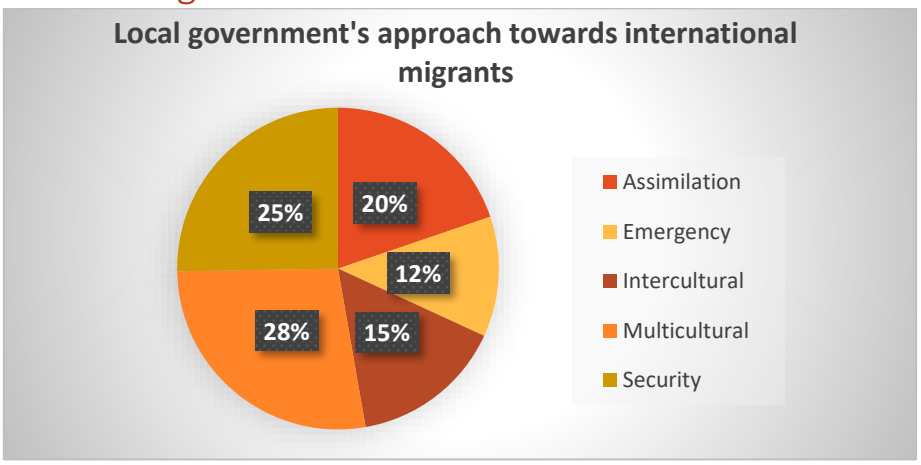
1. In your opinion, international migration in your city is considered as:



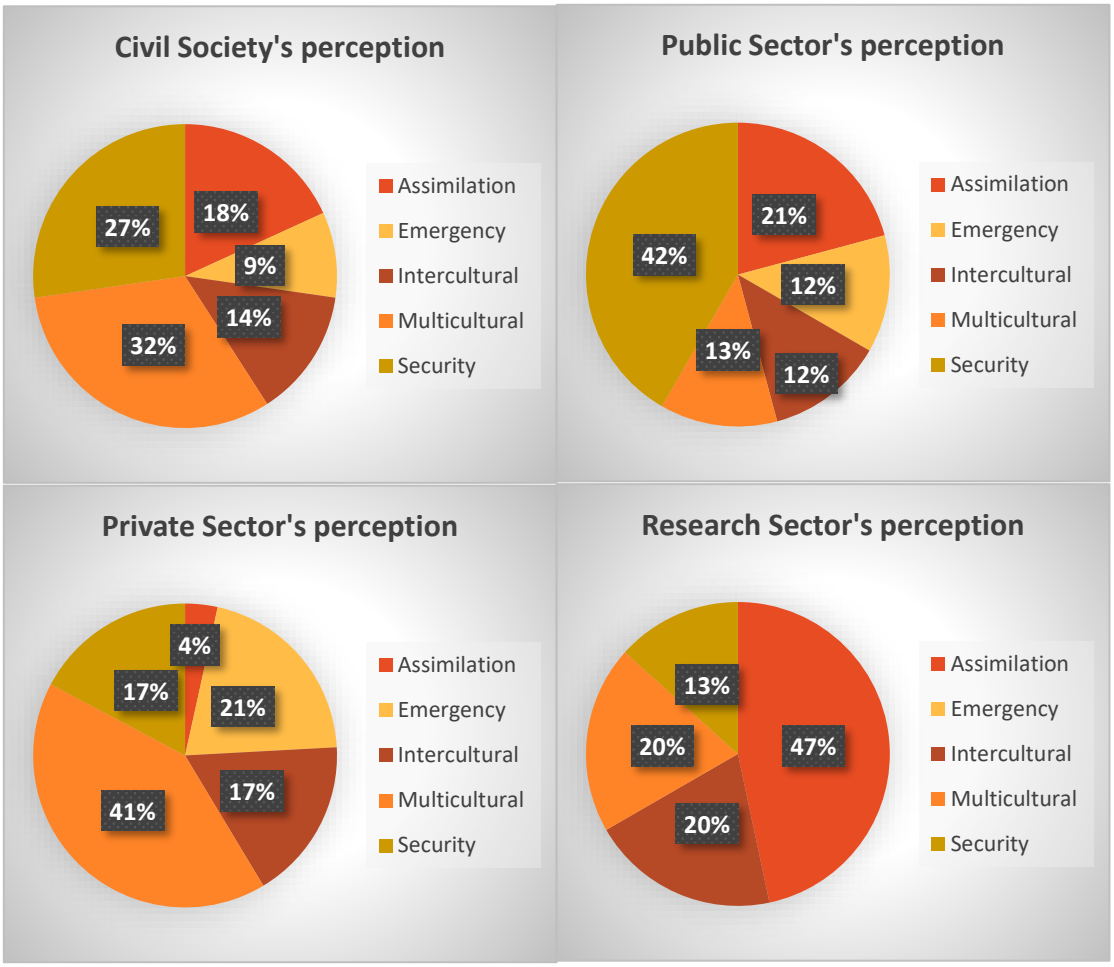
The overall results show that international migration is seen mostly as a challenge that city should better manage in order to get opportunities by about 36% of the respondents. Zooming in the responses, one can see that this opinion is particularly shared by civil society, private and research sectors, while the public-sector representatives see international migration rather as a problem too difficult to manage.



2. How would you define the local government approach towards international migrants?

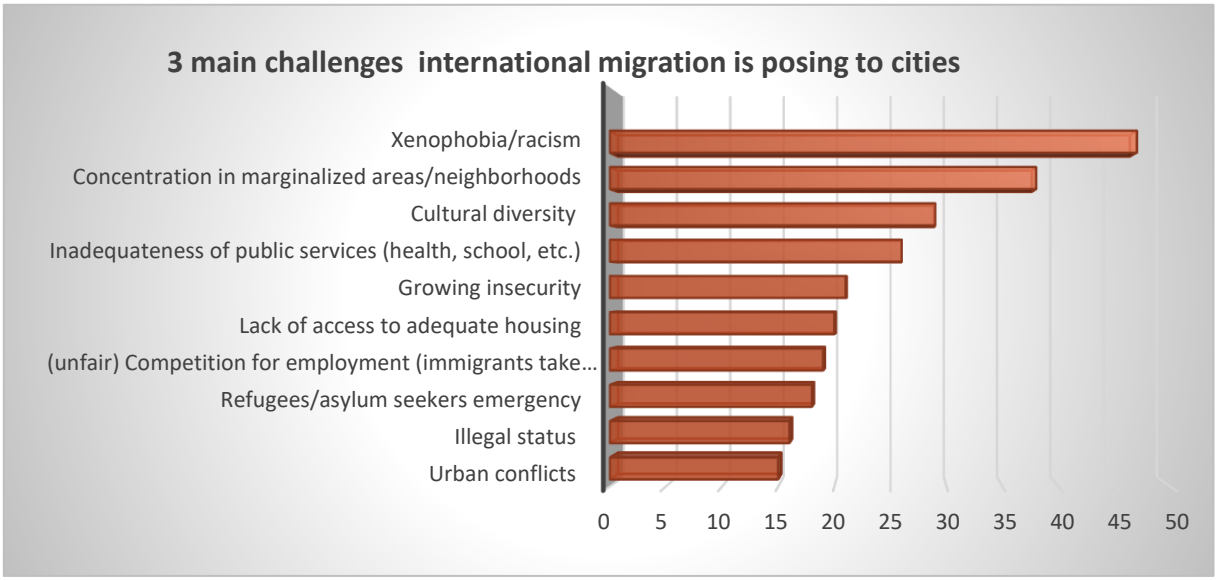


The results show that 28% of the respondents consider the government having a multicultural approach, followed by 25% thinking it's a security one and 20%-assimilation. At the same time, it is worth observing the same distribution according to sectors of activity. 32 % of civil society and 41% of the private sector think that government has a multicultural approach. On the contrary, 42% of the representatives of the public sector think it's a security one while 47% of the research community think it's assimilation.



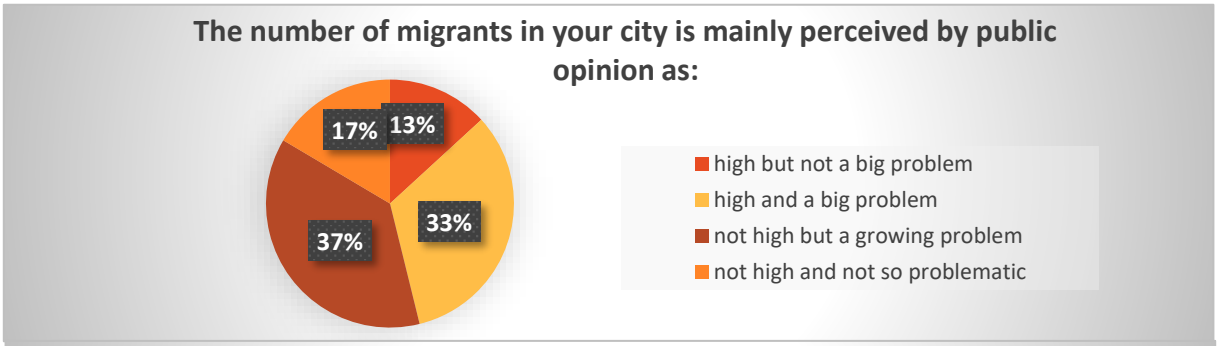
3. In your opinion, what are the 3 main challenges international migration is posing to your city?

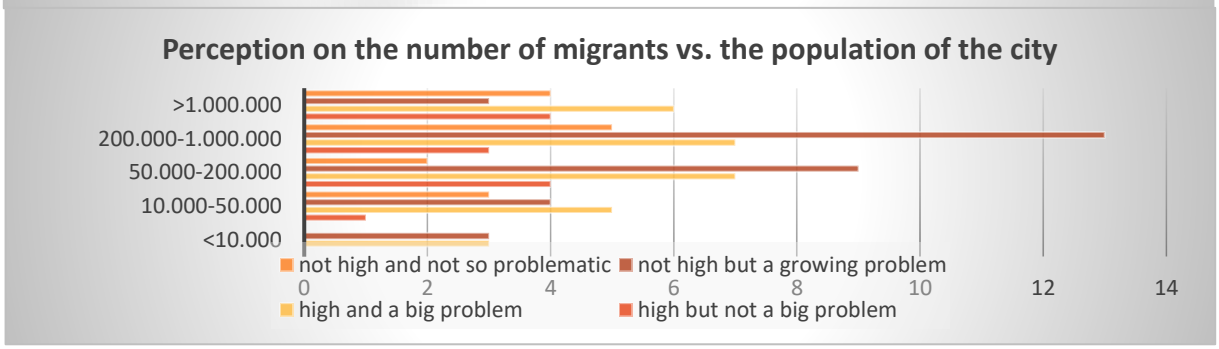
The answers at the survey revealed 3 top challenges international migration is posing according to the participants' opinion. These are: xenophobia/racism, concentration in marginalized areas/neighbourhoods, and the cultural diversity.



4. The number of migrants in your city is mainly perceived by public opinion as?

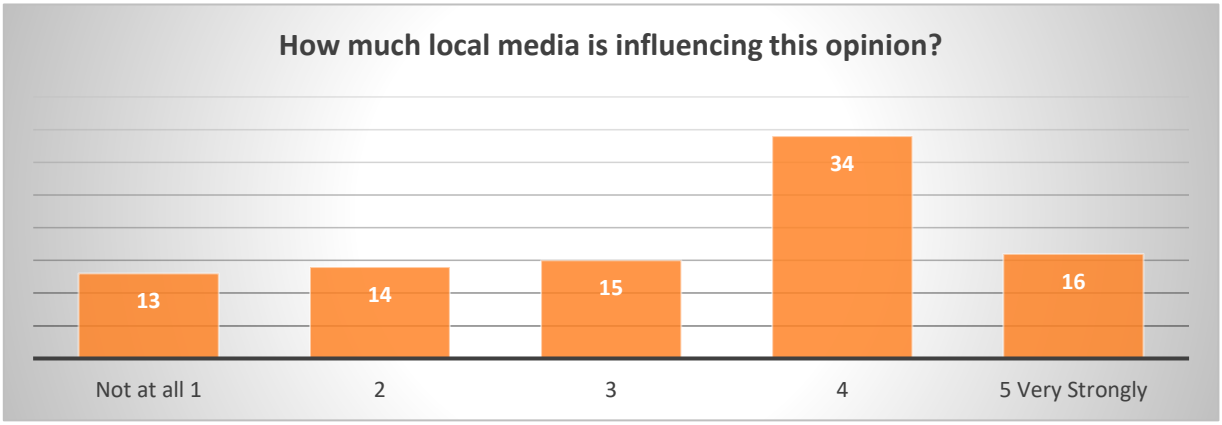
37% of respondents consider the number of migrants not high at the moment but a growing problem. This is more characteristic to cities of 50.000 to 1.000.000 inhabitants, while other 33% of the answers show that the number is perceived as high and a big problem particularly in cities smaller than 50.000 inhabitants or more than 1.000.000.





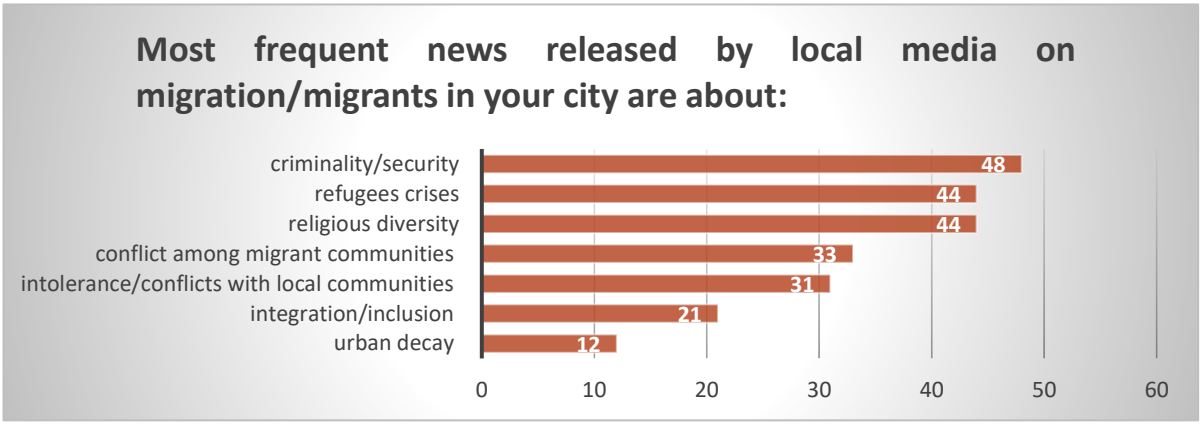
5. How much local media is influencing this opinion?

A bit more than 50 % of the respondents think that the public opinion on how the number of migrants is perceived in each country is strongly and very strongly influenced by the local media, while the other 50% think the local media have a less role to play.



6. Most frequent news released by local media on migration/migrants in your city are about?

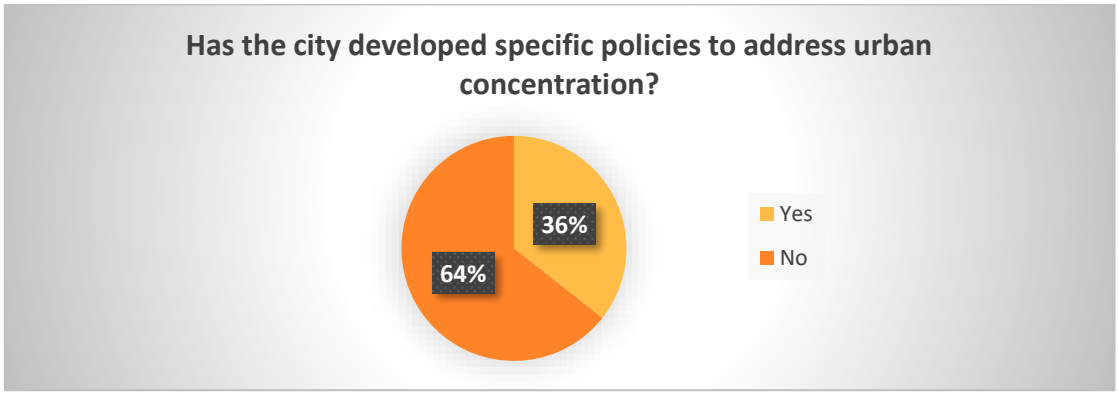
Trying to understand better the role of local media, the respondents highlighted criminality/security, refugee crises and religious diversity topics among the most frequent released in the local news.



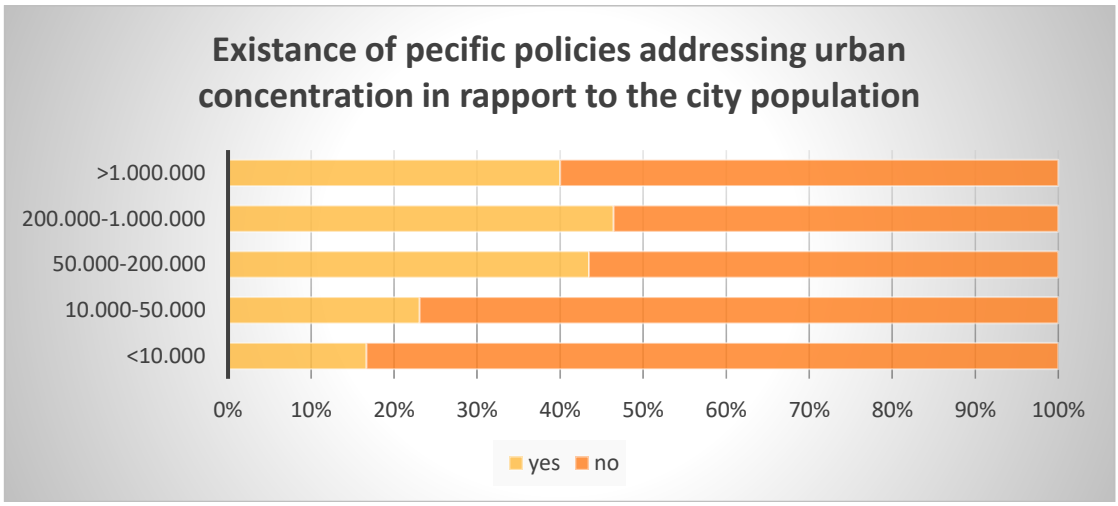
7. How are migrants distributed in your city?

Tackling the distribution issue of the migrants, 41% of respondents think that some groups are more concentrated, others much less. Moreover, when talking about the concentration in some areas/neighbourhoods, city centre is chosen in 55% of the cases.

8. Has the city developed specific policies to address urban concentration?



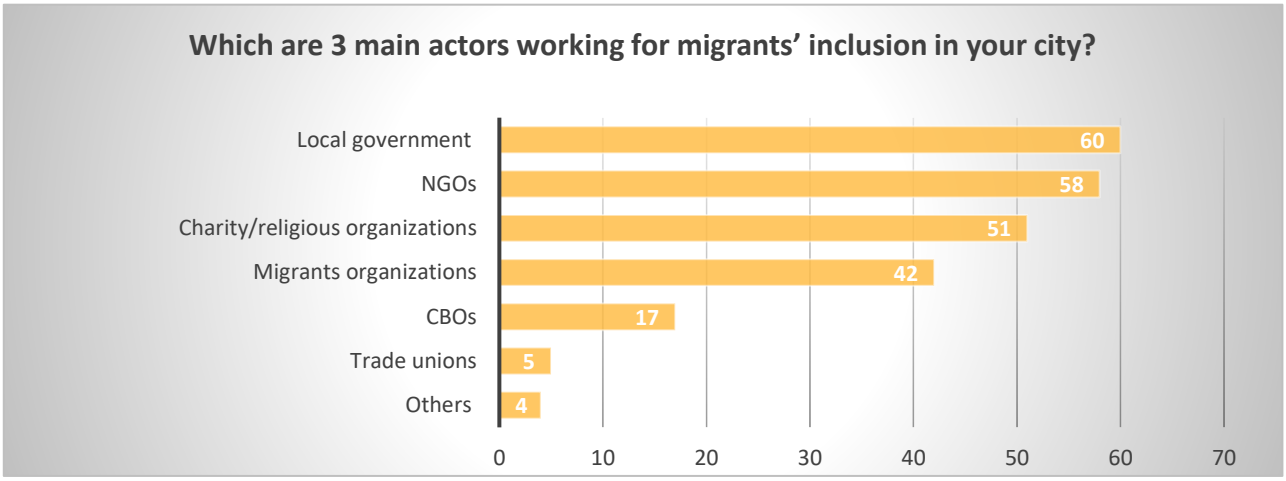
64% of the survey respondents think cities are lacking specific policies to address urban concentration. The issue becomes more prominent in particular for cities smaller than 50.000 inhabitants.



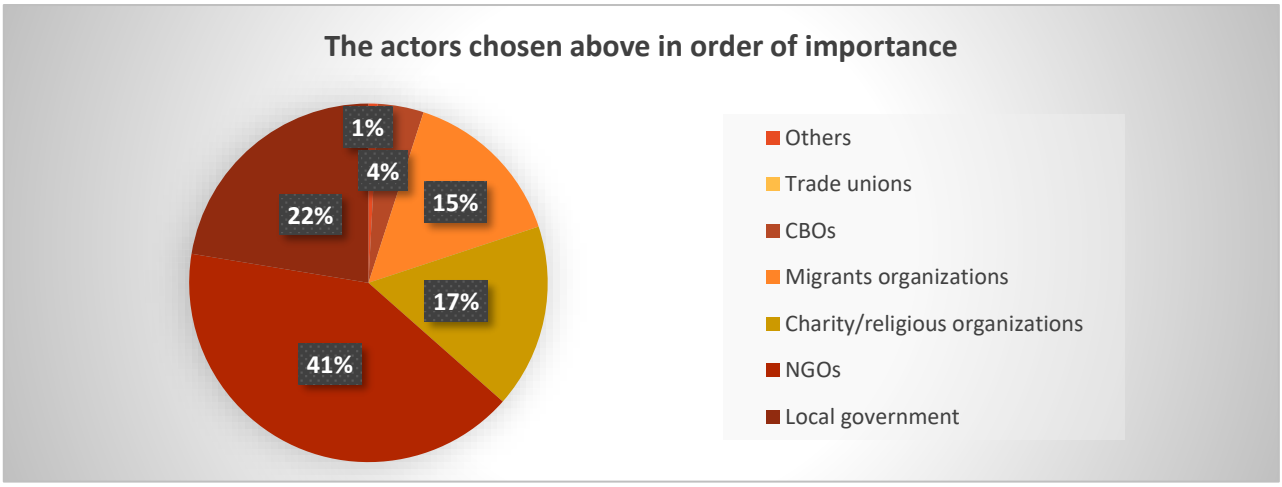
SURVEY RESULTS – PART 2

The second part of the survey focuses on the approaches/policies and practices in relation to migration in the European countries.

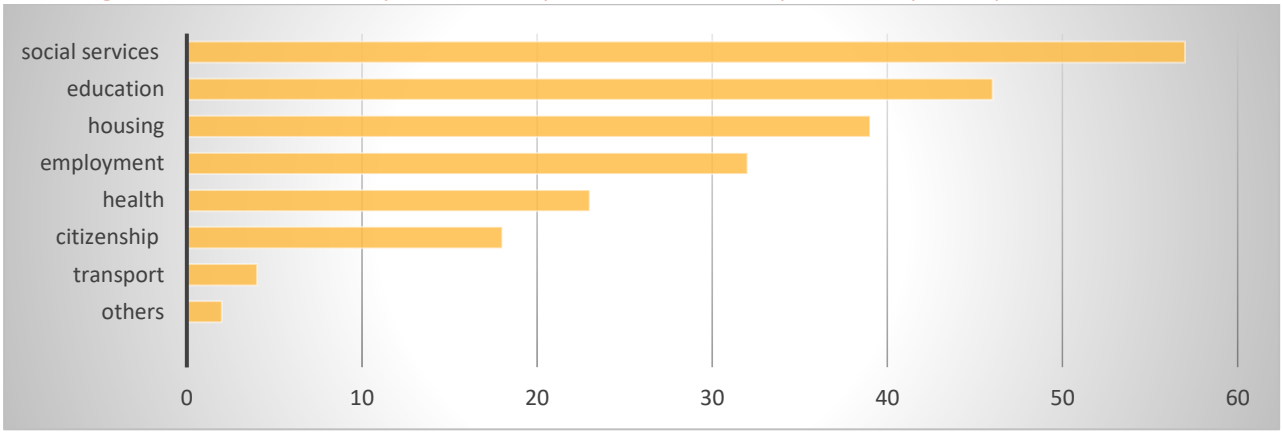
1. Which are the main actors working for migrants' inclusion in your city?



Among the 3 main actors working for migrants' inclusion, the respondents highlighted the local governments, NGOs and Charity/religious organizations. When listing then in their order of importance, NGOs are considered the most important for 41% of the respondents, followed by local governments (22%) and charity/religious organisations (17%).

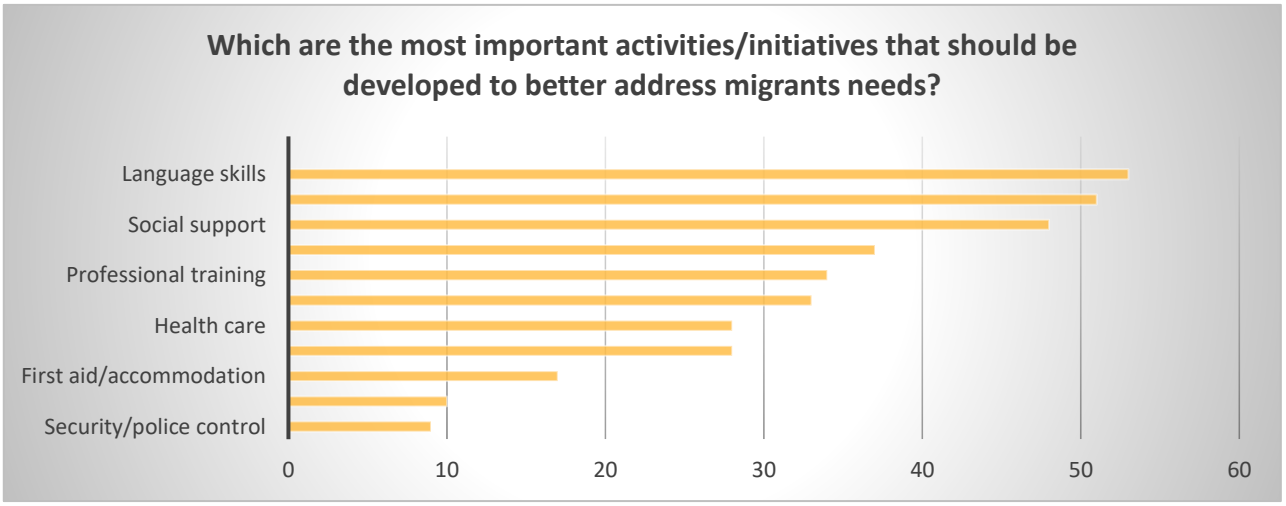


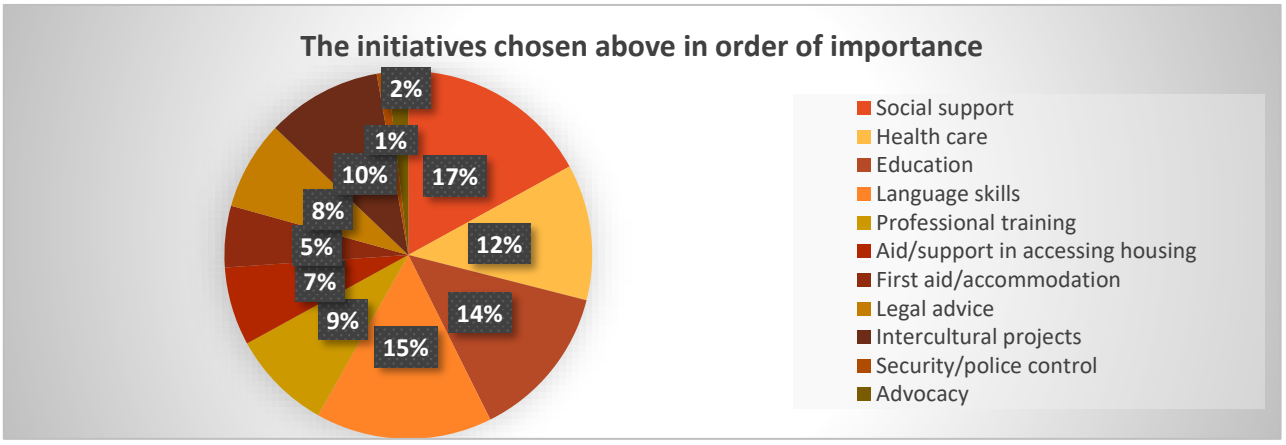
2. Migration in the city is mostly addressed by these policy sector:



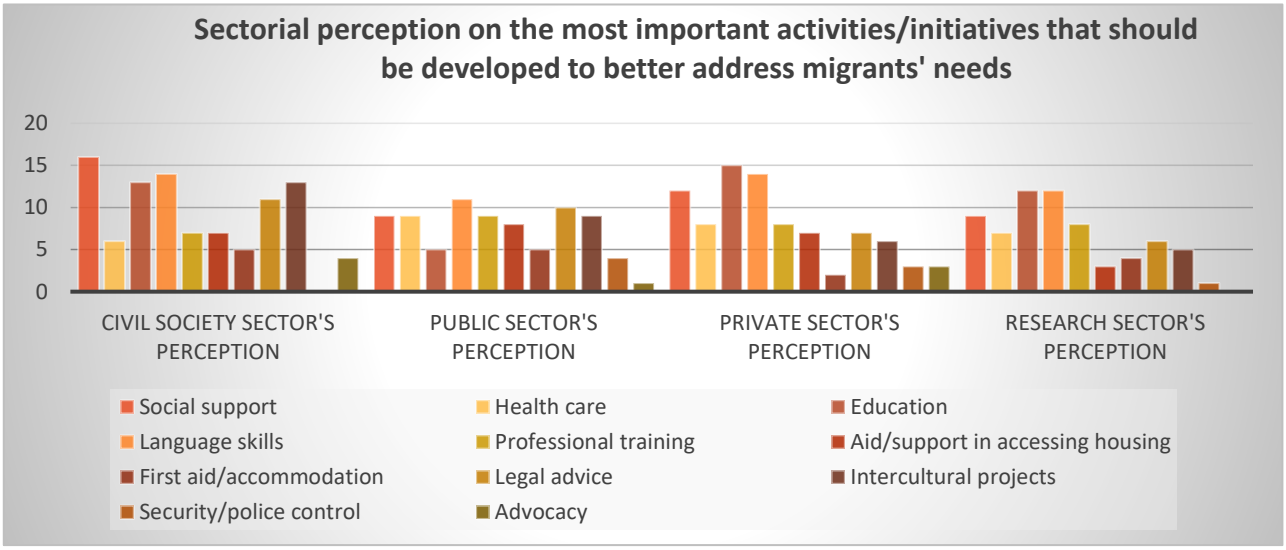
When talking about policies addressing the migration at the city level, social services, followed by education and housing are the sectors that tackle the most the issues, according to the opinion of the respondents. Despite the existing policies and programmes, 17% of the respondents think that developing further the social support is an imperative; language skills activities come second in the list of importance mentioned by 15% of the respondents, and 14% consider education activities essential to be developed to better address migrants' needs.

3. Which are the most important activities/initiatives that should be developed to better address migrants needs?

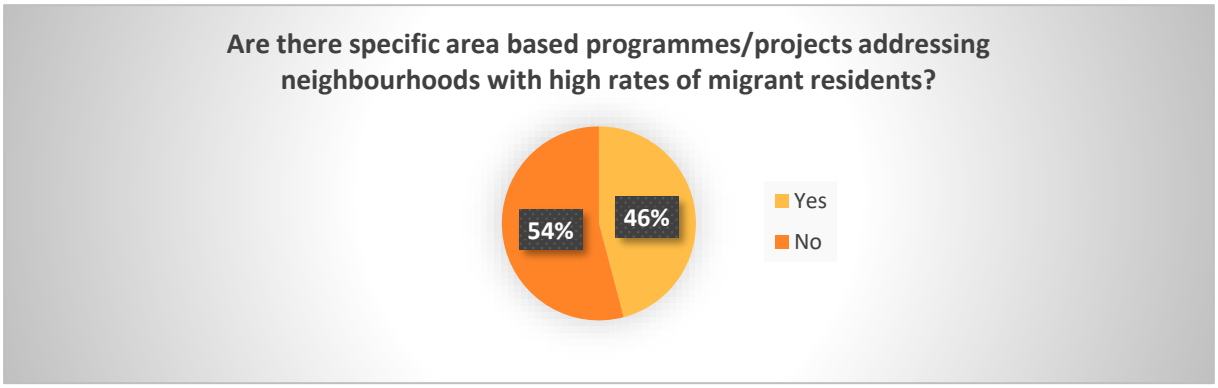




Moreover, it is worth visualizing also the sectorial perception on the most important activities/initiatives that should be developed to better address migrants' needs. From the graphic below, once can see that civil society, private and research sectors' representatives pledge in particular for social support, education, language skills and intercultural projects; while public sector's representatives consider language skills along with legal advice very important.

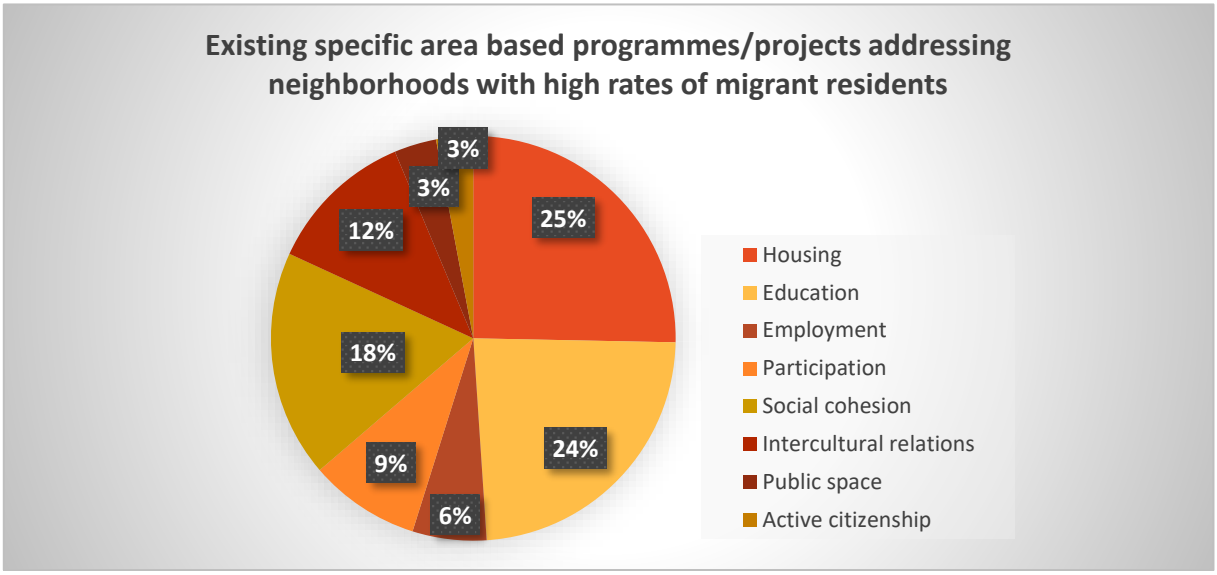


4. Are there specific area-based programmes/projects addressing neighbourhoods with high rates of migrant residents?

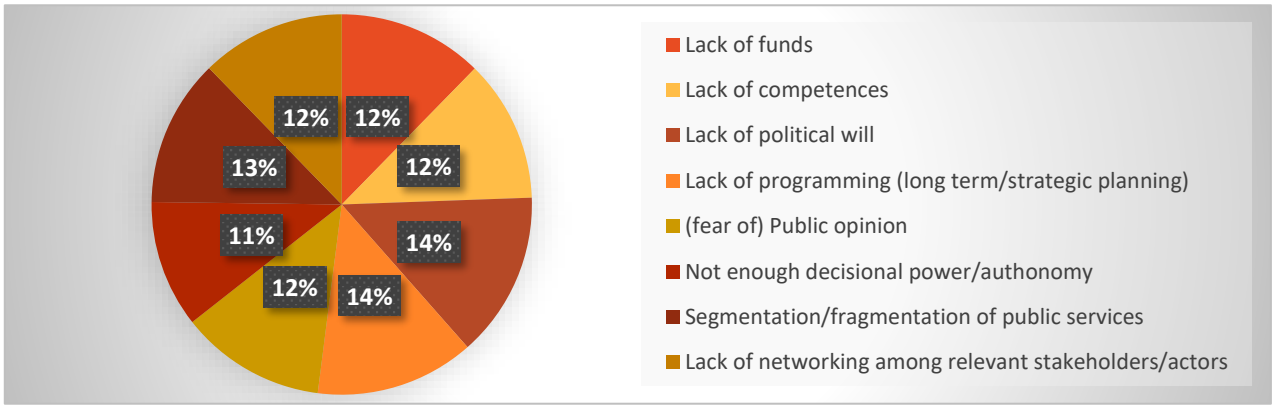


5. Existing specific area-based programmes/projects addressing neighbourhoods with high rates of migrant residents (in order of importance).

When putting forward the problem of existing specific area-based programmes/projects addressing neighbourhoods with high rate of migrant residents, 54% affirm about their lack while the other 46% they exist. Among the existing ones, 28% of the respondents highlight the housing programmes/projects as being the most important ones, followed by education (24%) and social cohesion projects (18%).

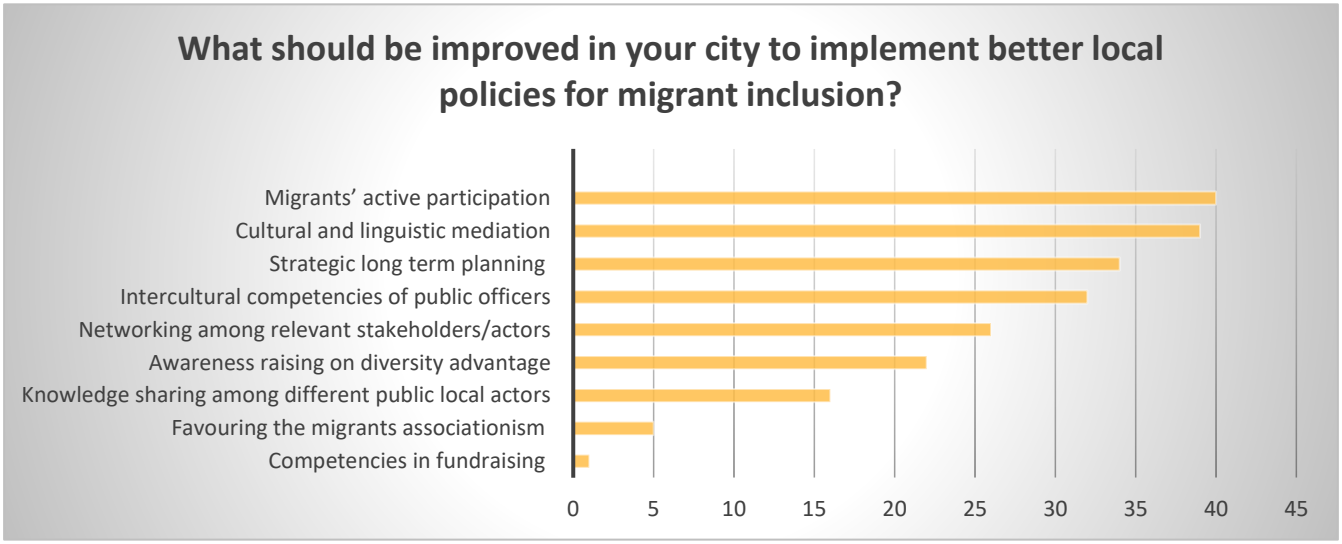


6. How much the following obstacles are preventing the promotion of better policies/inclusive practices? (for each: rate from 1 nothing to 5 maximum)



All the obstacles above are seen equally important by the respondents.

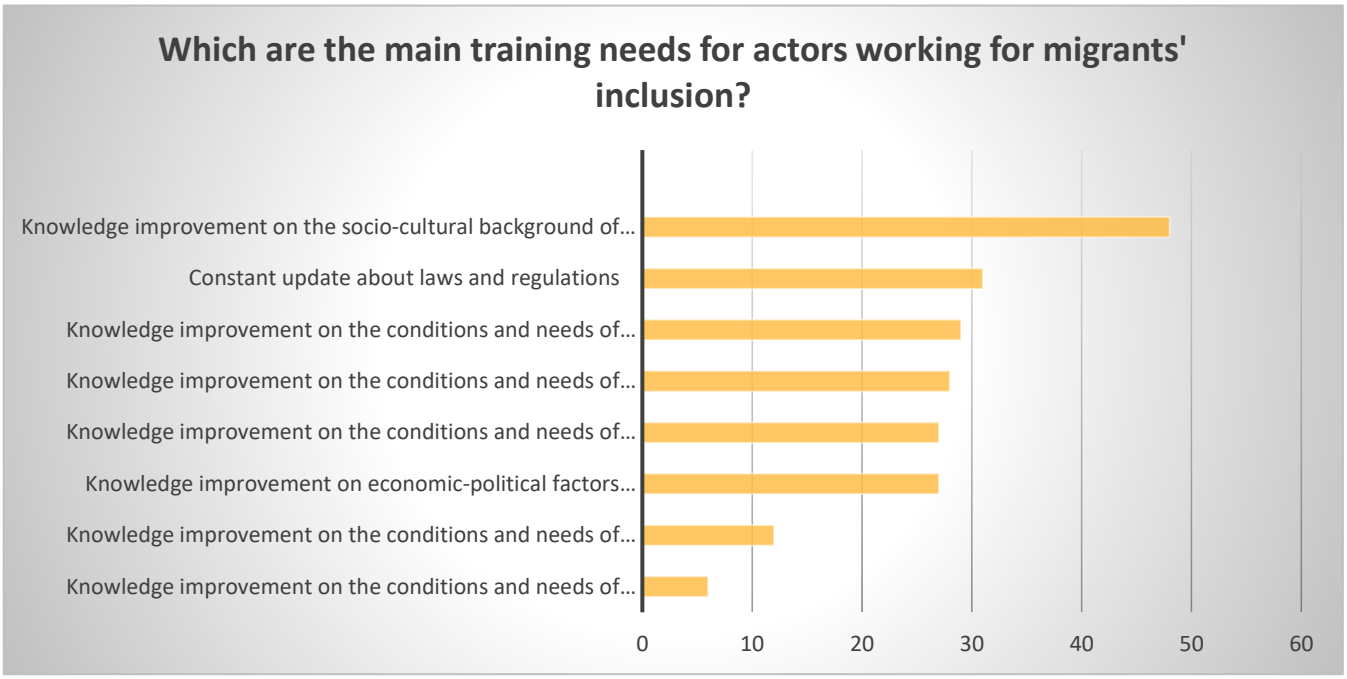
7. What should be improved in your city to implement better local policies for migrant inclusion? (max 3 answers)?



Passing from the perception on the issue towards the potential solutions, the participants at the survey have underlined a better migrants' active participation, cultural and linguistic mediation, and strategic long-term planning among the top actions to be taken at the local level in order to foster migrants' inclusion.

8. Which are the main training needs for actors working for migrants' inclusion? (3 max)

The migrants' integration is facilitated on one hand by the local policies, on the other hand by the actors working directing in the field. Therefore, the respondents showcased that there is a strong need particularly in knowledge improvement on the socio-cultural background of main migrant groups.



9. Which are the main good practices promoted in your city to foster migrants' integration?

Across many European cities there are existing already a set of good practices what could serve for inspiration to other communities. Among them we can count:

Housing: hosting asylum seekers in apartment and not in big structures.

Cultural activities: Refugee Food Festival, Project Skuhna, art/cultural projects, Cultural bazaar, TV shows.

Education: language courses; migrants are assigned to different private schools, so that public schools don't risk becoming thought of as "low-quality"; training courses for migrants; Capacity building and Transfer of knowledge; Education and integration programs for migrant children and their parents; Inclusive workshops for migrant women; Counselling for migrant labour rights.

Technical support: Web pages helping migrants to integrate, telephone line to help them to obtain different information (010);

Institutions: Migrants organisations, social centres, Social Centre ROG, Broad volunteer-based network for migrant and refugee needs within and outside of the city, Red Cross and religious communities; meeting regularly the religious institutions for planning activities with refugees; networks, guides, centres; Municipal Council of Migrants

Other: Barcelona anti-rumours: Maintain social cohesion and encourage positive interaction and intercultural coexistence in the city from equality, through the fight against rumours, stereotypes and prejudices about cultural diversity in Barcelona.

This survey analysis is the result of the European Project URGENT, led by a consortium of 13 partner organisations established in 10 countries, with the support of the Europe for Citizens Programme of the European Union, from September 2016 to August 2018. The project aims at improving social cohesion in local communities by promoting migrants' integration through the development of urban policies fostering intercultural dialogue and the use of common spaces.

For more information, please contact URGENT partners:

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Association of Albanian Municipalities – Albania
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