

CoNet newsletter November 2010

The URBACT Cohesion Network CoNet is a network of 11 cities from 11 EU countries exploring current approaches to strengthen social cohesion in neighbourhoods.

Topics in this edition: Integration of Immigrants and the CoNet meeting in Gijón

Integration: EU frame, national law and local atmosphere

Migration is a global phenomenon. For centuries Europeans migrated to the Americas and other continents in search of freedom and to escape poverty and hunger.

Nowadays people do not only migrate within the EU, but there is a growing number of migrants from outside of the Union, so called third-country nationals who have settled for good in the member states. This brings the issue of integration to the agenda.

Immigration brings benefits to the host countries. Taxpayers and contributors to pension schemes of aging societies are highly welcome. Most European city dwellers enjoy the variety of food, music and culture that migration brings to neighbourhoods. But there are challenges. It seems to be more difficult to strengthen social cohesion in culturally heterogeneous societies and neighbourhoods.¹ In many European countries extremist politicians exploit the challenges connected to immigration to promote xenophobia and racism.

The European frame

In the 1990s the EU developed a common approach on visa and asylum policies with the Schengen agreement to regulate conditions of entering the EU territory. But only following the Council meeting in Tampere in 1999 the issue of integrating those migrants who live in the EU into our societies came forward. In 2004 eleven common basic principles for immigrant integration policy in the European Union were adopted². In 2007 the European Fund for the Integration of third-country nationals (EIF) was set up and provides 825 million Euros until 2013.³



Gijón



Palermo



Malmö

¹ Robert D. Putnam: E Pluribus Unum: Diversity and Community in the 21st century. The 2006 Johan Skytte Prize Lecture. In Scandinavian Political Studies, Vol. 30 Nr 2 2007 pages 137-174.

² http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/jha/82745.pdf pages 19 to 24.

³ http://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/funding/integration/funding_integration_en.htm

The website www.integration.eu provides detailed information in English, French and German. The third edition of a Handbook on Integration for policy-makers and practitioners was published in April 2010 listing many good practise examples for the local level and is available in all EU languages.⁴

National laws

Despite the development of a European frame for integration policies the legal status of immigrants in Europe is still largely determined by national laws. A number of studies compare the situation in different EU countries.⁵ Germany changed the law on citizenship in 2000 to promote naturalization of immigrants, but numbers of immigrants who apply for German citizenship are below expectations. The French government created in 2007 a Ministry for Integration, Immigration, National Identity and Co-development that launched a debate on French national identity in 2009 and 2010. In all countries integration policies are determined by ideas of what the welfare system should provide for and what makes us, the natives, “us” and what makes them, the immigrants, “them”.



Apeldoorn



Gijón



Palermo



Sofia



Sibiu

Local Atmosphere

Although cities rarely influence national laws on citizenship and immigration their local policies have a great influence on whether or not migrants feel welcomed and accepted and are given the opportunity to contribute to city life. Access to public schools, permissions to open businesses and possibilities to participation in local affairs are rather determined in town halls than in national parliaments.

Liverpool takes pride to be “the world in one city” and has set up the Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Services to support immigrant pupils and students.⁶ Berlin has an Integration plan⁷ for the period 2007 to 2011, publishes welcome information to new immigrants in different languages⁸ and is currently debating a law on participation and integration. Palermo and Gijón cooperate with NGOs and associations to provide language classes and other support for immigrants.

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/resources/detail.cfm?ID_ITEMS=12892

⁵ Ruud Koopmans: Tradeoff between Equality and Difference. Immigrant Integration, Multiculturalism, and the Welfare State in Cross-National Perspective. Berlin WZB 2008 <http://bibliothek.wzb.eu/pdf/2008/iv08-701.pdf>

⁶ http://www.liverpool.gov.uk/Education_and_learning/EMTAS_Minority_Group_Support/index.asp

⁷ http://www.berlin.de/imperia/md/content/lb-integration-migration/publikationen/willkommen/welcome_englisch_08.pdf?start&ts=1287666106&file=welcome_englisch_08.pdf

⁸ http://www.berlin.de/imperia/md/content/lb-integration-migration/publikationen/willkommen/welcome_englisch_08.pdf?start&ts=1287666106&file=welcome_englisch_08.pdf for the English version



Gijón



Brussels



Liverpool



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Spain: Europe's immigration history in quick-motion

Until the 1970s many Spaniards left their country for America and since the 1950s for Northern Europe. The economic boom following the democratisation and Spain's accession to the EU reversed the trend. Spaniards came back home and immigrants from Latin America and Africa started to come to Spain. Between 1999 and 2008 the number of foreigners living in Spain increased from less than 1 Million to more than 5 Million. Spain has thus seen Europe's immigration history in quick-motion.⁹

Gijón is preparing for higher numbers of immigrants

Within Spain there are regions like Catalonia and Madrid with high numbers of immigrants. In Gijón the percentage of immigrants in the total population is just 4 %, so far below the national average of 12 %, but the city is preparing for higher numbers.

As in other fields Gijón cooperates with associations and NGOs to deliver services to immigrants. ACCEM and the Red Cross (Cruz Roja) are associations active throughout Spain and also in Gijón providing counselling and language classes for immigrants.

A growing group among immigrants are Roma from Romania and Bulgaria. Romanian citizens make up 13%, Bulgarians 3 % of all foreigners in Spain. Part of them is from the Roma ethnic group. The Fundación Secretariado Gitano (www.gitanos.org website in Spanish and English) is a NGO with a rich experience of supporting Roma and gypsies from Spain in education and employment. They are now also catering for Roma from Romania and Bulgaria. Essential for integration of immigrants is Gijón's active employment policy. Although most competences in employment rest with the Region (the Principality of Asturias for Gijón) the city of Gijón has made the "Agreement for Innovation, Economic Development and Employment- Gijón Innova 2008-2011". The Development of a Science and Technology quarter and boosting tourism are two aspects of this policy.

Immigrants of Spanish decent who left Cuba after the USA took the island in 1898 contributed to an early boom of Gijón. They settled here and invested money earned in Cuba in Gijón's steel and ship-building industries.

⁹ For a history of immigration to Spain see focus Migration: Spain

http://www.focus-migration.de/uploads/tx_wilpubdb/CP_06_Spain-08.pdf

For 2010 OECD figures see: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/5/36/45629697.pdf> .

For the impact of the crisis on immigrants in Spain see: Papademetriou Demetrios G., Madelaine Sumption and Aaron Terrazas with Carola Burkert, Steven Loyal and Ruth Ferrero-Turrión. 2010. Migration and Immigrants Two years after the Financial Collapse: Where Do We Stand? Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute. see:

<http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/MPI-BBCreport-2010.pdf>

Gijón's cooperation with associations and Municipal Centres

The city of Gijón has developed a tradition of cooperation with associations. 1400 associations are registered with the municipality in this City of 280.000 inhabitants. 2% of the city budget are decided by local "association councils" and registered associations can use the facilities of the Integrated Municipal Centres. Participants to the CoNet meeting in Gijón on September 23rd and 24th 2010 visited the Centre in El Llano, one of six Integrated Municipal Centres in Gijón. In this modern building there are municipal services, a library, study rooms, child care facilities and a conference hall. Associations that have registered with the Gijón Municipality can make use of these facilities.

Citizens' Card and transparency

The citizen's card (tarjeta ciudadana) is a card that gives easy access to many municipal services from libraries, public transport to sport facilities. Everybody living in Gijón, including immigrants can apply for the card.¹⁰

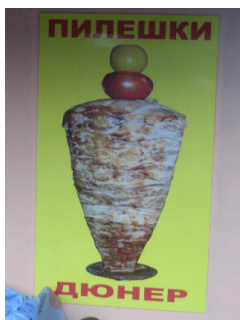
Gijón is part of a network of Spanish municipalities that exchanges experiences and methodology of citizen's involvement and proximity (www.kaleidosred.org website Spanish only). Gijón takes pride to be among the most transparent public administrations in Spain.¹¹



Gijón



Malmö



Sofia



Berlin

Next CoNet events

The CoNet network meeting in Palermo will be on November 25th and 26th 2010. The Final Conference for the URBACT Cohesion Network CoNet will be held in Berlin on March 31st 2011 (Conference) and April 1st 2011 (project visits).

www.urbact.eu/conet

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¹⁰ <http://www.gijon.es/documentos/departamentos/tarjeta%20ciudadana/citizen%20card.pdf>

¹¹ <http://www.gijon.es/Noticia.aspx?area=107&leng=en&id=6176>