



MIGRANT-LED APPROACHES

A Mifriendly Cities Project
Sounding Board Report
from discussion on
19 March 2020

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This sounding board discussion focused on how cities and localities can build on, work with and promote migrant-led approaches to become more welcoming, enterprising and migrant-friendly. Participants shared their knowledge and experience of: what helps migrant-led initiatives succeed, the benefits of encouraging migrant leadership, where pitfalls and challenges lie and how these can be mitigated. The discussion benefitted from the input of three projects from the MiFriendly Cities Programme that seek to foster migrant-led initiatives and active citizenship. These were: (1) migrant-led Social Innovation projects supported by Migration Work CIC, (2) migrant-led Social Enterprise projects supported by Coventry University Social Enterprise CIC and (3) Coventry City Council's Share My Language project. The sounding board brought together 16 participants, including representatives from the three participating city councils (Birmingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton), and practitioners and experts working on migrant integration in other European cities including Barcelona (Spain), Bologna (Italy), and Solna (Sweden). Attendance was affected by the outbreak of coronavirus across Europe.

Migrant-led initiatives promise the benefits of harnessing the greater potential for innovation and creativity that comes with diversity. However, to realise these benefits projects find they require adequate support and greater flexibility to help migrants navigate unfamiliar cultures and bureaucracies. Many contributors stressed the importance of ensuring a proper fit between the support and resources offered and community needs. This includes not only having an understanding of individuals' needs, but also developing an analysis of the impact of context in terms of the locale's migration history and trajectory. Approaches in places where immigration is a newer phenomenon will need to be different to those with a longer history of migration. Priorities in areas that experience a lot of transit migration, will be different to those in which migration leads to settlement. These factors affect the transferability of learning on migrant led approaches, and cities and localities looking to foster them will need to take into account these factors. Having good links into decision-making structures and strong relationships with key decision-makers can be critical in allowing cities to adapt to changes on the ground, particularly in contexts that are changing rapidly. Responsiveness is also key to addressing the unanticipated consequences, both positive and negative, that often arise.

The discussion emphasised the need for exchange between migrant and non-migrant communities to underpin initiatives. This was differentiated from understanding the purpose of integration work as focused solely on increasing migrants' understanding and competency in their new environment. Instead, several participants stressed that success was related to the equality and empowerment that lies in valuing the knowledge and experience of migrants as well. Within this, existing migrant leadership can help form a bridge between different experiences. The projects discussed noted the importance of peer-to-peer learning and buddy systems, and of providing a means for facilitating exchange across different groups. Migrant community organisations and associations played a similar facilitative role.

Bottom up approaches nonetheless require local authorities to take the lead in setting the context. There is a risk in the current funding environment that migrant-led approaches become favoured as a way of reducing costs rather than for their inherent benefits. To be successful, migrant-led approaches require an adequate infrastructure of support and resources provided by local authorities, either directly or through community organisations. Cities and localities play a critical role in setting the tone in relation to countering discrimination and hostility. Participants stressed the need for policy and practical frameworks to create the context in which migrant friendliness can be achieved and sustained. Thinking through the governance of community projects, this requires the balancing of sufficient scope for creativity and community ownership against the need for common basic standards and criteria. Across the discussion, unlocking the experience and insight that migrants bring to communities was seen as a key benefit of migrant led approaches. The focus was on finding ways that these can be productively shared and drawn upon.



RESOURCES

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



IGdansk Immigrant Integration Model Handbook

<https://www.gdansk.pl/download/2017-06/91579.pdf>

McKinsey & Company (January 2018)

Delivering Through Diversity - “builds on previous research to reaffirm the global relevance of the correlation between diversity (defined here as a greater proportion of women and ethnically/culturally diverse individuals) in the leadership of large organisations and financial outperformance”

URBACT Local Support Group Toolkit for participatory policy-making and delivery to improve the social dimension of urban regeneration processes

https://urbact.eu/sites/default/files/import/general_library/URBACT_Toolkit_online_4.pdf