

WELDI

BUILDING WELCOMING COMMUNITIES
FOR MIGRANTS

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WELDI coordinator Hans Sakkers, city of Utrecht - the Changing Tides of Migration: A City Perspective



On July 2nd, a new governing coalition took office in the Netherlands, with the far-right party emerging as the largest. The coalition parties have agreed to implement the strictest migration policy ever seen in the country and to opt out of EU asylum and migration policies. While the Netherlands may be an extreme example, it is also emblematic of the challenges Europe faces.

The exact implications of this shift are still

unknown, but it is clear that the protection of human rights, particularly for newcomers, will be less of a priority. The trend of nation-states suggesting that Europe would be better off isolating itself within its old borders and that countries do not need migrants is still prevalent. However, we are also witnessing a turning point. Locally, a new narrative is emerging that views migration as a normal part of development. This is why the activities within WELDI are so crucial. The collaboration of our partner cities demonstrates how a pragmatic approach to migration, which sees human rights as a normal part of this reality, leads to a very different perspective on 'newcomers' from the cities.

This journal is once again filled with numerous inspiring contributions to the idea of a Europe with Fluid Borders, where our cities cannot survive without the aspirations of those who come to us. It is a testament to the fact that migration is not just a challenge, but also an opportunity for growth and development. As we navigate these changing tides, it is essential to remember that our strength lies in our diversity and our ability to adapt to new realities.

While the current political climate may be challenging, it is also a call to action. It is a reminder that we must continue to advocate for a more local and humane approach to migration, one that respects human rights and recognizes the invaluable contributions that newcomers bring to our societies.

Fostering access to adequate housing - Learning from the transnational exchange on 18-19 April 2024 in Albacete



The Human right to adequate housing and the housing affordability crisis

WELDI's transnational exchange in Albacete focused on housing –a topic where human rights norms clash with the commodification and financialisation of housing, creating an environment of precarity that does not just affect migrants. Human rights legislation is clear in this regard: state authorities, cities and other public authorities have the duty to ensure that vulnerable and marginalised groups have access to adequate housing and are protected from discrimination, eviction and homelessness. This duty is anchored in treaties such as the Universal declaration of Human rights and the EU Charter of Fundamental rights (“the Union recognises and respects the right to social and housing assistance so as to ensure a decent

existence for all those who lack sufficient resources”) as well as the European Pillar of Social Rights (“access to social housing or housing assistance of good quality shall be provided for those in need”).

Yet, the last decades have seen public investment in public housing decline dramatically. Together with global trends such as private housing turning into a speculative good (financialisation of housing) and the boom of tourist rental platforms, this had led to a dramatic decrease of affordable housing options in Europe's cities. Newcomers find it particularly hard to find housing, as they tend to face a greater disadvantage due to lack of financial resources, information and due to discrimination or a lack of residency papers. For all WELDI partners, securing adequate housing is one of the main problems for

newcomers and established residents alike. Even in cities with a relatively big public housing sector, e.g. in Seine-Saint-Denis and Utrecht, waiting times to access public housing are 10 years. In Liège, for the total of 100,000 social housing units there are 40,000 households on the waiting list. Albacete has a total social housing sector of 1000 units. 88 additional units for sale and 27 for rent will be created by 2025 and 800 households are on the waiting list.

At the same time, there are new opportunities for building public housing, as literally all EU institutions, from the European Commission to the Parliament and European Investment Bank acknowledge a generalised housing crisis and the need to provide new funds, as was acknowledged by EU Housing Ministers' [Liège Declaration](#) in March 2024. Several member states (e.g. Portugal, Spain and Romania) have earmarked funds for public housing in their EU recovery funds. Several WELDI partners (e.g. in Sosnowiec, Fundao) are building new public housing at a bigger scale.

Albacete and the challenge of decent housing for agricultural workers

In his opening speech, Mayor Manuel Serrano from the host city Albacete stressed that access to housing is a “basic human right and a topic that affects all of us.” The city illustrates how this challenge is shared by all partners, while its concrete form is specific in each locality. Being at the crossroads of a large area of intense agricultural production that stretches from the South-West to the North-East of Spain, the city sees a significant increase of its migrant population between May and October. The city addresses the housing needs of this temporary population through its shelter for homeless people (86 people) and several shelters for temporary migrants that are funded by the city. One of them is the “Seminary” building that the city funds together with Caritas. It offers 50 places and additional services such as the provision of meals and support in finding work

for free. The city and its NGO partners thereby provide a service that employers are legally obliged to provide for the workers they hire. Being mostly dependent on the local authority and NGOs, existing resources are clearly insufficient.



An additional complication is the mobility of the workers who chose Albacete province as their base, but who follow the harvests, and who work mostly outside the city boundaries. El Pasico, a housing facility for migrants run by ACAIM and Médicos Mundi Sur outside the city boundaries provides young newcomers, many of them without papers, with housing and basic support (e.g. professional orientation and language training). This is particularly relevant as formal work relations and training are a ground for regularisation in Spain based on a procedure called “arraigo” (literally: “rootedness”). The proximity to villages provides formal and informal work opportunities for the residents - they become a familiar part of the local environment. Residents participate in the maintenance of the building.



“Intermediarios”: the link between housing and exploitation on the labour market

The housing and work situation of agricultural workers in Albacete is linked to the system of *intermediarios* (gangmasters) - an exploitative system that is very common across Europe.

Intermediarios take advantage of the agricultural workers' precarity. They act as informal placement agents and charge employers for this service while also collecting a fee from workers themselves to provide additional services such as shelter, registration with the municipality, and transport to work. For instance, according to the outreach worker Fodé Diabi, who is employed by the trade union CC.OO. through a city grant, agricultural workers tend to pay 200 Euros to gangmasters for getting registered with the city and a monthly fee to maintain their registration, which is a precondition for regularisation. Involving the regional government (which regulates the provision of housing for workers) and employer unions are some of the solutions that can potentially break this system.

Fundão's work with employers as good practice for fighting exploitation in agriculture

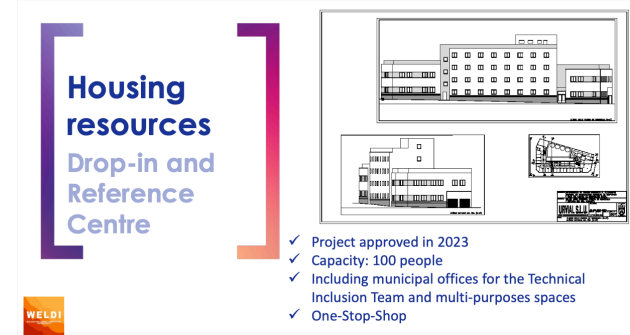
WELDI partner Fundão, a city famous for its cherry production, has witnessed similar exploitative practices in its agricultural sector but has found ways to address the related problems of housing and exploitation. Fundão started from the principle that the quality of Fundão cherry should be reflected in the working conditions of its production. They made employers aware of their duty to provide housing for workers, and offered accommodation in the "Migration Centre" facility, which employers pay for. Triggered by a case of trafficking of almond pickers in Fundão, the city also started to provide a service, matching workers with employers, to push the exploitative gangmasters out of the market. The city even trained migrants together with agricultural cooperatives to become qualified workers in the agricultural and forestry sector, based on a prior mapping of job shortages.

Finding interlocutors in the form of cooperatives and having a sector that produces high value agricultural products (cherries, cheese) certainly helped. But in the end, Fundão's key to outbidding the gangmasters was to offer better services and trained workers.

A look at Albacete's IAP: Improving housing and breaking the gangmaster system

Albacete's Integrated Action Plan for WELDI reflects its ambition to break the exploitative gangmaster system. The city already has an approved project for a new Drop-in and reference centre to provide shelter for 100 workers and accompaniment by the city's technical inclusion team and NGOs.

While this project will take several years to be implemented, the city and NGOs will run a pop-up information service for newcomers (in particular agricultural workers) as an URBACT testing action, to provide orientation about rights and available services to prevent workers from entering the exploitative parallel services of the gangmasters.



Beyond agriculture: inadequate housing and exploitation in the industrial sector

The WELDI partners Cluj-Napoca, Osijek, Sosnowiec and Timișoara, face similar challenges to those of Albacete and Fundão with workers who are contracted by local industries. They are often housed in collective accommodation outside the city in proximity of the production sites, and stay out of the reach of

city council services. Here, the intermediary role of the gangmasters in agriculture is occupied by recruitment agencies who bring workers from South-Asia and Africa. The fact that work contracts are often linked to specific employers makes workers prone to exploitation. Relevant EU legislation, in particular the Single Permit Directive, was very lax about inspecting work and housing conditions, but the new version of the Directive which is about to be adopted, is likely to at least allow workers to change jobs without losing their permit. Migrant workers, whatever their status, should be a main preoccupation for local authorities and the EU alike, when it comes to protecting human rights.

Holistic support of migrants and other vulnerable groups: Albacete's Technical Inclusion Team

In Albacete, work with vulnerable migrants is led by the "technical inclusion team" (ETI). Originally developed at the regional level, the service today is a unique local approach that is financed by the autonomous community and ESF+. The service works with all people who are in a situation of social exclusion in the city, regardless of whether they are migrants or not. The team is interdisciplinary and covers a variety of areas (social work, education, training and employability, access to decent housing and legal advice) together with a network of NGOs (e.g. Cáritas, Cruz Roja, ACCESS, Médicos del Mundo, CCOO, ACAIM). ETI cooperates with NGOs via different technical boards for all its areas of intervention. For migrants in particular, legal support for obtaining and consolidating a residence status, and related to this, finding employment, is key. They use phone interpretation to communicate with non-Spanish speakers. ETI also works closely with the provincial representation of the government on residence permits.

Holistic interventions in shanty towns - from Albacete to Seine-Saint-Denis

Informal settlements and shanty towns in cities across Europe are one very visible sign of the housing affordability crisis. As part of its outreach work, ETI also has designed an intervention in the city's informal settlements.



They appeared on the outskirts of Albacete around 2005 and have formed into settlements with different profiles of residents, including Roma families from Romania and African migrant workers. There is no electricity or water available in the settlements.

Albacete presented its model of integrated support of ETI together with the NGO ACCEM and Médicos del Mundo - a networked support model in which all actors hold monthly meetings and discuss the situation of individual clients. This support includes the re-housing of families into temporary emergency city-owned flats where they don't pay rent or charges - a housing-first approach. After a first outreach visit in the shanty towns, the team conducts interviews with clients to assess needs (papers, healthcare, schooling) and offer solutions (information, accompaniment etc.). The work focuses on women as "motors of the family". With only six units, Albacete's current capacity for emergency housing is very limited. But the city has plans to build 30 prefabricated dwellings on a municipal plot at the outskirts of the city as intermediate living spaces where the social intervention can be more easily developed.

Seine-Saint-Denis also has a number of informal settlements on its territory. The outreach work of Médecins du Monde in multidisciplinary teams was first focused on access to health care (in particular for pregnant women). Now that relationships have been developed, they extend work to other areas and bring in other associations, e.g. on housing, jobs, schools.



Ending homelessness through housing-led support - insights from the URBACT network ROOF

Representatives of two cities that had been involved in the [URBACT network ROOF](#) - Liège and Timisoara - reported on the project's impact on ending homelessness in their cities. ROOF had the ambition of ending homelessness by promoting local housing-first or housing-led approaches. This model - a policy import from the US to Finland and other EU member states - is characterised by providing homeless people immediately with an independent flat, instead of moving them through a trajectory of institutional housing solutions with increasing autonomy.

Gregor Stangerlin from Liège stressed how the URBACT network had provided the basis for the city to implement housing-led approaches through its Integrated Action Plan and the collaboration with more than 100 stakeholders. A grant from a foundation to finance the counting exercise of homeless people in the city provided further help.

Inspired by ROOF, Liège created a new tool of case-management, in which interdisciplinary teams meet on a weekly basis to discuss individual client and co-design pathways for about 10 people every week towards greater

autonomy. Today, equipped with a regional grant, the city will now be able to buy more flats to implement its housing-led policies and to strengthen its accompaniment, which is crucial for housing first approaches, in particular for preventing people falling back into homelessness when they leave institutions such as prisons and mental health care institutions.

In Timișoara, the ROOF project provided important knowledge about the approach, which was relatively unknown before - nobody knew about housing-led policies. A first priority group were homeless people with disabilities, for which partners provided housing while the city took care of the accompaniment. ROOF also triggered work on deinstitutionalisation.



Affordable housing based on unused private flats and Social Rental Agencies

As one of many potential measures to improve access to housing, the Albacete meeting also discussed the practice of creating affordable housing stocks based on the temporary lease of unused private flats to municipalities, NGOs or dedicated "Social Rental Agencies" (SRA). This model is particularly important to offer solutions for people moving out of institutionalised forms of housing, and can, to some degree, complement publicly owned social housing. Measures to incentivise owners to temporarily lease their flat include a guaranteed rental income, insurance against squatting, interest free loans for renovation or a reduction of the property tax. Some instances where this model is used include:

- Liège working with SRA to provide housing-first for homeless people
- Fundao's stock of 220 privately owned flats for newcomers working in local companies
- ACCEM in Albacete finding private housing for vulnerable groups, including migrants
- associations in Seine-Saint-Denis and the wider Paris region providing housing options for refugees based on empty private housing.

Angela Ciupa from Timisoara also stressed that the reception experience of Ukrainians demonstrated the potential of private housing, as long as owners can be convinced. In relation to this, the Albacete case illustrated the importance of work with neighbours, of the involvement of actors such as neighbourhood associations, social accompaniment and

renovation projects conducted with the future residents.

At the same time, SRA cannot replace publicly owned housing: the Brussels region's SRA programme was so attractive that the government put a freeze on new flats entering the scheme, and housing rights movements were critical, remarking that the subsidies granted for SRA could have been spent on building a similar number of permanent social housing units.

All serious analyses of the affordable housing crisis in Europe point to the fact that it can only be tackled by using a variety of instruments in parallel, to regulate the market, support vulnerable groups and increase the housing offer that remains outside the market.

Migrant voices: Cheikhou Cissé Nyasse, Albacete



Cheikhou has been living in Albacete for 20 years. He came to Spain to visit a Spanish friend who had stayed with him in Senegal. When it was time to go back, friends and family in Senegal convinced him to stay. A trained informatician, he first worked on construction sites, but eventually decided to work in the social sector, first as a volunteer for a local migrant support association, and since 2009 as a coordinator of a migrant reception centre for

Médicos Mundi Sur. The centre provides housing for newcomers in vulnerable situations and helps them with language learning, finding work and regularising their status, together with the local and the regional administration. "Sometimes somebody who has been living here for ten years gets in touch with me when they have a problem. When their spouse arrives they present her to you, they present their children to you. They become almost like your family."

What are the main difficulties for people arriving in Albacete?

Cheikhou: Many newcomers in Albacete come from French-speaking countries. When they arrive, they do not speak the language. The second problem is housing. You need information on how to find a room or a hostel at least for the first week. Sometimes this kind of information is difficult to find. And a lot of it only exists in Spanish. So that is not very inclusive.

Which resources are available for migrants in Albacete?

Cheikhou: The principal resource is really the coordination we have between NGOs, municipal and regional services - the whole network of people working together. When I go to other cities I become aware that they don't have this everywhere. Here, we can call each other, coordinate with each other, sit down together to talk about subjects related to migrants. We have to preserve this asset and develop it further.

What do you expect from WELDI?

Cheikhou: I think that the idea of welcoming cities are not just an utopia. We know that migrants have human rights, should have access to health care and education, but I expect WELDI to be much more ambitious. When the Ukrainian refugees arrived, one could see all the efforts that the EU made to welcome them.

They softened a lot of regulations to facilitate their reception, to allow them to find work and education. I ask myself if we can't do - I am not saying the same effort - but at least 50% of the effort made for Ukrainians also for the migrants that are arriving in Lampedusa and Tenerife. Or for the migrants that have been living here for years. There are some advances, for instance the Spanish government is working on regularising 3-400,000 migrants. That's at least something. But we can't ignore the presence of these migrants, who often work in the informal sector and cannot contribute to social security, who take care of our children and our parents so we can go to work. We can't just look the other way.

This is an extract of a longer interview conducted by Kulthum Laoufi and Sofiane Youssef from Seine-Saint-Denis conducted with Cheikhou Cissé Nyasse.



Managing the reception of Ukrainian refugees - elements of a new reception model?

The EU's Temporary Protection Directive, which has now been extended to March 2026, grants refugees from Ukraine housing support that is comparable to that of asylum seekers. Art 13 of the directive demands that member states provide beneficiaries of temporary protection "with the means to enable them to obtain housing" as well as with necessary assistance for social welfare and means of subsistence when necessary. However, due to the speed and volume of arrivals from Ukraine, housing was often organised in a different way than for asylum seekers and often relied on funding private accommodation.

Since the first refugees arrived, there is a tendency to successively integrate support for Ukrainians into more general social support measures and to move from supporting housing providers to supporting the people to pay their rent. Also, there is a trend to condition support with a view to incentivise the use of mainstream employment, social support and education services (e.g. in Romania).



The current situation in WELDI cities

In **Sosnowiec** the majority of refugees from Ukraine are working and their housing situation seems to be evolving towards privately rented flats. Those who still stay in reception centres are mostly single mothers with kids. There is no

problem with homelessness. Data collected in a survey that is conducted with Ukrainians in Sosnowiec will soon provide a more precise picture of the situation.

In **Fundão**, only single women still live in the Migration Centre facility run by the city. Most other people have jobs and are becoming autonomous.

In **Cluj-Napoca** and **Timișoara**, the number of people who are registered for state support dropped sharply, but it is not clear whether those who dropped out have left the cities or simply have become autonomous. The conditioning of state support on being in employment or registered unemployed, and on registering children with schools have probably also contributed to the drop.



What worked well? WELDI partners' views on the support system for Ukrainian refugees

- The **good coordination** across all levels of government and with civil society organisations was a huge positive experience for most WELDI partners compared to other fields, such as the reception of asylum claimants. The EU directive in particular set clear rules and ensured quick decisions. **Unbureaucratic coordination structures** were created almost everywhere to allow fast decision making

- In many places (e.g. Romania, Netherlands) **cities had greater responsibility** in the reception of Ukrainians than in asylum, which facilitated an agile and adapted response.
- **Immediate access to rights** was granted through the directive, including housing, financial support and work facilitated integration from day 1. The take up of these rights was facilitated to one-stop-shops (e.g. in Liège's Social Welfare Centre), where Ukrainians could solve all immediate problems without having to commute between different institutions
- **Private accommodation** was facilitated through online platforms and support to landlords. Several cities (such as Timișoara) also conducted checks of flats and landlords to avoid exploitation.



What did not work so well? For partners, the most problematic elements in the reception of Ukrainian refugees have been so far;

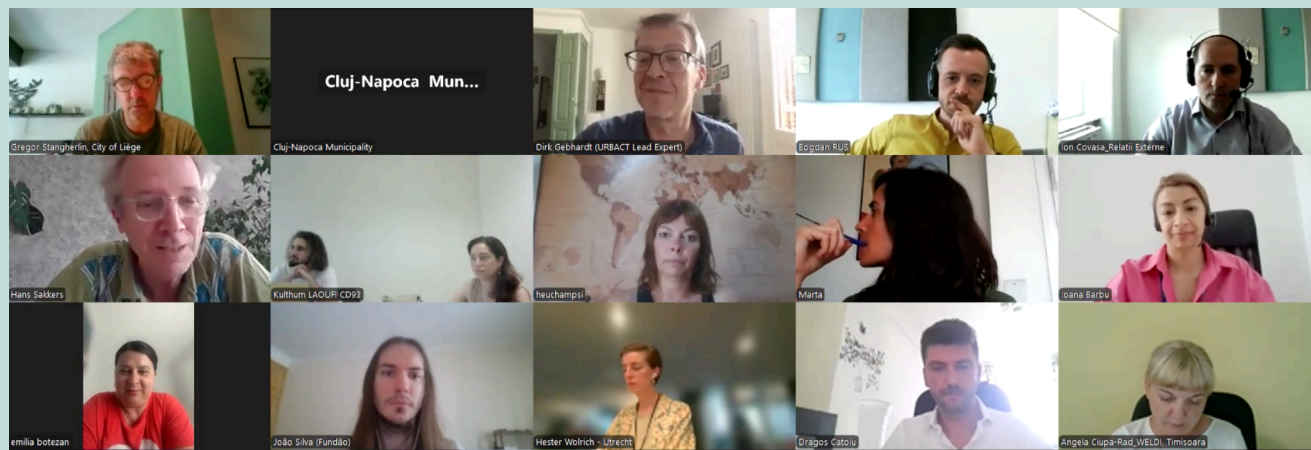
- **Lack of central government leadership:** in some places (e.g. Poland or Romania), central government was not sufficiently supportive and reactive to provide direction in a situation of uncertainty.
- **Short-term perspective:** national government funding was planned for a period that was too short, and is running out, while support is still needed.
- The **uncertainty** about support beyond March 2026, when the temporary protection status could end, makes it difficult for public authorities and migrants to plan ahead.

- As a side-effect of the positive unconditional right to mobility for Ukrainian refugees, cities find it difficult to have **updated information on who is there**.
- **Abuse of support:** The generous and unbureaucratic financial support allowed some hosts and refugees to claim undue amounts of support.
- There are ongoing problems about **access to some fundamental rights** (e.g. school, health care) in some places.
- The **better support** granted to Ukrainians in relation to other refugee groups is problematic and needs to be addressed.

WELDI partners' success factors in the reception of Ukrainian refugees that should inspire a new reception model

- Clear rights and entitlements that are the same across the EU
- Decentralised (local) execution of reception between city council and NGOs
- Multi-level coordination fora
- Granting basic rights (including the right to work) from day 1, with specific attention to the needs of vulnerable groups
- Providing support in one place (one-stop-shop model)
- Providing information on rights and entitlements in one place
- Build on private accommodation - it offers the best social inclusion perspective if it is well monitored
- Equal treatment of all migrant groups when there is no reason to discriminate
- Communication to the public on why support is needed.

Digital Inclusion and guidance. Transnational exchange hosted by Cluj-Napoca



The online transnational exchange hosted by Cluj-Napoca on 27 June 2024 explored WELDI's links to digital transition from two main perspectives: the first one is about the different digital initiatives and tools that can promote access to human rights for newcomers and potentially overcome obstacles such as language barriers and availability of information. The second one is about how to tackle the risk of curtailing access to rights that is inherent in digitalisation for those people who lack access or competences to use digital services. WELDI network coordinator Hans Sakkers stressed the importance of social media in shaping migration by providing information about arrival destinations (and we should add: in jeopardising social cohesion through the spread of exclusionary hate speech). The meeting host, Emilia Botezan from Cluj-Napoca, introduced

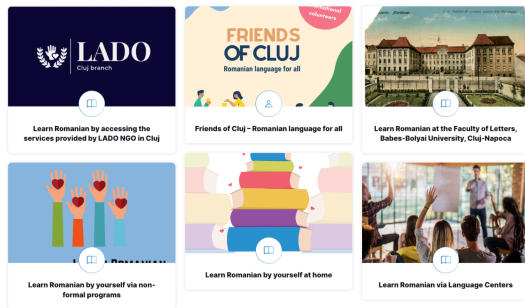
the topic in claiming a lead role for local authorities not only in physically, but also in digitally welcoming migrants.

Digital inclusion in Cluj-Napoca

As illustrated by the city's digital strategy, the development of digital services in Cluj receives strong support from the mayor and key stakeholders such as IT companies and universities. In relation to migration, the arrival of Ukrainians in particular has pushed support, including in digital form, for newcomers. Cluj is thinking of digital and face-to-face interaction as two sides of the same coin. This is most obvious in the city having set up in parallel the digital guidance resource and a physical One-Stop-Shop in cooperation with IOM.

Learn Romanian language

Romanian or românește is an Eastern Romance language spoken by approximately 22-26 million people as a native language, primarily in Romania and Moldova, and by another 4 million people as a second language. According to another estimate, there are about 34 million people worldwide who can speak Romanian, of whom 20 million speak it as a native language. It is an official and national language of both Romania and Moldova and is one of the official languages of the European Union.



welcometocluj.ro (screenshot)

Bogdan Rus (IOM), who helped set up “Welcome to Cluj”, illustrated the different levels of interaction that exist in digital services.

- Informational services: mostly one-way-interaction from the electronic resource to the users)
- Transactional services: two-way communication, where users can e.g. request documents)
- Interconnected services: based on a user-identification a wide range of services is available

Welcome to Cluj is currently mostly at the informational level, but will create new AI-supported functions to direct users to the right resources. This will include a chat function with bots or real persons.

However, the city will move from the first to the third level of interaction by introducing Cluj ID, a digital ID developed by the company NTT data. The ID was introduced one month ago with the objective of improving access to services for citizens. While the current pilot version can only be used by Romanian passport holders, the city’s vision is to make it available to all people who live in Cluj, including migrants.

Links with digital inclusion initiatives in other WELDI cities

Liège is currently revising its new strategic plan on IT to develop more tools for the interaction between administration and citizens. Citizens use a “Liege in the pocket” App to access different services. For Gregor Stangherlin, director responsible for citizen participation, a platform like “Welcome to Cluj” could address a gap in Liège to provide digital information and services targeted to migrant residents, through the existing app or in other ways. A workshop has taken place between representatives of migrants and city departments on the city’s project of a local ID, the carte Ardente, to consult with both sides on information and guidance needs and ways to address them.

In Sosnowiec, digital public services represent a barrier for migrants at present, as they are only available in Polish and (in some cases) in English. The city’s local card, which also exists in an electronic format, is not well known or used among migrants. The city plans to extend the card’s functionalities and to promote it among migrant residents. As Cluj, Sosnowiec is working on a real-world and a digital One-Stop-Shop. While the practical value of such guidance services is clear, how to fund it is an open question at present. But the ULG is specifying what is needed with each meeting and a survey that the city currently conducts with the city’s migrants will generate key input for the design of such services. A cornerstone for more accessible digital services for migrants is the city card which exists as a physical card and as a mobile app.

Digital exclusion

Introducing the second topic of the meeting, the risk of exclusion by digitalisation of services, Nassera Bechrouri from the Seine-Saint Denis’ non-discrimination unit presented the case of the digitalisation of appointments with the Préfecture, a state service that is of existential

importance for migrants, as it manages residency permits. A study from the French state authority for the defence of rights has found that the online appointments jeopardise the access to fundamental rights for migrants. This example illustrates that it is crucial to maintain several ways of accessing public services and to support people who are not digitally literate. Services such as the “France Services” points that provide one-stop access to online procedures and “France Services Buses” that offer the same service in a mobile version in priority urban policy areas and rural regions show how exclusion by digitalisation of services can be overcome.

A view from the URBACT network Digi-Inclusion

Ian Graham, Lead Expert of the network DIGI-Inclusion, confirmed what was a red thread to the Cluj meeting, namely that digital-only services will necessarily lead to the exclusion of some people.

The balance between local online and offline services are one key issue for the network.

DIGI-Inclusion addresses its topic from a social, not a technological perspective. Exclusion is seen as the result of multiple divides:

- The access divide - can people get to the digital world?
- The skills divide - can people use the technologies?
- The empowerment divide - can people get full value from the digital world?

Ian explained how understanding what prevents people from accessing digital resources (e.g. job offers) is key in addressing them. E.g. refugees might have high digital skills but no access.

So starting the design of digital services from the user's and not the service's needs and capabilities in terms of access, skills etc is key. Although digital services are seen as a cheaper solution, their hidden costs should be factored in, which consist of potentially excluding people and needing to support people to access them.

WELDI meets experts by experience

Migrant residents from Fundão, Timișoara and Utrecht discussed with WELDI partners and ULG members how migrants can directly feed into the work of the project. Speaking from their roles as community leaders, intercultural workers and staff working for the city administration, the migrants attending the meeting agreed that migrant communities constitute an important resource for WELDI's work, but also stressed that they need to believe that their voice matters and can make a difference. The precariousness of migrant lives, the uncertainty about the future and the stress related to this situation as well as anti-migrant propaganda were some shared concerns raised in the meeting. Some of the ideas about how migrants could contribute to WELDI's work included:

- Gathering experiences of migrants / newcomers in WELDI cites through videos, audio interviews or artistic formats;
- Organising, together with the city councils or ULG partners, community surveys with migrants about unmet needs;
- Working against hate speech and online rumours, in conjunction with a dedicated training on this topic in November 2024.

WELDI will further develop these first ideas and try to extend the group to other partners to have an impactful involvement of the people that WELDI is about.

Partner updates

Timișoara - Exhibition "Faces of Refugees" and Ukrainian Independence Day celebrations

On the 20th of June, World Refugee Day, Timișoreans had the chance to learn more about the refugees living in the city in Western Romania. The [exhibition "Faces of refugees from Timișoara"](#) presented 19 portraits of people who found safety in the city taken by Katalin Fanni Horváth. Asylum seekers and refugees from Ukraine, the Central African Republic, Sudan, Somalia, Syria, Congo and other countries shared their stories of integration in Timișoara, but also the challenges they face in everyday life in Romania. How did they get here and especially why? What are their dreams and future plans?



Photo: Katalin Fanni Horváth

On the 24th of August 2024, Timișoara will celebrate together with the Ukrainian community the Independence Day of Ukraine. The event celebrated at the city's Central Square will include activities such as concerts, the photo-exhibition "Ukraine is" about the country and its history and the ongoing war in Ukraine, a solidarity fair with handmade products made by local community artisans and workshops for children.

Seine-Saint-Denis joins Intercultural Cities

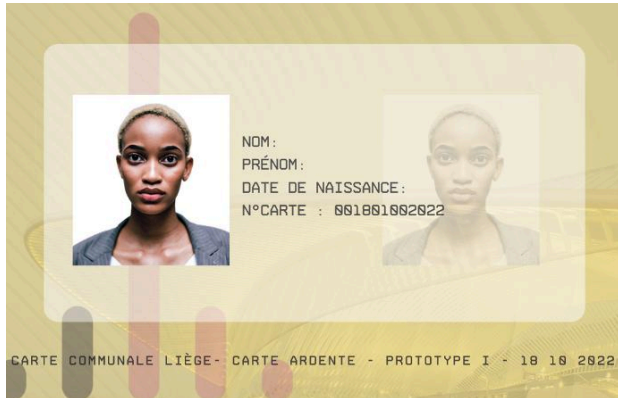
The département Seine-Saint-Denis has joined the Council of Europe's Intercultural Cities initiative that supports cities and regions on their way to developing intercultural strategies through benchmarking and exchange. This new engagement is a sign of the départements philosophy of embracing diversity and unconditional welcome.



Liège - Co-designing the "carte ardente" - a new tool to reaffirm the inclusive and hospitable identity of the people of Liège

On 1 July 2024, members of the 'Liège Ville hospitalière' collective, undocumented migrants and representatives from various departments of the municipal administration got together to think about the co-creation of a new tool: the Ardenne card. Issued by the municipal authorities, this municipal citizen's card is meant to become a local tool for identification and affirmation of belonging to the city, a means of taking action against discrimination and social inequality, and a resource for promoting inclusive citizenship. The city of Liège is convinced that the 'Carte Ardente' can be a social innovation to reaffirm the city's inclusive

and hospitable identity, while facilitating access to public services for newcomers. The card will also enable undocumented migrants to prove their residence in the City of Liège, thereby facilitating access to healthcare and cultural activities, and making it easier to lodge complaints with the police, etc.



Prototype of the Carte Ardente created for the civil society coalition “Liège Ville Hospitalière”

The morning of the workshop that was organised as a testing action for the Weldi network presented the concept of municipal cards, whose most famous example is the New York City ID card. Testimonies from undocumented migrants highlighted the difficulty of accessing various human rights at present. In the afternoon, local authority staff discussed the conditions for introducing the tool.

In September, municipal ID cards will be the topic of a bilateral visit from Utrecht to Liège and in November WELDI will organise an online seminar with all partners on this topic.

Utrecht: new URBACT innovation transfer network Plan Einstein Academy



In June, an URBACT innovation transfer network by the city of Utrecht was approved by the URBACT monitoring committee to transfer the city's Plan Einstein Reception model to other European cities. The Plan Einstein model was developed to revolutionise institutional accommodation of asylum seekers through a series of innovations. They include starting integration support from day 1 instead of keeping asylum seekers in a limbo until a decision is reached on their status; mixing accommodation between newcomers with established residents and offering support (such as business and English courses) to refugees and established residents - in short: breaking down the walls that often isolate newcomers from their local environment by fostering natural interaction. The initiative was piloted in the first round of Urban Innovative Actions and has now become the mainstream form of asylum seekers and refugee accommodation in Utrecht. From September onwards, other cities will be able to learn from this model and help Utrecht to develop it further.

Upcoming WELDI-exchanges



September 16 2024 (tbc): Workshop on one-stop-shops for migrants

September 23, 2024 (13-16.30 CET): Masterclass The Human-Rights based approach with Estel·la Pareja

October 2-3 2024 Transnational Exchange Lampedusa - health care and psychological care in first reception - the integrated approach in migrant reception

November (date tbc): WELDI midterm-reflection (online)

November (date tbc): Online training communicating about migration and tackling rumours and hate speech

About WELDI

The URBACT network WELDI (2023-25) tackles the question of how local authorities can promote human rights when receiving and offering integration support to newcomers. WELDI starts from the acceptance of the reality of migration and focuses on how to ensure a well-organised and dignified reception and integration that can benefit the whole local population. WELDI starts from the potential of

cities as places of dignified reception and integration of newcomers and wants to demonstrate local leadership in reception and integration and to trigger bottom-up change towards models that are in line with the fundamental rights that lay the basis for the European Union.