Cities as

MIGRATION

Governance
Partners

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GMF
Ideas.
Leadership.
Hope.

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About GMF Cities

From climate change to racial injustice, cities and their citizens are on the front lines of global challenges. GMF Cities connects the United States and Europe at the city level to address our shared challenges. Our high-impact gatherings, peer exchanges, and applied research spark transformative change: When cities learn from and build on each other's initiatives, the best policies and practices can be replicated at scale.

GMF Cities has an extensive and successful history of working cooperatively with public, private sector, and NGO leaders to apply these insights to improve local and regional policies and programs. GMF Cities supports these individuals in expanding their transatlantic network, growing their policy expertise, and developing their leadership skills.

GMF Cities works with and for transatlantic cities that: further and fortify democracy; center agency and equity; advance justice—social, economic, and climate; and drive enterprise and entrepreneurship to social good.

About Cities Managing Migration

GMF's Cities Managing Migration addresses the most salient and current issues of immigration and integration on the local level. The project focuses on four key areas:

- Creative workforce integration (track #1)
- Bridging borders (track #2)
- Rural cities and towns (track #3)
- Human-centered safety (track #4)

In parallel, the project includes crosscutting learning themes, such as inclusion of youth, technology, and digitalization. The project offers a platform to support interested local-level actors with policy analysis, opportunities for peer learning, and for developing advocacy strategies. Crosscutting learning themes include cross-sector coordination, technology, strategic communication, intergovernmental coordination, and future scenario planning. To kick off the project, a GMF survey collected input from over 25 cities across the four thematic tracks and cross-cutting learning themes.

SUMMARY

In a world where interdependent issues such as migration, climate change, diversity, democracy, and sustainable development transcend nations and continents, multilateral cooperation must move beyond the national level. As the world becomes more and more urban, these issues take concrete form in cities, where local governments become increasingly de facto migration-governance actors. In this context, local governments carry high potential—and in many cases, stand ready—to partner with civil society, national governments, and international organizations in order to shape coherent policies that address the needs of migrants, refugees, and locals alike. However, local governments remain often excluded from national and international decision-making processes, even for policies that directly affect their residents.

Recognizing the growing expertise that local governments can leverage to link local, national, and international policy design and implementation, the German Marshall Fund's Cities Managing Migration project (CMM) promotes a a bottom-up perspective that explores opportunities for city governments to participate in national and international knowledge exchanges, decision-making processes, and multi-stakeholder partnerships for local action.

The CMM project is based on the premise that such action could make migration governance more outcome-oriented by ensuring that policies and practical implementation are grounded in and address local potentials, needs, and challenges.

Drawing on firsthand insights and recommendations developed during six transatlantic CMM city convenings between 2021 and 2022, this policy paper focuses on two central city strategies aimed at recognizing cities as partners of national and international actors in migration governance: cross-border city engagement for outcome-oriented migration governance and local-level multi-stakeholder partnerships for urban migration governance.

Cross-border City Engagement for Outcome-oriented Migration Governance

To overcome the paradox that cities increasingly address the consequences of (inter)national migration policymaking without the power to influence the development of such processes, some cities are working to establish bridges between local, national, and international stakeholders. Central elements of such transnational city engagement include co-shaping migration narratives, providing policy reality checks, and claiming a seat at decision-making tables. Cities do not intend to, nor will they, replace national governments as key actors of migration policymaking. Rather, cities argue that in the interest of developing effective whole-of-government approaches, as called for in the Global Compact for Migration, national governments and international organizations can better achieve global objectives by entering in real partnerships with cities and funding city-led action.

Multi-stakeholder Partnerships for Urban Migration Governance

Furthermore, city representatives highlight that cities' transnational work serves to access new resources and to develop new partnerships in order to drive inclusive multi-stakeholder action on the ground. Over the last two years, CMM has encouraged cities to explore opportunities for such partnerships by bringing together city representatives from the Americas, Europe, and North Africa to share experiences and build innovative ideas around four thematic areas.

Bridging Borders

Given their geographic location, the consequences of (inter)national migration policymaking affect border cities even more directly than other urban or rural areas. Cities participating in the CMM Bridging Borders exchange highlighted the ineffectiveness of entirely security-based migration management and purely humanitarian-oriented emergency interventions. Instead, city representatives called for more inclusive strategies that would strengthen the resilience of city administration and service providers as well as residents, including migrants and refugees. To develop such strategies, local, national, and international actors should collaborate to pilot flexible funding options, scalable social infrastructure, and housing that could be used by different communities at different times for a variety of purposes.

Fostering Human-centered Safety

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that exclusion of certain communities exacerbates insecurity in cities by limiting access to education, health care, and legal support. Local authorities can only ensure that their cities work for their inhabitants if they have the means, mandates, and partners to create services and opportunities for everyone. The argument here is not that there are no legal differences between nationals and non-nationals in cities, but that ensuring access to basic social and legal services in respect of human rights benefits cities as a whole and makes them safer for all inhabitants. City representatives participating in the CMM convenings highlighted a need to build up city capacities in the areas of anti-human trafficking and the development of local ID documents that would ensure inclusive access to basic city services.

Facilitating Creative Workforce Integration

Knowledge exchange among the CMM participants showed that matching immigrant competencies with skills in demand in the local labor market can best be done through cross-sector coordination and multi-level governance. During the pandemic, incidences of skills-based hiring increased, creating new opportunities and incentives to tackle policy restrictions on access to work and recognition of certificates. CMM participants specifically highlighted skills-based hiring initiatives and new apprenticeship programs, as piloted in some US cities, as innovative approaches that should be pursued further.

Driving Integration in Rural Cities and Towns

In recent years, the need for rural development has gained attention in Europe as well as North America. This increased awareness among policymakers opens a window of opportunity to introduce new immigration and integration policies favoring the development of rural areas and
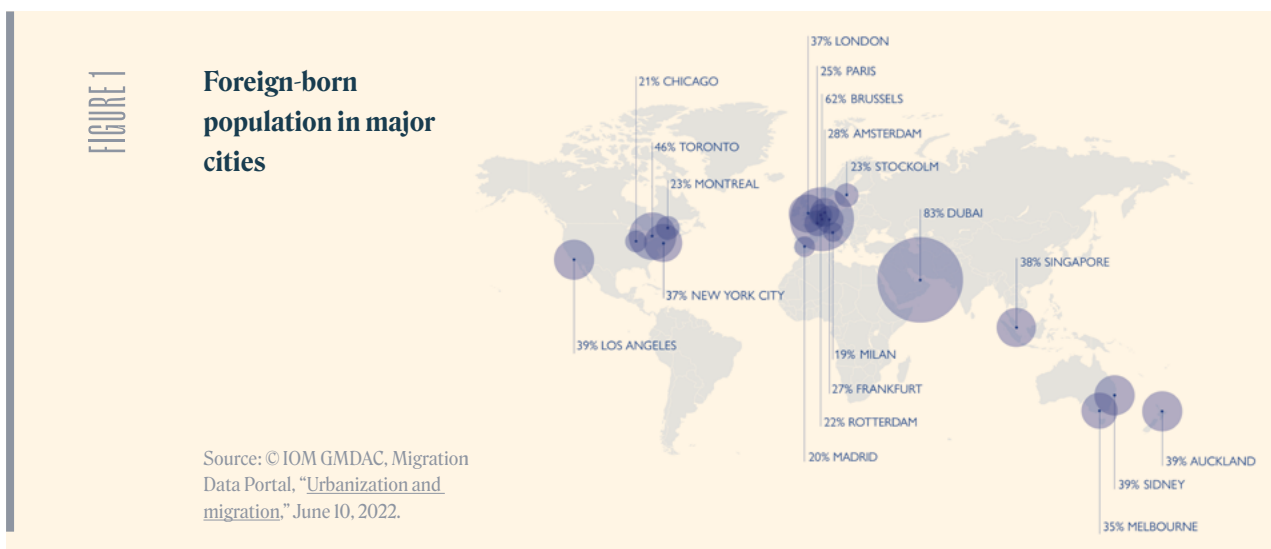
towns and gives hope that welcoming rural communities will find the support they need to address their challenges. For instance, small municipalities must either make temporary immigration beneficial for the local economy or find ways to attract and retain long-term immigrants. Digital solutions could contribute to enhance infrastructure and connectivity, as well.

This paper concludes each thematic section with concrete policy recommendations developed by the CMM city participants and the CMM team throughout the project.

MIGRATION IN AN URBANIZING WORLD

The future of human mobility is urban. While in 1950, only 30% of the world's population lived in urban areas, this number rose to 55% by 2018 and is expected to reach 68% by 2050.[1] Both natural population growth and migration play an important role in driving urbanization. In a 2018 letter to UNHCR, the United Nations Refugee Agency, city representatives highlighted that while "the iconic image of a refugee is a person residing in a camp, today at least 60% of the world's refugees reside in urban areas".[2] Indeed, more than 60% of refugees and 80% of internally displaced persons (IDPs) lived in cities in 2018.[3] Refugees are not the only ones drawn to cities. Urban centers are also highly attractive destinations for persons migrating for employment, education, family reunification, etc. Furthermore, cities represent points of destination for rural-urban migration. As reasons for human mobility are manifold, this policy paper applies an inclusive definition of the term "migrant" as any person who "moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently".[4]

Today, North America and Europe represent some of the most urbanized regions in the world with 82% of the North American population and 74 percent of the European population residing in urban areas.[5] Figure 1 shows that for major North American and European cities, foreign-born inhabitants constitute an important part of their urban population.

FIGURE 1

Foreign-born population in major cities

21% CHICAGO
46% TORONTO
23% MONTREAL
37% NEW YORK CITY
39% LOS ANGELES
37% LONDON
25% PARIS
62% BRUSSELS
28% AMSTERDAM
23% STOCKOLM
83% DUBAI
38% SINGAPORE
19% MILAN
27% FRANKFURT
22% ROTTERDAM
20% MADRID
39% AUCKLAND
39% SIDNEY
35% MELBOURNE

Source: © IOM GMDAC, Migration Data Portal, "Urbanization and migration," June 10, 2022.

1 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, World Urbanization Prospects, 2018: Highlights, 2019.

2 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Letter by Cities to the High Commissioner, 2017.

3 Sheila R. Foster and Chrystie F. Swiney, City power and powerlessness on the global stage, In Eva Garcia-Chueca and Lorenzo Vidal (Eds.): Urban futures. Alternative models for global cities. Barcelona: Cidob, pp. 19–27: 22, 2019; United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Global trends. Forced displacement in 2018, 2019.

4 International Organization for Migration (IOM), Glossary on migration, 2019.

5 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, World Urbanization Prospects, 2018: Highlights, 2019.

Local Governments: De Facto Migration Actors

As more and more migrants, including refugees, settle in cities, local governments are increasingly addressing core issues of national and international migration governance such as mixed migration, protracted displacement, and intercultural diversity. Migrants and refugees help build transnational connections by linking cities through human mobility, economic relations, financial transactions, social networks, and the flow of ideas and innovative practices. Migration-driven urbanization can therefore be a crucial contributor to economic growth, social development, and intercultural understanding and can put cities on the global map. However, to realize this potential, local governments need to proactively plan for and integrate the immigration and emigration of their urban population and human mobility into city planning. If local governments neglect migration issues due to a lack of legal competencies, political will, or resources, migrants and refugees arriving in cities may struggle to access formal labor and housing markets, basic services, and health care. In such situations, the potential they bring to these cities often remains unfulfilled. Therefore, representatives from cities, including Amsterdam, Barcelona, Gaziantep, Los Angeles, Mannheim, Mexico City, Milan, New York City, and San Francisco, highlight that national policies aimed at halting (international) migration by closing borders or limiting access to basic services in cities are oftentimes futile and may produce negative effects for social cohesion and safety in cities of transit and destination. Instead of supporting restrictive migration policies, these local governments call upon civil society, national governments, and international organizations to enter into partnerships with cities in order to develop pragmatic and inclusive approaches that would benefit migrants, refugees, and local populations alike.[6]

> "*There is still work to do, but immigration is unstoppable. It's linked to demographics and economic cycles. Laws can make immigration more difficult or easier for people, but it won't stop it. [...] All you can do is create policies that will either do something positive for everyone or make it all more difficult.*"
>
> **CAMEROUN THIBOS**
> Director of Welcome Policies for Migrants, Barcelona City Council
> "Barcelona: city of refuge," Open Democracy, September 26, 2016

POLICY

Action Imperatives for Policymakers

The increasing interlinkage between migration and urbanization leads to two action imperatives for local and national policymakers:

- **Policy coherence across sectors:** Despite growing interdependence between migration and urbanization, too often these policy areas remain disconnected. There is an urgent need for local and national governments to ensure policy coherence, dialogue, and cooperation between respective ministries and departments.

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6   Janina Stürner-Siovitz, Curtain up! City diplomacy in global migration governance, Springer Nature, forthcoming 2023.

- **Policy coherence across levels of government:** Policy coherence needs to be strengthened across both policy sectors and levels of government. As governments closest to the urban population, many local authorities have acquired vast expertise on the interplay of urbanization and migration. Nevertheless, channels for dialogue between local and national authorities on questions of migration remain the exception in the transatlantic context.

> *"Do refugees cause social, political, and economic destabilization? We knew that the answer to this question would shape all of our actions in this critical time, and ultimately Gaziantep answered definitively: Refugees do not cause destabilization; poor leadership and policies do."*

ÖNDER YALÇIN,
Director of Migration Management, Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality.
"The Gaziantep Migration Model for Building a Resilient City for All in a Time of Crisis,"
The German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2020.

Across the transatlantic region, cities have developed innovative solutions, which they discuss and share in national and transnational city networks, cooperation projects, and conferences. Among these are city ID cards in New York[7] and San Francisco,[8] which open access to all city inhabitants to basic city services. The city of Athens has partnered with UNHCR to increase housing opportunities in the Greek capital.[9] In Helsinki,[10] the local authorities draw on modern technology and robotics to broaden the support offered to newcomers seeking employment. The Italian city of Lampedusa has entered into partnership with cities and towns from Malta, Cyprus, France, Italy, Hungary, and Austria to create the Border Towns and Island Network.[11] In Turkey, Gaziantep was the first city to create a municipal migration unit in order to move from an emergency mode in the context of the Syrian civil war to a more sustainable and inclusive approach that addresses the needs of migrants, refugees, and local communities living in the city.[12]

> *"Cities are places for innovation and experimentation because the city level is small enough to be manageable and big enough to show options for upscaling."*

REPRESENTATIVE OF THE CITY OF BRISTOL
Quoted in Janina Stürner, A New Role for Cities in Global and Regional Migration Governance?,
Robert Bosch Stiftung, 2020.

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7 New York City Government, IDNYC, 2022.

8 Office of the County Clerk, San Francisco City Government, SF City ID Card - Getting and Renewing a Card, 2022.

9 Athens Coordination Center for Migrant & Refugee Issues, City of Athens - Accommodation and Services Scheme for Asylum Seekers, 2022.

10 Education Division, City of Helsinki, Helsinki Skills Center, 2022.

11 Janina Stürner-Siovitz, Bringing Border Cities into the Center of Migration Governance, The German Marshall Fund of the United States, September 13, 2021. Welcome Border Towns and Islands Network, Snapshots from the Border Project, 2019.

12 Önder, The Gaziantep Migration Model for Building a Resilient City for All in a Time of Crisis.

The Challenge:
THE URBAN MIGRATION GOVERNANCE PARADOX

Despite this wealth of innovative ideas and partnerships, local governments' ability to act remains restricted by a central migration governance paradox that comes increasingly to the fore as more and more migrants and refugees settle in urban areas: Cities are disproportionally affected by migration movements and migration policies negotiated at national or international levels. Striking examples are the implications of the EU-Turkey agreement for cities in Greece and Turkey and the short- and medium-term consequences for US and Mexican border cities following President Trump's announcement to construct a physical wall along the US-Mexico border. However, despite the direct influence of national policies on local realities, local governments often lack the mandates and resources to address migration and displacement on the ground as well as communication channels to feed local expertise back to higher levels of governance. As a consequence, national and international actors rarely see local governments as relevant partners for migration governance, and local governments remain excluded from policy fora where decisions that affect urban populations are made.

This communication and cooperation gap between local actors addressing questions of local inclusion and integration and (inter)national actors addressing questions of migration is even more problematic given that integration and migration are inherently linked. In situations where data on migrants and refugees in cities is not readily available or outdated, national migration management depends first and foremost on available reception capacities and public support for integration *as perceived at the national level*. Local knowledge on integration potentials and challenges in cities and towns can thus be an important factor in ensuring cross-sectorial coherence between migration, asylum, and integration policies. However, if local-national communication channels are unavailable, national migration policy risks becoming disconnected from local realities.[13] In 2021, the Cities Managing Migration project [14] conducted a survey of 25 cities from Europe, Canada, Mexico, and the United States. While four out of five cities stated that national policies on migration and integration restricted local capacity to develop inclusive solutions for all inhabitants, two-thirds of those same cities also considered some national policies as important support factors for their local engagement. These seemingly contradictory findings point to the need and opportunity for more integrated policymaking involving different levels of government.

13   Janina Stürner, A New Role for Cities in Global and Regional Migration Governance?

14   Christiane Heimann, Janina Stürner-Siovitz, and Paul Costello, Cities Managing Migration: the State of Affairs, The German Marshall Fund of the United States, July 21, 2021.

> *"We need global governance to move into its next iteration and that means the representatives of international networks of cities sitting alongside national actors in shaping the national and international context in which we must live. At this moment, we find ourselves trying to lead a 21st century world with 20th century political structures. People have always known that nations working alone were not enough. That's why nations bounded together. But whereas before they looked up and across to collaborate, I suggest that today they need to look inward and across city-to-city."*
>
> **MARVIN REES,** Mayor of the City of Bristol
> "US Conference of Mayors, Mayor of Bristol, England, on Immigration," C-SPAN, June 11, 2018.

At a time when interdependent issues such as migration, climate change, (in)equality, diversity, democracy, and the need for sustainable development transcend nations and continents, multilateral cooperation between states is no longer enough. In an urbanizing world, international challenges take concrete form in cities. Cities therefore carry high potential—and in many cases, stand ready—to partner with civil society, national governments, and international organizations in order to shape coherent policies that address the needs of migrants, refugees, and local populations alike.

The Opportunity:
CITIES AS MIGRATION GOVERNANCE PARTNERS

As local governments become increasingly aware of the urban migration governance paradox, some aim to bridge the gaps between local, national, and international levels of migration policymaking. Adopting a bottom-up perspective that considers opportunities for city governments to participate in national and international knowledge and decision-making processes and to launch multi-stakeholder partnerships for local action could render migration governance more outcome-oriented by ensuring that policies and practical implementation are grounded in and address local potential, needs, and challenges. In contexts where local governments in Europe and North America grow increasingly aware of their role as *de facto* migration governance actors, two municipal strategies take center stage:

- Transnational city engagement in regional and international migration governance
- Cooperative urban action on the ground

Transnational City Engagement for Rights-based and Outcome-oriented Migration Governance

Zooming in on city engagement in migration governance at regional and international levels means exploring "the institutions and processes by which cities engage in relations with actors on an international political stage with the aim of representing themselves and their interests to one another".[15] What are these institutions and processes? Central among the first are city networks as national or international structures that enable cities to bridge governance levels, amplify and legitimize city voices, and promote local interests at regional and international levels.[16]

15 Rogier van der Pluijm with Jan Melissen, City diplomacy. The expanding role of cities in international politics, Clingendael Diplomacy Papers, 2007.

16 Simon Curtis and Michele Acuto, The foreign policy of cities, The RUSI Journal 163 (6), pp. 8–17.

Networking Is Everything—
CITY NETWORKS AND
MIGRATION GOVERNANCE

Worldwide, the number of city networks addressing questions of integration, migration, and diversity has rapidly expanded since the turn of the century. A recent mapping identified 64 networks operating at national, regional, or international levels.[17] Table 1 shows the spatial distribution of these networks in 2021.

Spatial Distribution of Migration-related Networks

	Global	Regional	National	Total
Europe	12	15	12	39
South America		4	1	17
North America			9	21
Oceania			2	14
Africa		5	2	19
Asia		1	1	14

Source: Thomas Lacroix, "Migration-related city networks: a global overview," In Local Government Studies, 2021.

While the European continent hosts a wide range of regional city networks, in North America the focus is mainly on national city networks and, except for the Sanctuary Cities movement, there is no common city network linking Canada and the United States.[18] EUROCITIES, a network of major European cities, plays a central role in leading city advocacy at the EU level and in collaborating with the European Commission to promote city-to-city cooperation through various Integrating Cities projects. Other influential European networks engaging on questions of migration and integration include Intercultural Cities, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, and the European Coalition of Cities against Racism.

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17   Thomas Lacroix, Migration-related city networks: a global overview, Local Government Studies, 2021.

18   Ibid.

Examples of International Networks

Cities of Migration
GFMD Mayors Mechanism
Global Parliament of Mayors
Mayors Migration Council

Metropolis
United Cities and Local Governments
Welcoming International

At the national level, a variety of networks have started addressing these topics in recent years, with prominent examples being the French Association Nationale des Villes et Territoires Accueillants (ANVITA), the Greek Cities Network for Integration, or the UK Inclusive Cities. On the other side of the Atlantic, Mercociudades works toward inclusive migration approaches that respect human rights in South and Central America, Welcoming America and Cities for Action support the development of inclusive communities and policies in the United States, and the Réseau des municipalités en immigration et en relations interculturelles du Québec promotes city-to-city dialogue on immigration and intercultural relations in Canada. As migration governance develops an increasingly important international dimension, transnational city engagement is following suit with a growing number of global-level networks.

Examples of Regional Networks

Africa: African-European Mayors' Dialogue, South African Local Government Association (SALGA), United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLG Africa)

Middle East & Med: Mediterranean City-to-City Migration project (MC2CM), Mediterranean Host Municipalities Learning Network (HMLN), United Cities and Local Governments Middle East and West Asia (UCLG MEWA)

Europe: Border Towns and Island Network (BTIN), Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), Cities Managing Migration (CMM), City Initiative on Migrants with Irregular Status in Europe (C-MISE), European Coalition of Cities against Racism (ECCAR), EUROCITIES, EU Urban Partnership on Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees, Integrating Cities, Intercultural Cities, International Alliance of Safe Harbors, International Cities of Refuge Network, Solidarity Cities

Americas: Cities for Action, Cities Managing Migration (CMM), Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Federación Latinoamericana de Ciudades, Municipios y Asociaciones de Gobiernos Locales (FLACMA), Mercociudades, Sanctuary Cities movement, Welcoming America

Asia & Pacific Region: Global Mayoral Forum 2016, Welcoming International

Whether city networks are structured horizontally or vertically has important implications for their constituency, methodology, and (policy) objectives. Horizontal city networks, such as Cities of Migration, focus strongly on city-to-city exchange and cooperation. They may cooperate with

other actors, such as NGOs or international organizations, but their constituents are exclusively local governments. Vertically oriented city networks focus on collaboration and advocacy between cities and higher levels of governance in order to ensure that city voices are heard in national and international migration policymaking processes and facilitate multi-stakeholder partnerships and municipal access to national or international funding. Peer-learning and city exchange play a key role, as well. Among such vertical city networks, we often find hybrid networks, which include non-city actors among their constituency. A prevalent international example would be the Mayors Mechanism, led by the city organizations United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and the Mayors Migration Council (MMC), as well as the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Having discussed city networks as central *institutions* of transnational city engagement, the next section turns to *processes* of city engagement. A mapping of the most prevalent forms of transnational city action highlights three central strategies:

- Co-shaping migration narratives
- Providing policy reality checks
- Claiming a seat at decision-making tables

CO-SHAPING
MIGRATION NARRATIVES

As *stories about reality*, narratives shape the way we interpret what is happening in the world. While a security-based narrative may frame migration as a threat to urban social cohesion, a development-based narrative may highlight the potential that migrants and refugees bring to cities' economic and social development. Reality, of course, is never as black and white as that—however, it matters whether local and national policymakers adopt policies to cope with a challenge or to seize an opportunity. While some cities in the transatlantic context have longstanding experience in contributing proactively to public debates on migration and integration, such active shaping of narratives is rather new to others. German city representatives shared, for example, that peer-learning in the exchange with American counterparts helped them shift from a deficit-oriented focus on integration—considered necessary to raise funds to address a city challenge—towards communication that highlighted that funding was needed to seize integration as a city opportunity.[19]

Narratives matter even more in contexts where evidence-based policymaking may be restricted by limited data availability, the presentation of "alternative facts," or the politicization of migration. While fully recognizing challenges linked to human mobility, representatives from cities such as Athens, Amsterdam, Montréal, New York, and Los Angeles highlight that migration can contribute to their cities' social, economic, and cultural development, if—*and this is important*—cities have adequate policies, resources, and partnerships with national governments, civil society, and international organizations to shape environments conducive for *all* inhabitants. These cities are therefore supporting central arguments of international organizations in favor of strengthening the migration-development nexus to achieve local sustainable solutions.

> *"When good policies are in place, regarding urban planning as well as employment, housing, public health, primary and secondary education and communication, immigration drives the economic, social, and cultural development of cities. Of course, this is not something that happens overnight but requires a relationship of trust between cities and central governments, partnerships with society in the broad sense of the term and financial support to build an adequate infrastructure for living together."*
>
> **VALÉRIE PLANTE,** Mayor of the City of Montréal
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> "Speech at the stocktaking meeting of the Intergovernmental Conference to adopt the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, December 4th to 6th in Puerta Vallarta, Mexico," authors' translation, Metropolis, 2017.

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19   Stürner-Siovitz, Curtain up!

PROVIDING POLICY REALITY CHECKS

Cities' transnational engagement on narratives is intricately linked with another strategy—providing reality checks for national and international migration policymaking. As governments are closest to target groups of migration governance, city authorities argue that they have a good grasp of how policies play out on the ground and what unintended consequences may result. In particular, regarding the topic of non-discriminatory access to basic services, cities are urging states to consider local expertise. Non-discriminatory access to services means ensuring equal access for all city inhabitants irrespective of a person's legal status. While national governments hold that migrants without status need to return to their country of origin and asylum seekers, in the EU context, are to return to the country of first EU entrance, many city representatives interviewed for this policy paper recognize that in reality, return is often not possible; and as a consequence, some city inhabitants are stuck in perpetual legal limbo. To overcome such situations, local governments took local action such as the creation of city IDs in New York and San Francisco, which enables all urban inhabitants to access certain city services. In the United States and Canada, the Sanctuary Cities Movement strives to broaden access to basic services for all migrants and refugees residing in these cities through the establishment of "firewalls" between service providers and immigration enforcement as well as "Don't ask, don't tell" strategies.[20]

> "*Integration efforts should not be connected to the legal status. National governments are often not capable of enforcing re-transitions. The legal consequence of this equals exclusion from systems of integration. However, this is an indirect assault on the functioning of an urban society.*"
>
> **CITY OF MANNHEIM**
> "Cities show more solidarity than nation states – Mayor's summit in Vatican City", 2016.

In the Netherlands, cities such as Amsterdam and Utrecht have offered "Bed, Bath and Bread"[21] to asylum seekers irrespective of their legal status, leading to tension with the national government. Despite facing opposition, these cities are convinced that inclusive approaches pay off in the medium to long term. The city of Utrecht, for instance, started the local "Plan Einstein"[22] in 2015, offering education and professional skills training to asylum seekers as well as vulnerable locals.

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20   Blances Garcés Mascareñas and Kristin Eitel, Sanctuary Cities: a Global Perspective, CIDOB, 2019.

21   Barbara Oomen and Moritz Baumgärtel, Frontier cities: the rise of local authorities as an opportunity for international human rights law, In European Journal of International Law 29 (2), 2018.

22   Jan Braat, We Give People Guidance from Day One, Robert Bosch Stiftung, 2021.

> *"Asylum seekers in the Netherlands normally stay in a center and wait for a decision as to whether they can stay or not. In the meantime, they can't do anything. The philosophy of our Plan Einstein is to give them from day one all kind of activities, education, for example lessons in English, in ICT (information and communication technologies), and in entrepreneurship. [...] The program is for migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers and also for Dutch people, for example for people who aren't in a good economic situation and who also need support."*
>
> **JAN BRAAT,** Senior Policy Advisor, City of Utrecht
> "We Give People Guidance from Day One," Robert Bosch Stiftung, 2021.

The Dutch national parliament has commended the city of Utrecht on its "Plan Einstein" and the concept was named one of the top ten innovative projects on migration by the European Commission.[23]

However, city representatives realize that there are limits to what they can achieve through local action. This is why some cities combine inclusive local-level strategies with national and global-level advocacy. As one example, members of the American city network Cities for Action commit to both advancing inclusive local action on public safety, immigrant protection, and civic inclusion while also advocating for immigration reform at the national and federal levels. In 2021, nearly 200 Cities for Action members provided recommendations to the Biden administration. In their "Vision for Immigration Action: Local Leaders' Recommendations for Building Inclusive, Equitable, and Resilient Communities for All",[24] city leaders highlighted that migrants were integral members of their communities and that all city residents would ultimately benefit from inclusive policies. Similar positions are defended by the European city network Eurocities, which published a 2022 statement calling upon national and EU actors to support cities as front-line actors in welcoming and integrating persons fleeing the war on Ukraine.[25] In this context, cities welcomed the EU decision to increase the flexibility of funding to support local reception and integration structures but also reiterated former claims to provide local authorities with direct access to national and European emergency funding. Furthermore, cities underlined the need for non-discriminatory, equal access to rights and protection for all refugees irrespective of their country of origin.[26]

> *"Cities call for non-discriminatory, equal access to rights and protection for all refugees in Europe. The rapid response of the EU and national authorities to the Ukrainian refugee crisis has been consistent with the European values of democracy and human rights that we share as European cities. However, we regret to see that displaced non-Ukrainian nationals escaping the war are being discriminated against at the border when entering the European Union. Other refugees from countries in the Middle East, Africa or Latin America face considerable difficulties in accessing rights and receiving international protection. At the same time as*

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23   Ibid.

24   Cities for Action, Cities For Action's Vision for Immigration Action, 2021.

25   Eurocities, Caring Cities: Acting in solidarity with all refugees, 2022.

26   Ibid.

helping refugees from Ukraine, we need to ensure that all refugees, regardless of their origins and identity, no matter the colour of their skin, their gender, sexual orientation or religion, are receiving the same right to protection. International and EU law that guarantees equal access to rights and to protection in Europe for all refugees and people in need of protection must be upheld and applied fairly."

EUROCITIES
"Cities need more support for Ukrainian refugees", 2022.

When it comes to city advocacy at the global level, cities such as Atlanta, Athens, Barcelona, Bristol, Kampala, Milan, Montréal, New York, Quito, and São Paulo have actively engaged in the negotiations of the Global Compact for Migration (GCM). As the first UN agreement to comprehensively cover all dimensions of international migration, the GCM constitutes the centerpiece of global migration governance at the beginning of the 21st century.[27] Throughout the negotiations in 2018, city advocacy focused on ensuring that the topic of non-discriminatory access to basic services and to education, a rather contentious issue among the national negotiating parties, would remain in the final text. The fact that GCM objective 15 is entirely dedicated to these topics can be considered an important success.

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27   United Nations, Global Compact for Migration, n.d.

CLAIMING A SEAT AT DECISION-MAKING TABLES

City engagement with the GCM process shows that cities are increasingly claiming seats at decision-making tables, moving from ad hoc engagement to more structured forms of cooperation in regional and international policy fora. Cities' key supporting argument for this engagement is that it would be more efficient to include local governments in early stages of policy development, rather than trying to fix (inter)national policies that do not fit local realities ex post. Overall, cities will certainly not replace national governments as key actors of migration policymaking. However, in the interest of developing effective whole-of-government approaches, as called for by the Global Compact for Migration, cities need to be more than local implementers of national and international decision-making.

Drawing on these reflections, a Mayors Mechanism was established in 2018 within the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD). Created in 2007, the GFMD is a state-led process established outside of the UN system that provides a less politicized space for state dialogue on migration and displacement.[28] Despite the establishment of participation mechanisms for civil society (2011) and the private sector (2015), local governments did not have official representation in the GFMD until 2018, when the GFMD troika (then the governments of Germany, Morocco, and Ecuador) supported the creation of a Mayors Mechanism.

In the same year, cities founded the Mayors Migration Council, a diplomacy-oriented city organization, aiming to strengthen cities' access to national, regional, and global policy fora. The MMC strives to build up city diplomacy skills, open municipal access to funding and resource flows, and develop diverse partnerships to achieve global objectives on migration and displacement through locally led action.[29]

In 2022, the Mayors Mechanism (co-led by UCLG, the MMC, and the IOM) launched a Call to Local Action for Migrants and Refugees[30] at the first Review Forum of the Global Compact for Migration (IMRF). Presenting seventy local actions and commitments regarding, inter alia, climate migration, access to municipal services, as well as access to employment and entrepreneurship, city leaders showcased their commitment to the implementation of Global Compact and called upon national governments and international organizations to support city-led action.

28   Stürner, A New Role for Cities in Global and Regional Migration Governance?

29   Mayors Migration Council, Local action. Global impact, n.d.

30   GFMD Mayors Mechanism, A Call to Local Action for Migrants and Refugees, 2022.

> *"The Call to Action shows the strong leadership of cities. Germany believes that the participation of local governments in global migration governance is essential. Local governments are the ones confronted with realities of migration but also have knowledge and access to migrant populations."*
>
> **GERMAN FEDERAL MINISTRY FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT**
> "IMRF Daily Briefing: 18 May," Mayors Mechanism, 2022.

These developments show an interesting change in perspective—no longer do city representatives ask national and international actors how local action could support the implementation of (inter)national migration policies. Instead, city leaders highlight the broad expertise cities bring to the table on questions of migration and integration and call upon national governments and international organizations to enter into real partnerships with cities and fund city-led action to achieve common objectives.

Multi-stakeholder Cooperation—Innovative Action for Urban Migration Governance

Cities engaging at national and international levels of migration governance highlight that their transnational work is not a goal in and of itself, but rather, serves to access new resources and develop new partnerships in order to drive inclusive multi-stakeholder action on the ground. What could such locally led multi-stakeholder cooperation look like? The German Marshall Fund's Cities Managing Migration program (CMM) encourages cities to find answers to this question, bringing together city representatives from France, Germany, Greece, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, Spain, the United Kingdom, Turkey, Tunisia, the United States, Canada, and Mexico to share their experiences and build innovative ideas around four thematic areas:

- Bridging borders
- Fostering human-centered safety
- Facilitating creative workforce integration
- Driving integration in rural cities and towns

Between 2021 and 2022, the Cities Managing Migration program organized a series of virtual thematic workshops. The following section provides an overview of central outcomes and presents recommendations based on city-to-city dialogues.

BRIDGING BORDERS

Cities around the world situated near land or sea borders are often first responders supporting (or, at times, rejecting) migrants and refugees. Due to their geographic location, border cities tend to be more directly affected by the consequences of national and international migration policymaking than other urban or rural areas.

Innovative Practice

In 2019, the City of Lampedusa and Linosa joined forces with border towns and cities in Malta, Cyprus, France, Italy, Hungary, and Austria to launch the Border Towns and Island Network (BTIN).

Cities participating in the CMM Bridging Borders Exchange[31] highlighted the ineffectiveness of purely security-based migration management targeted to halt or deter migration movements entirely. Taking a pragmatic perspective, city representatives further argued that purely humanitarian-oriented emergency intervention dedicated to directly assisting migrants and refugees for a brief period of time before expecting them to move on, is ultimately not in the interest of border cities either. Such action simply drives a city from one crisis to the next, leaving the local administration and population less resilient over time, draining the motivation of volunteers willing to aid migrants and refugees, and opening spaces for security-based migration narratives.

Innovative Practice

The city halls of San Diego in the United States and Tijuana in Mexico are only 30 kilometers (18 miles) apart. For years these two cities have cooperated on cross-border challenges by agreeing to consecutive MOUs, with the latest one being signed in May 2022. In their MOU the city administrations agree to establish joint working programs, to share information, and to build out collaborative work plans. Among areas of shared interest, the cities collaborate on migration management. They recognize that, being part of a dynamic border region, they are on the front lines of welcoming migrants, and they commit to being a voice advocating pro-migrant policies, to providing inclusive services, and to protecting vulnerable migrant populations.

City representatives therefore highlighted that more inclusive strategies were necessary to strengthen the resilience of the city administration and service providers as well as of inhabitants including migrants and refugees. To develop such strategies there is a need for collaboration between local, national, and international actors to pilot flexible funding options, scalable social infrastructure, and housing that could be used by different communities at different times for a variety of purposes. Such local-level strategies need to be situated in a transnational system of safe and regular migration channels to ensure safety of migrants and refugees, reduce vulnerability, and promote social cohesion in border cities. None of this will be easy to achieve. Nevertheless, as local

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31   Stürner-Siovitz, Bringing Border Cities into the Center of Migration Governance.

governments, cities form part of a country's governmental structure. Within the scope of their legal competencies and through partnerships with local, national, and international actors, cities can develop innovative approaches to show national and international decision-makers what could be possible if pragmatic and rights-based considerations guide policymaking. In doing so, cities can draw on international agreements such as the Global Compact for Migration to demonstrate the legitimacy of their actions and call for national support.

Policy Recommendations

Bring border cities into the center of migration governance: Despite being spaces where the effects of (inter)national decision-making manifest most clearly, border cities lack voices in policy deliberations that affect their social, economic, and cultural urban structures. Current city advocacy at regional and international levels is often carried out by major hosting cities. Local governments from border cities should proactively engage to bring their perspectives into city networks and conferences. At the same time, **national and international actors** should open communication channels with border cities to ensure that (inter)national policy deliberations address needs, potentials, and opportunities on the ground.

Seize potential for cross-border cooperation: Cities situated along borders have a lot to bring to the table when it comes to developing cross-border cooperation on migration. **National governments and international organizations** should enter into dialogue with border cities and facilitate and finance cross-border city-to-city cooperation and peer learning.

Develop adaptive infrastructure: City-to-city dialogues on reception and inclusion of migrants and refugees focus often on the experience of long-term hosting cities. Border cities, however, have ample experience as short, medium, or long-term transit cities. As needs may differ from typical host **cities, city networks, philanthropic actors, international organizations,** and other actors working in cooperation with cities should offer cities incubation spaces to discuss and pilot action for adaptive infrastructure solutions.

Topics for Future City Action

Situational insecurity in border cities
Addressing insecurity of policies, planning, service providers, information about migrants and refugees, and information for migrants and refugees in comprehensive ways

Public attitudes and communication
Launching proactive communication in situations where verifiable information is not easily available

Bi-national policy advocacy
Advocating joint city positions vis-à-vis two or more national governments

Sustainable approaches to transit migration
Piloting flexible infrastructure that can be used for different purposes and by different communities at different times

FOSTERING
HUMAN-CENTERED SAFETY

The idea that cities can be spaces that offer safety to migrants and refugees is at the basis of the Sanctuary Cities movement in the United States and Canada. It also plays a central role in the work of city networks such as ANVITA in France, EUROCITIES at the European level, and Cities for Action in the United States. But what does it mean for a city to declare itself a safe space for migrants, refugees, and local inhabitants?

EXAMPLE

Innovative Practice

The City of Houston is among the first US cities to have established an Office of Human Trafficking and Domestic Violence in the Mayor's Office. Next to a broad range of local activities, the city offers toolkits to local, national, and international organizations and agencies. Furthermore, the city has established a fellowship program to train city officials from the US and around the world in anti-human trafficking.

CITY OF HOUSTON, "Ten/Ten Muni-Fellowship", 2022.

Research conducted within the Cities Managing Migration project[32] shows that in European and North American public debates and media a lot more information is readily available on migration and security than on migration and safety. The nexus between migration and security is intricately connected to the securitization of migration movements and policies. In such contexts, migration is being discussed, for instance, in contexts of deterring extremism and organized crime. While these topics are of relevance to local and national governments and need to be addressed, the result of focusing *exclusively* on such security issues is often the exclusion of certain communities or persons. Exclusion, however, contributes to strengthening insecurity in cities for migrants, refugees, and local inhabitants. Exclusion from basic services exacerbates food insecurity and household poverty. Exclusion from legal support and representation can further endanger victims of human trafficking or other criminal activities. Exclusion from the labor market can drive urban inhabitants towards the informal economy. Traditionally, exclusion based on citizenship is tied to the argument that an individual as a citizen of a state has a right to make certain claims vis-à-vis that state. However, cities participating in the CMM workshops highlighted that urban societies are growing increasingly diverse. In such contexts, local authorities can only ensure that the city works for its inhabitants if they have the means, mandates, and partners to create services and opportunities for all urban inhabitants. The argument here is not that there are no legal differences

32 Janina Stürner-Siovitz, How Inclusion Leads to Safer Cities for All Inhabitants, The German Marshall Fund of the United States, March 29, 2022.

between nationals and non-nationals in cities, but that providing certain basic social and legal services as well as financial support in respect of human rights, benefits the city as a whole and makes it safer for all its inhabitants.

City Dialogue Learning Outcome

It matters whether we speak of safety or security in cities. This may not translate from English into every language, but surely the ideas behind it do. Security makes us think in terms of threats to avoid or contain, while a feeling (and the reality) of safety can be promoted through trust, dialogue, and community.

However, recognizing that safety in cities is about inclusion does not, in practice, make the task of defining what that means any easier. Local governments need to address a whole variety of topics in interconnected ways to work towards making cities safe spaces. Among central tasks are developing anti-discrimination strategies, ensuring access to basic services and education, countering human trafficking, preventing extremism, shaping public communication strategies, and using digitalization in smart ways to support vulnerable inhabitants while ensuring adequate data protection. The war on Ukraine puts cities, especially in Europe but also beyond, center stage once more as places *and actors* who can provide safe havens for migrants and refugees. To achieve this task, local governments need to work in cooperation with civil society, the private sector, national governments, and international organizations.

Policy Recommendations

Make it about an issue, not a specific community: As urban societies become more and more diverse, action tailored to support specific communities may benefit them in the short term while at the same time sparking or reinforcing social tensions as other communities suffering from similar challenges feel disadvantaged. What is more is that group-specific action may lead to the creation of parallel structures. Local governments should therefore shape policies that target issues such as housing, access to basic services, health care, etc. in inclusive ways.

Build resilient relationships: If the feeling and the reality of safety in urban areas rely on trust, safety needs to be based on relationships between migrants, residents, local authorities, law enforcement, and civil society organizations. Building up resilient relationships is difficult work and must be done on different levels simultaneously. Local governments need to include migrant communities into political city dialogues and processes, partner with civil society actors to create spaces for intercultural encounters, and bring together people from different backgrounds and age groups to discuss sensitive issues of diverse societies such as right-wing extremism or religious radicalization.

Launch inclusive two-way communication: The Covid-19 pandemic has once more demonstrated the importance of ensuring rapid, inclusive information flows and two-way communication between local authorities and urban inhabitants. Research shows that information reached the broadest parts of urban society when it was distributed via both

online and offline channels in written, audio, and visual formats, and in different languages. Furthermore, direct dialogue with migrant and refugee associations and communities proved central to providing updates on protection measures and support but also to receiving up-to-date information on needs and potentials within the communities.

Form local-national coalitions against human trafficking: Local governments striving to fight human trafficking need to focus on a range of different areas simultaneously—prevention and awareness-raising, identification and investigation, victim support, rehabilitation, and reintegration. To address these areas of responsibility, local authorities require both a team of local staff dedicated to these topics as well as partnerships with local and national authorities (including judicial branches and police forces), health services, safe houses, civil society actors, and migrant and refugee associations.

Use digitalization responsibly: Digital service provision as well as online and social media tools can be great assets in launching two-way information flows, building relationships, shaping narratives, and combating human trafficking. National governments should support local digitalization efforts with financial support and capacity building. Local authorities should always be aware of and strive to bridge digital divides when offering services and information via virtual channels. Furthermore, local authorities need to check continuously for data protection and privacy risks that the use of digital services may entail.

Promote human safety beyond city borders: Safety does not stop at city outskirts. During the summer of 2021, cities and city networks from Europe and North America called upon their national governments to provide regular channels to safety for those fleeing Afghanistan. These calls built on previous city engagement and concrete offers to host migrants and refugees rescued in the Mediterranean Sea or caught in conflict situations and in urgent need of resettlement. More recently, European cities announced their readiness and started taking pragmatic actions to welcome refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine. By means of transnational agency and active city diplomacy, local governments need to continue to strengthen their advocacy for the safety of migrants and refugees beyond city borders.

Topics for Future City Action

City-to-city training on anti-human trafficking
The CMM convening showed that local authorities are highly interested in acquiring practical knowledge to identify and counter human trafficking. Transatlantic city trainings organized by city networks or civil society in cooperation with city officials could provide hands-on capacity building.

Local workshops to incubate city IDs
While many CMM participants showed strong interest in local city IDs, local authorities need support in reflecting which public services such IDs could or should cover, how to ensure data protection, and how to design local IDs in a way to make them attractive for a broad range of city inhabitants.

FACILITATING CREATIVE WORKFORCE INTEGRATION

Work is a key element of social participation and a critical part of addressing the social and fiscal challenges of cities managing migration. It is, therefore, crucial for cities to develop effective ways to attract and integrate newcomers into the workforce. In order to support immigrant workforce integration and the local economy, city officials and local stakeholders of the CMM cohort collaborate to provide training opportunities and leverage and recognize existing skills in a way that boosts the local and regional economy.[33]

Research within the CMM project showed the most important priorities with regard to immigrant workforce integration for the CMM cohort: skills training, language training, skills recognition, worker attraction, cross-sector coordination (business, universities, etc.), and worker retention. To some extent, policies and practices addressing these priorities concerning immigrant workforce integration can solely be shaped by local-level actors. Regulation of work permits and recognition of foreign degrees, however, are usually provided at the federal, national, or supranational level, while local economies, city officials, and other local stakeholders implement these on the ground.

EXAMPLE

Innovative Practice

Labor shortages are particularly pressing in the health care sector, as the process of licensing medical staff is long and complex. Two very different innovative approaches to tackle this issue have been developed in Minneapolis-Saint Paul and Boston. The International Institute of Minnesota in Saint Paul has created flexible education programs for a four-year degree that can be done in separate modules and is adaptable to the individual availabilities and calendar. Instead of licensing, Boston offers an Immigrant Professionals Fellowship to reskill medical staff with foreign degrees for non-medical tasks in hospitals.

In the CMM survey conducted in early 2021,[34] as well as in the convenings on creative workforce integration in 2021 and 2022, the design of migration laws and the administrative process for visa and residency permits were highlighted as obstacles to local workforce integration. This includes access to visa and work authorization, recognition of specific criteria for entrepreneurship, document-processing time, existence of quotas on the number of entries, and establishment of (international) recruitment structures and agreements. Improving processes and regulation is crucial for realizing the political aims of attracting and integrating workforce from abroad. Throughout Europe and the United States, many cities and regions suffer from skills and labor shortages. City officials noted

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33   Christiane Heimann, Challenges around Creative Workforce Integration, The German Marshall Fund of the United States, November 8, 2021.

34   Heimann, Stürner-Siovitz, and Costello, Cities Managing Migration: the State of Affairs.

that national governments introduced new legal frameworks and policies to address this issue. Since March 2020, the German Skilled Immigration Act[35] allows targeted recruitment of non-EU nationals for jobs that require vocational training in order to address regional labor demands. In the Netherlands, the new Civic Integration Act[36] improves options for tailoring integration measures to personal talents and motivation since January 2022. Due to the existing skills shortage, city officials report receiving significant funding from the federal government for skills training to meet the high demand for language courses, re- and upskilling, certification of skills, and professional recognition of the immigrant workforce. In the CMM survey as well as the convenings, skills validation and assessment, skills mismatch, and language proficiency have been highlighted as the main challenges to immigrant workforce integration. This is all the more an issue as early interventions offering educational opportunities and pathways for professional recognition are important to avoid skilled foreign professionals spending longer periods in unrelated jobs and/ or precarious working conditions. Software for competency assessment has proven helpful for matching individual competencies to skills in demand in the labor market. The City of Amsterdam makes use of the app SkillLab, while MySkills supports skills assessment in Germany. At the International Metropolis Conference in Berlin 2022, experts from the Cities Managing Migration cohort and the Research Institute for Vocational Education and Training (f-bb) discussed challenges and opportunities for digital tools in competency assessment and virtual qualification with experts from different continents. Worldwide, digital tools for competency assessment of formally and informally acquired skills have been developed and applied to support the integration of an immigrant workforce. However, as Jane Graupman, Executive Director of the International Institute of Minnesota, highlighted in the workshop, interpersonal relationships and individual perceptions of the successful completion of qualification measures and assessment cannot be underestimated.

In order to seize the potential of skilled people without college degrees, a skills-based hiring initiative[37] has been developed in the United States. During the pandemic, the acceptance of skills-based hiring increased due to the rise in unemployment and simultaneous demand for skilled workers. In this line, apprenticeship programs based on local networks with employers have spread from Chicago to Northern California,[38] Houston,[39] Washington, D.C.,[40] Philadelphia,[41] New York, and

POLICY

City Dialogue Learning Outcome

The demand for workers is high so employers and political decision-makers are becoming more open and flexible. Employers are very receptive to changes, creativity, and adaptation. This offers new opportunities for creative local policies regarding workforce integration of immigrants and advocacy in this area.

35   The Federal Office of Migration and Refugees, The Federal Republic of Germany, Skilled Immigration Act for qualified professionals, March 1, 2020.

36   Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, Government of the Netherlands, New Civic Integration Act 2021, January 1, 2022.

37   Tom Vander Ark, The Rise of Skills-based Hiring and what it Means for Education, Forbes, June 29, 2021.

38   Aon, Aon Convenes Local Employers To Build An Inclusive And Diverse Workforce In Northern California, May 28, 2021.

39   Aon, Aon, Houston Business Leaders Convene To Launch Local Apprentice Network, August 26, 2021.

40   Aon, Accenture And Aon Launch Apprenticeship Network Across The Greater Washington, D.C. Area, April 28, 2021.

41   Aon, Aon Brings Together Local Organizations To Launch Apprentice Network In Philadelphia, August 25, 2021.

Minneapolis-St. Paul[42] between 2021 and 2022.[43] Participating stakeholders from these areas report that the skilled-based hiring initiative and the apprenticeship program open new possibilities for skilled immigrants without a (recognized) college degree.

In terms of cross-sector coordination, local networks with employers are a valuable resource and opportunity for integration of the immigrant workforce. According to the CMM city cohort, anxiety about hiring immigrants, especially those of a specific ethnic background or with temporary residency status, remains a structural barrier, but employers are becoming increasingly open to this. Due to the pandemic, the labor demand grew and socioeconomic inequality was aggravated. As a result, political and business leaders became more willing to harness corporate social responsibility. Hence, awareness, initiatives, and funding for diversity, equity and inclusion have risen to create a sense of community and belonging for everybody, as reported by city officials. This development might offer new opportunities to immigrants facing multi-layered discrimination, such as women, disabled persons, LGBTQIA+, and certain ethnic groups. In this regard, philanthropic support of local civil society is indispensable to immigrant integration and information spread. Universities and research institutes can support the systematic assessment of resources and demand as well as the evaluation and development of policies and practices. To maintain and coordinate local stakeholders is time-consuming, thus, significant resources in terms of staff capacities and funding are required.

While the value of immigrant workforce integration to the local economy is rising, political and legal frameworks are changing. Political decision-makers in Europe and North America are therefore introducing new immigration and integration policies that require implementation and evaluation by local stakeholders facing on-the-ground realities. The fruitful transfer of immigrants' competencies to skills in demand in the local labor market needs creative approaches that are best addressed by cross-sector coordination and multi-level governance.

POLICY

Policy Recommendations

Mind the target group while creating inclusive policy designs: There is no one-size-fits-all workforce integration strategy. Some immigrant groups, such as refugees, women, youth, disabled, or transsexuals, might face specific barriers. They need adequate support to avoid being left behind. Nevertheless, the design of (workforce) integration measures should be as inclusive as possible. Too much focus on a particular target group, such as refugees, could exclude other immigrants who would also benefit from the same measures, such as language courses or skills training.

Involve all local stakeholders: To find supporters for cross-sectoral cooperation opens capacities and resources. In order to involve volunteers, NGOs, service providers, educational institutions, and researchers in a fruitful manner, it is important to communicate and discuss targets as well as demands.

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42   Aon, Greater Minneapolis-Saint Paul Employers And Organizations Unite To Promote Apprenticeships, June 21, 2021.

43   Michael T. Nietzel, As Employers Rightsize Job Requirements, Apprentices are Replacing College Degrees, Forbes, August 1, 2022.

Think out of the box: Many paths might lead to workforce integration. Immigrants face higher barriers to labor market entry due to unrecognized diplomas or non-transferable skills as well as language issues and discrimination. For most immigrants, especially skilled and highly skilled ones, it is not enough to find a job to sustain themselves. Taking their professional interests and goals into account increases complexity but is important for sustainable skills matching. Hence, offering and discussing all pathways and their advantages and disadvantages is necessary—employment vs. entrepreneurship, professional recognition vs. re-skilling, standardized education vs. flexible modules of qualification, etc.

Well-informed claims lead to wise policies: The integration of immigrants needs to be matched with the demands of the local economy and community. To this end, it is necessary to understand local needs and demands as well as the impact of certain integration measures for immigrants. Local stakeholders should therefore regularly monitor and evaluate demands and effects of policies. (Local) universities and research institutes can help to analyze local statistics and assess the impact of workforce integration measures. Well-informed claims can assist in obtaining funds and support from regional and national governments.

Join forces to address the labor demand: Mismatches in skillsets and the demand for labor is an issue in many cities and regions of North America and Europe. National and local governments need to work together to address these issues. While national governments adapt labor immigration laws and integration politics to their current situation, integration policies are mainly implemented at the local level. Constant dialogue within the local, regional, and national levels is therefore necessary to create a feedback loop and adjust laws and policies when necessary.

FUTURE ACTIONS

Topics for Future City Action

Develop fruitful methods of cross-sector cooperation

The CMM city cohort highlighted that workforce integration is a task that needs comprehensive approaches and cooperation between city administration, service providers, universities, institutes, and companies on the local level. Peer learning on good practices and opportunities could help cities to extend their networks and adopt or adapt local strategies.

Exchange on competency assessment, skills, and language training

An exchange on the opportunities and limits of new (digital) forms of competency assessment of formally and informally acquired skills is of relevance to the city cohort and could be further discussed and analyzed in future CMM research products.

Addressing workforce integration and skills matching to explore further opportunities and challenges of professional recognition, reskilling, and upskilling would be fruitful.

Workshops on good practices and policies for different target groups

Various city officials problematized the difficulties of addressing certain target groups. In a prior convening, the CMM cohort discussed approaches to integrate female and young immigrants among others. Another pressing matter is the protection of undocumented immigrants from exploitation. Workshops on naturalization or access to other residency permits could be equally helpful as possibilities to provide basic (employment) rights within the legal framework.

Exchange on (international) funding opportunities
As resources are usually scarce, information events on funding opportunities and possibilities to find support, for example, via networks, could help cities to harness resources and capacities.

DRIVING INTEGRATION IN RURAL CITIES AND TOWNS

Metropolitan areas and big cities have been in the center of attention when it comes to immigration and integration of newcomers. However, smaller and mid-size cities in rural areas are strategically opening up to migrants and refugees. Rural communities with an aging population and a shrinking workforce can significantly profit from the arrival of migrants and refugees. Immigration bears opportunities and challenges for both immigrants and rural towns with regard to their local economy and social life. The capacities of local administration and civil society, along with the cultural context, entail specific circumstances for attracting, retaining, and successfully integrating newcomers in rural areas. Their circumstances differ from metropolitan areas and are important for welcoming and including newcomers. Which political opportunities have recently opened up for smaller cities and rural areas? And what challenges do they face with regard to the attraction and retention of immigrants?

In recent years, the need for rural development has gained attention in Europe as well as in North America. The Committee of the Regions (CoR), as one of the EU organs, has demanded a rural agenda[44] and a rural deal[45] for the EU. In June 2021, a long-term vision for the EU's rural areas[46] was adopted by the European Commission.[47] The Rural Pact was launched as one of the main initiatives to achieve the goals of this vision. Within the framework of the Horizon Europe program, the projects Matilde,[48] Whole-COMM, and Welcoming Spaces have been funded to assess and foster the impact of migration and integration in rural regions as well as shrinking small and medium-sized towns. Experts from these projects take part in Share Network events, including expert group meetings on topics relevant to immigrant integration in rural areas and information sharing, peer exchange and advocacy at the EU-level. While rural interests are regularly diluted or underrepresented in networks of cities and regions, the Share Network provides unique opportunities for local stakeholders and researchers to channel rural interests from the bottom up to EU policymakers. Building on the EU's political momentum on integration and rural development, in 2022, the Share network released a policy brief[49] advocating for and mapping rural participation in the reception and integration of refugees and immigrants.

44   European Committee of the Regions, European Union, A rural agenda is urgently needed for rural areas after COVID crisis, November 27, 2020.

45   European Committee of the Regions, European Union, Regional and local leaders demand a New Deal based on a clear Rural Agenda and increased investment to help rural communities out of the crisis, December 10, 2020.

46   European Commission, Long-term vision for rural areas: for stronger, connected, resilient, prosperous EU rural areas, June 30, 2021.

47   European Commission, A long-term Vision for the EU's Rural Areas - Towards stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous rural areas by 2040, June 30, 2021.

48   Marika Gruber and Kathrin Zupan (Eds.), Report on Existing Integration-Political Foals, Programmes and Strategies in the European Union and the Matilde Countries and Rural Regions, MATILDE, March 2021.

49   Rachel Westerby, Petra Hueck, and Andrea Soler, Building Inclusive Territories: Refugee and migrant integration for rural revitalisation, The Share Network, April 2022.

POLICY

City Dialogue Learning Outcome

Rural development has currently gained political attention. Immigration and immigrant integration can play an important part in developing the local economy, infrastructure, and social community in small towns and rural areas.

In Europe, as well as North America, there is a growing awareness of the need for rural development and the part immigration and integration can play. Canada launched the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot (RNIP), a community-driven program designed to support economic immigration to smaller communities by offering a path to permanent residence for skilled foreign workers. It was created to spread the benefits of labor immigration to rural areas and small towns for skilled foreigners who want to work and live in one of the eleven participating communities. In the United States, a similar concept was proposed by the Economic Innovation Group in 2019,[50] which is included in President Joe Biden's immigration bill. It stipulates a pilot program[51] that provides 10,000 Heartland Visas to labor immigrants working in shrinking cities and towns. In addition to work visas, resettlement schemes and community sponsorship offer pathways for newcomers to rural areas. Welcoming America's Rural Welcoming Initiative offers support to selected communities by providing free core membership in the network, peer learning, training, and technical support.

These initiatives and networks strengthen the voice of smaller towns and rural territories for advocacy within the field of immigration and integration policies. At the same time, the increased awareness of policymakers opens a window of opportunity to introduce new immigration and integration policies favoring the development of rural areas and towns. This development gives hope that welcoming communities in rural territories will find the support they need to address the challenges they face. In interviews, local stakeholders, experts, and scientists throughout Europe and the United States mentioned limited staff capacities for immigrant integration, limited access to funding, mobility issues, and other infrastructural issues as challenging. As discussed during the joint workshop of the Cities Managing Migration Project and the Research Institute for Vocational Education and Training (f-bb) at the International Metropolis Conference 2022, digitalization has the potential to reduce some of the infrastructural obstacles. Analyzing data from the Network Integration Through Qualification, research from Christian Atzendorf at the f-bb indicates that virtual integration measures increase the outreach to skilled immigrants facing barriers to access, such as those living in rural areas but also females and employed immigrants. In order to tap into the potential of digitalization for immigrant integration in rural areas, the expansion of broadband coverage there is essential as Irene Almazán Sotillos, project officer of Nuevos Senderos, which is part of the EU-funded project Welcoming Spaces, and member of the Share Network, points out. Welcoming rural territories, however, also offer opportunities for housing, agriculture and hospitality jobs, landscapes, and tranquility, as well as strong and stable support from civil society.[52]

An exemplary instance of comprehensive immigrant integration is the work of the Texas-based Cactus Nazarene Ministry Centre (CNMC), a faith-based community with more than 20 different

50   Adam Ozimek, Kenan Fikri, and John Lettieri, From Managing Decline to Building the Future - Could a Heartland Visa Help Struggling Regions?, Economic Innovation Group, April 2019.

51   Noah Smith, Why I Changed My Mind About Heartland Worker Visas, Bloomberg, March 1, 2021.

52   Christiane Heimann, Cities Managing Migration: Rural Cities and Towns in the Spotlight, The German Marshall Fund of the United States, October 21, 2021.

cultures. In this small town of around 3,000 inhabitants, the CNMC offers a broad range of assistance to refugees and immigrants from Mexico, Central America, Myanmar, and Africa. The CNMC provides classes in English as a second language, a GED program for people to receive a high-school degree, an after-school program for children for homework and language support, and summer programs. The immigration service offers help with visas and obtaining residence status, among other programs. In Europe, rural areas such as the municipality of Valdemarsvik in Sweden attract immigrants from cities and metropolitan areas by offering jobs and housing.

Innovative Practice

An impressive example how to turn challenges into opportunities is offered by Djamal Hamaili from the municipality of Valdemarsvik, with around 2,500 inhabitants. Facing labor shortages in agriculture, he recruited refugees from Stockholm and other big Swedish cities. Recently, he led a program bringing unemployed immigrant women into work by creating a social enterprise that provides catering services.

Despite the efforts of local stakeholders, immigration to rural areas is often temporary and seasonal, which might lead to frustration among volunteers and the autochthonous community. With temporary migration becoming a current pattern, it became the overarching topic of the IMISCOE Conference in 2022.[53] IMISCOE is the biggest European network of migration scholars.[54] According to interviews with stakeholders from rural areas, temporariness is especially challenging for welcoming municipalities in Southern and Eastern Europe. Interviewed stakeholders stated that Germany, France, and the United Kingdom are perceived to be more attractive destinations. However, even in these countries, labor immigrants often use local employers in rural areas as steppingstones to labor market access in bigger cities and companies.[55] In the future, small municipalities either need to shape temporary immigration to be beneficial for the local economy and host community or find ways to attract and retain long-term immigrants.

53 IMISCOE (International Migration Research Network), 19th IMISCOE annual conference - June 29 - July 1 - 2022 – Oslo.

54 IMISCOE - International Migration Research Network, IMISCOE is Europe's largest network of scholars in the area of migration and integration.

55 Christiane Heimann, Curse and blessing of intra-EU labour mobility – Free labour movement in Spain, Germany and the UK, Series: Studies on Migration and Integration Policy Springer, 2020.

POLICY

Policy Recommendations

Link immigrant integration and rural development: Immigration and immigrant integration can help shrinking cities and towns revive their communities and economies and maintain their infrastructure. Stakeholders at the international, national, and local levels should consider the contribution of immigrants to counter the demographic shift and take part in events, networks, and advocacy to adapt policies, practices, and funding to the local realities of small towns and rural areas.

Make use of digital innovations to overcome infrastructural issues: The acceptance of and competencies in the use of digitalization and technology have grown during the pandemic. Immigrant integration usually faces issues such as limited resources and capacities and long distances to educational institutions, service providers, the workplace, etc. This is why smaller towns can profit extraordinarily from digital opportunities such as virtual language classes or (professional) education to overcome infrastructural issues. Besides, it is key that national governments invest in internet access, stable electricity, and water supply as well as public transport and maintenance of roads in rural areas.

Rethink temporary immigrant integration in ways that are beneficial for local stakeholders and the economy. There are ways to constantly attract temporary immigrants that help rebuild infrastructures and create jobs. For instance, offering education and/or training opportunities or space for remote work in tranquility, might encourage continued temporary immigration.

Make use of existing pathways: In order to address the aim of attracting and retaining immigrants, local governments should check to see whether work visa, resettlement schemes, and community- or employer-based sponsorships are an option. National governments should assess the value of immigration for rural development and reflect on introducing a place-based visa program as in Canada and the United States.

Be aware of foreign candidates who might be outside of the local community but within the country. There might be bigger cities not too far away, where unemployed immigrants are searching for a job and housing that is available in smaller towns.

Benefit from municipal cooperation: Cooperation and exchange with other small towns, cities, and metropolitan areas offer information, good practices, technical support, and funding opportunities. Networks of cities and regions as well as working groups offer convenings, workshops, and events. Besides networks in federated states and regions, in Europe the SHARE network offers these opportunities, while in the United States, the Rural Welcoming Initiative offers core membership to successful applicants in the Welcoming America network.

Search or create new flexible funding opportunities: For small towns and rural areas, eligibility for funding opportunities can be difficult as small towns address a small target group and therefore achieve limited impact. Donations from local companies or faith-based communities and foundations, or the creation of civic trusts or a consortium with other (small) towns may help to overcome this obstacle.

FUTURE ACTIONS

Topics for Future City Action

Workshop on how to get engaged in networks
Presentations and information on new opportunities and events held by different networks could help take advantage of the resources and the focus on immigration for rural development.

Workshop on opportunities of virtual innovations and new technologies
While digital and technological innovations are mostly created in metropolitan areas, they can be particularly helpful to overcome infrastructural challenges and limited resources for immigrant integration in rural areas. This was explored with part of the Cities Managing Migration cohort at the International Metropolis Conference in Berlin 2022.

Workshop on how to make temporary immigration beneficial for small towns
Research within the CMM project and beyond reveals that temporary immigration is a challenge and reality in small towns and rural areas. Exploring with peers how temporary immigration could be shaped to be beneficial for small towns could help rural areas to cope with and profit from this reality.

Peer Learning on existing pathways and resources
Exploring feasible ways to attract immigrants in different areas and towns. This includes learning about challenges and opportunities from other small towns, and considering possibilities that might exist internationally, nationally, regionally, and locally.

Read More from the CMM Project

GMF (2021):
Cities Managing Migration: The State of Affairs.

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GMF (2021):
Bringing Border Cities Into the Center of Migration Governance.

→

GMF (2021):
What More Can Cities Do for Afghan Refugees?

→

GMF (2021):
Cities Managing Migration: Rural Cities and Towns in the Spotlight.

→

GMF (2021):
Cities Managing Migration: Challenges Around Creative Workforce Integration.

→

GMF (2022):
How Inclusion Leads to Safer Cities for All Inhabitants.

→

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