ARE WE MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION?

EVALUATING MIGRANT FRIENDLINESS

A Mifriendly Cities Project Sounding Board Report from discussion on 26 June 2019

Cities across Europe are facing a quandary. In the face of a resurgent far-right, an increased or ongoing hostility to immigration, ageing populations, a globalised world and further refugee flows mean continuing growth in immigrant populations across European cities. Drawn in through the needs for new people to fill jobs, bring skills and for protection the puzzle for city administrations is how to make the most of migrants as the resource they are: ensuring cities become and remain migration friendly by empowering migrants, reducing hostility and building solidarity between migrant and non-migrant groups. This sounding board provided the opportunity for practitioners across European cities to exchange ideas on how to measure migrant friendliness and share their experiences on the promises and pitfalls of building solidarity across migrant and non-migrant groups when delivering activities and services. The discussion brought together representatives from the three city councils in the Mifriendly Cities project (Birmingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton) with practitioner and experts who work across various European cities including Cardiff and Newcastle in the UK, Amsterdam (the Netherlands), Campobasso (Italy), Solna (Sweden), Tallinn (Estonia), Vienna (Austria)]. They were also joined by representatives from programmes that work with cities on these issues: Eurocities and the Intercultural Cities Programme.

Cities emerge as a prominent locus for politics and policy for a number of reasons. In some cases, cities provide the most appropriate level for action. In others, action at city-level can provide a useful counterpoint to national or regional level policies. The sounding board contributors gave examples of actions at city-level that took a more positive or proactive approach to migration and integration compared to national level policies. For instance, more generous integration policies in Amsterdam and Vienna. However, our discussion also urged caution in seeing the city as a paragon of good practice. Where city and regional/nation policies conflict, there is a risk that city's more positive proposals end up viewed as simply rhetorical when these remain constrained by the wider context or a lack of practical support and funds.

The question of how to measure migrant friendliness raised two main points:

(a) the need for comparability
(b) how to capture intangibles

In terms of comparability, a number of contributors described challenges developing comparable data. Data availability at the city level is also a challenge. Some cities like Vienna, report considerable progress in gathering monitoring and evaluation data committing to a monitoring cycle every three years to allow longitudinal comparison.

The Intercultural Cities Programme and Eurocities Integrating Cities Process described the programmes and networks they run to support cities in developing and implementing monitoring and evaluation. While the level of resource and commitment required to implement comprehensive monitoring is high, contributors reported that such monitoring had helped alert cities to areas of concern that would otherwise have remained hidden. Contributors noted that benchmarking and monitoring data were useful in justifying specialist service delivery by evidencing specific needs. Our discussion also highlighted recognition of the need for measuring more intangible integration indicators. Cities are trying harder to find ways of measuring more intangible elements of migrant friendliness such as measuring levels of loneliness in Estonia and the expansion of the Home Office Indicators of Integration Toolkit (UK).

Participants exchanged experiences of unintended consequences of policies. The discussion highlighted the role of monitoring to assess impacts and help discover unintended consequences early. In terms of avoiding unintended consequences the importance of policies being properly targeted and having appropriate aims was raised. Participants pointed out that, at times, policies were too sweeping in their target group or pursued aims that did not take proper account the context in which particular migrant groups found themselves. For example, several cities discussed comparatively poor labour market outcomes of settlement refugees. We wondered whether such groups had been overprovided for leading to a decline in innovativeness and drive or whether the trauma experienced by these groups or their aspirations to return to the country of origin meant they were less motivated to integrate into local labour markets.

RESOURCES

PARTICIPANTS SUGGESTED A NUMBER OF RESOURCES ON MIGRANT INTEGRATION. THESE ARE LISTED BELOW.

Networks and Programmes Supporting Cities

Intercultural Cities Programme, Council of Europe
This supports cities in reviewing their policies through an intercultural lens and developing comprehensive intercultural strategies to help them manage diversity positively and realise the diversity advantage.
https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities

Eurocities Charter
This provides city signatories to the Charter on Integrating Cities which sets out cities' commitment to integration of migrants.
http://www.integratingcities.eu/integrating-cities/documents#toolkits

City and National Level Monitoring and Evaluation

Vienna
The Vienna Integration Concept is based on "integration from day one". The city's systematic integration assistance is continuously enhanced. Vienna welcomes new citizens and supports them in finding their way around everyday life in the city as quickly as possible. https://www.wien.gv.at/english/social/integration/facts-figures/integration-concept.html

Sweden
Practical examples of receiving asylum seekers and refugees, establishment and integration, which are implemented for both short and long term. https://skr.se/tjanster/englishpages/activities/localexamplesofactivitiesforintegration.9339.html

UK
Home Office Indicators of Integration framework provides practical ways to design more effective strategies, monitor services and evaluate integration interventions. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-office-indicators-of-integration-framework-2019