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Policy Lab.2

Inclusive cities

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Inspire policy making by territorial evidence

1. What should cities and the EU do?

- **Refugee crisis is predominantly an urban issue:** it is usually in cities where asylum seekers wait for a decision on their status and where undocumented migrants remain if their applications are rejected.
- **Early investment in integration pays off in the long run**
- **Common challenges: lack of funds and qualified staff** (budget cuts, recruitment freezes, difficult access to EU funding); **difficult policy trade offs** (how early to invest in integration measures for asylum seekers; how to apply conditionality principles for highly vulnerable groups; how to balance the needs of asylum seekers with those of disadvantaged residents; how to provide affordable housing avoiding ethnic urban segregation; how to support fast track inclusion of children into the education system and adults into training and employment; how to improve coordination between integration agencies at different institutional levels).
- **Different challenges in border transit cities** (immediate humanitarian aid) **and destination cities** (labour market and social integration)
- Need to:
 - **Mainstream integration across all policy areas, all reception phases, all asylum seekers** with attention to heterogeneity of asylum seekers and migrants, and focus on the most vulnerable, supporting early skill assessment and (language) training, as well as access to housing, education/training, labour market, healthcare, social services.
 - **Involve civil society organisations, inhabitants, employers, trade unions,** etc. coordinated by municipalities, through communication and community building, especially during the **reception phase**
 - **Avoid mass reception centres** even for transition periods, and the creation of ghettos and marginalised community. or **special integration asylum centers.** Use of **“start up” flats**
 - **Improve multi-level governance,** with **greater involvement of local authorities** in decision making and in **access to EU funding**
 - **Support coordination and networking among EU cities to exchange knowledge: cities provide important examples of social innovation and good practices**

2. How can EU policy and soft law mechanisms be better leveraged to support cities in the labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers?

- **Increasing role of the EU in integration policies.** Recent developments to ensure **common procedures and uniform standards** for international protection and reception conditions, **simplifying and shortening** asylum procedure, **discourage secondary movements** of asylum seekers and **increase integration prospects** of those entitled to international protection:
 - new **EU Agenda on Migration (2015)**, and **EU Integration Action Plan** (June 2016), setting out a common framework for integration policies.
 - **Proposal to reform the Common EU Asylum System (CEAS)** on July 2016 by replacing the Asylum Procedures Directive and the Qualification Directive; reforming the Reception Conditions Directive; establishing a Common EU Resettlement Framework including a financial support for each person resettled provided by AMIF. Policy implementing role of the new **EU Asylum Agency**
 - Support to **data collection and gathering, research and knowledge exchange** (Knowledge Centre on Migration and Demography).
 - **Urban Agenda** launched 4 pilot partnerships, one is on the inclusion of migrants and refugees coordinated by city of Amsterdam.
- **However still too little attention to the role local and urban authorities.**
- Need to:
 - **Involve cities, local authorities and their umbrella organisations** in policy debates and decisions on these issues.
 - **Provide guidance especially to small and border towns.** EU Asylum Agency could provide technical and operational assistance to cities and integration bodies based on a clear mandate
 - **Consider health and educational needs** in resettlements systems and EU funding
 - **Improve territorially disaggregated data and indicators** on asylum seekers, unaccompanied minors, persons with specific health care needs at the local level.

3. How can access to funding for cities be facilitated and simplified

- Main **EU funding**:
 - **AMIF** supports the management of migration flows, implementation common EU approach to reception conditions and asylum procedures, integration measures for legal migrants, beneficiaries of international protection, vulnerable groups. Strategies defined by national programmes, although at least 20% of total allocations for asylum measures and 20% for legal migration integration.
 - **ESF**: asylum seekers and refugees among the target population for labour market training and integration, but limited to those who are legally entitled to enter the labour market or are eligible to training or education according to national regulations. ESF also supports capacity building
 - **FEAD** may support material and social assistance for asylum seekers and refugees as long as they are included among the most deprived target groups in national programmes.
 - **EaSI** may support pilot integration projects for asylum seekers and refugees
 - Financing opportunities for local authorities can also be developed with the **EIB and Council of Europe Development Bank**.

Need to:

- **Simplify** current funding and reimbursement procedures and **avoid funding on a project basis**, which does not allow for long term sustainability if services and support are not mainstreamed
- Improve the **accessibility of EU funds for local authorities and civil society organisations**:
 - Addressing local needs in the implementation of the **national AMIF and FEAD programmes**.
 - **Reinforcing European funding for social care, custody and guardian work for UAMs** in mainstream youth welfare systems.
 - Revising **regulations of other EU programmes** (e.g. Erasmus+, Europe for citizens and REC) to include integration measures targeted to refugees and asylum seekers
 - Allow for **local and urban institutions to be directly eligible for Emergency Assistance** and/or automatically receive a certain share of available funding on the basis of specific indicators