

**International seminar: "Employment, Culture, Participation: re-shape European cities and communities for the effective inclusion of migrants"
Bruxelles, 23 March 2017 - Working groups**

These recommendations have been elaborated directly by participants and actors of three Europe for Citizens funded projects: "URGENT: *Urban Re-Generation: European Network of Towns*", "BY-ME - *Boosting young Migrants' participation in European cities*", "The New European Citizens – *lights and shadows of the European Union's future through the eyes of the present and future young citizens*". We met in Brussels at the European Parliament to present main conclusions and proposals while sharing ideas and collecting inputs from MEPs, European Commission's representatives, projects' participants and other stakeholders. This document sums up the main recommendations elaborated by 3 multi-level and multi-professional Working Groups. Its objective is to contribute to the policy debate in the area in order to promote evidence-based policies at EU level.

Working Group 1 - Participation

Main Problems/Challenges identified:

1. **Lack of awareness of local communities** (both adults and youth) at the local level towards the significance of migrants' integration resulting from low levels of education and inadequate or lack of information;
2. **Limited use of spaces and tools for participation** and interaction between the local community and migrants;
3. **Weak application of the active participation policies** in relation to migrants at the local level;

Main Solutions/Recommendations identified:

1. **To increase awareness of local communities:**
 - Promote and incentivise MS to promote civic education at all age levels;
 - Support non-formal education models (exchange of knowledge and experience among users; and more EU visibility at the local level as a supporting mechanism for the process);
 - Support more intercultural oriented and inclusive education systems that 'protect' and empower migrant students;
2. **To improve the opportunities for spaces and tools of participation and interaction between the local community and migrants:**
 - Stimulate policies at local level that promote integration through the active use of public spaces;
 - Support actions that promote the creation and the better use of public spaces for encounters between migrants and the host community;
 - Better support to the local level where concrete measures to tackle language barriers exist, are usually developed and can be further promoted;

3. To strengthen the application of the active participation policies in relation to migrants at the local level:

- Support participative democracy models to foster migrants' active participation;
- Promote projects with more clear, measurable and achievable short term objectives;
- Support more open door actions for migrants at all level of government to promote the understanding of policy processes;

Working Group 2 - Intercultural Dialogue and Education

Main Problems/Challenges identified:

- 1. Limited impact on intercultural activities in EU funded projects:** activities developed through EU projects risk to impact on same beneficiaries, in most cases already active on intercultural issues or already participating in international projects and mobility opportunities. Also, organizations put more effort and resources on the implementation and less stress on follow-up and sharing of feedbacks, impressions, lessons learned with other peers and potential actors. Some rules of the programme, as for example the involvement of greatest number of participants and countries as the only criteria to get more funds, do not contribute to projects' qualitative impact. Therefore, impact on citizens and youth in general can be limited.
- 2. Continuity and sustainability of activities and outcomes:** what good has been created through projects risk to end after projects conclusion. One-year interventions cannot really impact on changing attitudes and values on intercultural dialogue and education, especially if we want to reach people with less opportunities to be engaged (at risk to become Euro sceptical, anti-EU, emarginated, isolated, radicalized...).
- 3. Stereotypes and negative vision brought by media, politics and general opinion:** media, mostly local media, tend to spread a fearsome, partial and biased information towards migration and in general towards diversity. Migration is described as a problem, not as a natural flow that has always existed, a resource for our societies, an opportunity to widen our knowledge, values and relations. Media highlight negative episodes, especially related to micro criminality, instead of positive episodes. Stereotypes are human, and probably natural in each of us, but media and politics play a fundamental role in their incitement and manipulation. Towards these relevant actors (media, politics, general opinion), projects and initiatives risk to be have limited impact.

4. Lack of common/shared background and preparation among participants, direct and indirect protagonists of the Programmes and intercultural activities: we experienced a general lack of training and preparation of locals, teachers and school actors, institutions and public officers about migration, European issues and relevant topics related to intercultural dialogue and education. Situations differ among Member States and areas, but there is a general lack of positive examples among adults that fulfil public role in intercultural education and EU related issues. This also demonstrates a general lack of responsibility to inspire and encourage young generation to take an aware role and engage to promote multicultural and intercultural societies and the future they must contribute to build. This is a serious problem that EU institutions, with national and local institutions, should tackle.

Main Solutions/ Recommendations identified:

1. To increase the impact of EU funded projects and initiatives beyond the very direct participants:

- creation of relevant criteria in the evaluation of projects to encourage applicants to include in the partnership organizations, groups, institutions that have not been already involved in these kind of actions. Put more stress on newcomers, especially informal groups of youth, disadvantaged/hard to reach groups and areas that have less opportunities to get involved, as well as trying to rotate the participants within their own staff. Universities, public institutions, wide organizations should be warmly invited to act in a "peer to peer" approach, also in terms of resources and skills to be involved. We suggest to focus funds and attention on a more active role of those who have been directly engaged in the activities, beneficiaries, as actors also on follow up step, to keep spreading voices and experiences to contrast Euro-scepticism, disengagement, marginalization.
- projects should be evaluated in their capacity to include compulsory moment of follow up among participants and local peers, particularly where these groups can be more easily reached (not only in universities or public halls, city centres, institutions), choosing carefully the right tools (music, visual rather than seminar...): *spread results, ideas, opportunities to others not directly involved in the activities should be an asset, positive contamination.*
- Information, tools and opportunities generated by projects on intercultural education and dialogue should not be limited to EACEA/EC, official institutional websites; social networks can contribute to a more effective dissemination within "unusual" target, especially if direct protagonists talk to their peers, using easy language and smart communication tools (visual, audio rather than written information and manuals).

2. To increase the opportunity to further spread activities, outcomes and impact of projects:

- more resources should be planned with an "operational" approach, otherwise than "grant action" approach, not only for wide European network, but also for projects that have proved to be relevant among beneficiaries and reached impacts
- length of interventions should be increased to a minimum of 2 years

- stronger cooperation between EU agencies, authorities, institutions and national/local institutions responsible for the planning of funding and priorities: most of projects do not require extraordinary amounts to continue after their conclusion, instead an active role of authorities at local level to keep producing effect. Actions that proved to be worthy through EU funding and testing should be then supported by national/local institutions, through a more effective connection between European and national/local dimension
- promotion of Europe for Citizens programme, also in terms or more funding, should be a priority: it allows the direct and concrete engagement of youngsters and citizens as actors and not only as beneficiaries. Funding distribution among Programmes should be revised, to prove that active engagement and participation of citizens is effectively a priority.

3. To reduce stereotypes instilled by media, politics, general opinion on migration and diversity:

- give citizens tools to be themselves protagonists in spreading positive counter narratives, an objective information that can easily reach all citizens, provide for alternative information sources, promote non formal and moments of dialogue with common citizens from all strands and ranges of age, social, economic and cultural background. This should be a priority of the Programme, and institutions at European and local level. A good example can be found in the “antirumor practice” developed in the municipality of Barcelona
- give youth more credit and space of action: anticipate activities that can spread intercultural dialogue and education, as volunteers and international experiences, to early age, as well as the possibility for youngsters to actually take part to actions and civic, political, cultural engagement, because they have a lot of undervalued resources, ideas and they absolutely are the only driver of change for Europe
- increase opportunities of non-formal education everywhere and at every level, beginning from childhood, and impacting also adults: formal education is generally not doing enough to act as a safeguard and promoter of intercultural dialogue and education, active citizenship, equality and mutual respect. But education is still pretty much a national issue: decisions, methodologies and priorities are taken by Member States; therefore, inequalities are relevant. We propose to invest as much as possible in strengthening and spreading non-formal education as a tool of intercultural values and education. Opportunities of training, mobility, exchanges in the field of non-formal education should be disseminated among different kind of targets, organizations, areas, through accessible channels and tools (non-formal events with engaging tools spread not only in capitals but also in neighbourhoods or rural areas rather than Info Day in institutional venues, for example)
- promote different media, created by citizens and youth and supported by EACEA, EU institutions to impact and highlight intercultural education and European issues through friendly languages, peer to peer approach, multi-level channels and tools of communication. For example, a youth led European TV channel or news where to spread positive experiences and events that happen around Europe, as well as objective facts about migration and Europe.

4. To promote a higher and better preparation among protagonists of public and private institutions to spread and foster intercultural dialogue and education:

- stronger effort and control over requirements and training of people in relevant roles in public and private institutions that should deal with issues related to intercultural education and dialogue: knowledge, mind-set, language and transversal skills should not only be required to youth that take part to projects or initiatives; they should be an asset for all those who should spread and promote European and intercultural values among citizens
- more opportunities to meet decision makers, politics and authorities that deal with EU issues and intercultural education: many of us tried to reach decision makers and politics that fulfil roles connected to EU policies (mainly MEPs, institutions directors) with discouraging results. In most of cases they did not even replied, and the only one that give youth and citizens a chance were representatives of Euro-skeptical parties. We think that this is crucial, and EU institutions and agencies should "warmly" advise their members and policy makers to spend time to discuss with citizens who ask for this dialogue, otherwise political and civic disengagement will get worse, no matter how many projects and initiatives they may take.
- more opportunities of non-formal education, intercultural dialogue and exchange towards local authorities and decision makers that deal with intercultural education and European issues, as an integral part of their training and professional path.

Working Group 3 - Employment

Main Problems/Challenges identified:

1. **Discrimination** mainly due to the cultural background / mind-set of people in the host countries, and the existence of stereotypes and prejudices and the political influence, in particular speeches of populist / euro-skeptical political parties, and their consequent strong influence on the media
2. **Lack of information** in 2 directions: from the target group (migrants) about offered services, and from the local authorities and relevant stakeholders towards characteristics of the target group and their potential
3. **Lack of tailored training opportunities** (matching market needs, or really preparing trainees for work)
4. **Lack of recognition of qualifications and competencies** from the countries of origin, or low level of qualifications
5. **Low knowledge of legal framework and work regulations**, in 2 directions: the target group does not know how to move in the host country, but also the labour market is not informed of regulations or potential benefits about hiring a migrant

Main Solutions/ Recommendations identified:

1. **To tackle discrimination:**

- Increase of % of foreign professionals in professional bodies
- Personal data protection laws enforcement to avoid stereotyping migrants especially in information by the media, who have a big influence on strengthening discriminatory mind-sets
- Fund programmes on education / training in schools, companies, etc. on inclusion, intercultural activities and values, coexistence etc.

2. **To improve opportunity of information:**

- Fund creation "work-inclusion enterprises" , matching market demand and training offer (→ training for work market)
- Support and fund policies at local level (especially by LAs) that promote long-term accompaniment programmes for youngsters (to help them build a "life project")
- Fund educational and training programmes on cross cultural communication
- Use non formal methodology and tools to reach and inform them

3. **To promote more tailored training opportunities (matching market needs, or really preparing trainees for work):**

- Implement a specific tutoring to evaluate needs, difficulties and suggestions, ensuring effective involvement of young migrants in training opportunities
- Promote a crosscutting focus on competences development (soft skills)
- Promotion of a cooperation between young people and local communities (neighborhood entities, local development agencies, other associations, etc.)

4. **To improve processes of recognition of qualifications and competencies from the countries of origin, or low level of qualifications:**

- promote a better knowledge of Third countries education systems among public officers, teachers and stakeholders
- speed up procedures and bureaucratic exchange, limiting number of documents and data required, especially for youngsters that have already started studying or training in our countries
- put more stress on non-formal competences and strengthen at "official" and recognized level the connection between formal and non-formal education especially for migrants.

5. **To improve the knowledge of legal framework and work regulations, in 2 directions:**

- Support public and private entities to reach and inform this target group about available local services and regulations
- "Peer to peer approach", involving second-generation young people both in the services provision and in the cultural mediation, underlining their specific social role of intercultural bridge between services, institutions and local authorities and newly arrived migrants.



- Promote a better understanding of the intercultural issues within public and private services, a better personal communication, more language skills of operators, etc



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