



PROMOTING REFUGEE INTEGRATION AND INCLUSION:

Empowering Municipalities Across Europe

Integration Policy Brief
August 2024

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Cover photo:
Paulo Alexandre Fernandes, the Mayor of the small Portuguese city of Fundão, poses back to back with Sediqa Danish Nawrozi, a 29-year-old refugee from Afghanistan who worked as an intercultural mediator for fellow Afghans in the city under a project called “Fundão MEDEIA” implemented with support from the European Union. ©UNHCR/Ana Brigida. For more on Fundão’s work on refugee integration, see page 11.

Executive Summary

Municipalities have played a defining role in the inclusion and local integration¹ of forcibly displaced and stateless people in Europe in recent years, continually taking the lead in the short and longer-term response to large-scale refugee influxes.

This brief examines the policy reforms and new institutional practices needed to better sustain integration efforts and enhance capacities for inclusive local development. It focuses on five persistent challenges which UNHCR has recurrently encountered at the municipal level, based on its on-the-ground daily interactions with local governments, other frontline local actors, and refugees² throughout Europe. These include access to affordable housing, sustaining holistic integration and inclusion policies in the long-term, and access to funding. Moreover, it draws attention to the clear pragmatic dimensions and business case for more sustained and effective support for municipalities on socio-economic inclusion, particularly given the interest refugees have in contributing to their host communities and economies in the face of Europe’s shrinking labour force and ageing population.³

While much has been written on the role of municipalities in the integration of newcomers, this often has a limited geographic scope, or does not focus on forcibly displaced and stateless people. As it is often challenging for local actors to obtain a full

overview of relevant publications on the topic of refugee inclusion at the local level, this policy brief provides a synthesis of pertinent studies and up-to-date policy guidance by experts in this field, while making reference to relevant resources for local⁴ actors to consider and engage with further according to their priority areas, along with practical tools and methodologies for ensuring the meaningful participation and effective inclusion of refugee communities. It also offers a selection of workable solutions – particularly around housing – based on concrete experiences and recommendations, that might inspire authorities in search of innovative initiatives from across the continent that they could consider implementing or scaling up where relevant.

While municipalities are the focus of this brief, the refugee situations they grapple with are situated within complex, structural challenges related to the cost-of-living crisis and the asymmetric distribution of populations and opportunities within national territories, among others. These require coordination across levels of government and support from supranational and development actors, including the private sector. As such, this policy brief contains general information, guidance, and recommendations for a broad ensemble of actors needed to maximize the potential for refugee inclusion and the overall development of cities and towns across Europe.

Overview

By the end of 2023, Europe, including Türkiye, hosted about one-third (some 30 per cent) of all refugees globally.⁵ The number of refugees in European countries rose from 12.4 million at the end of 2022 to 13 million at the end of 2023, as more refugees from Ukraine continued to seek safety in nearby countries. Additionally, there are also 493 000 stateless people and people of undetermined nationality in Europe. Their denial of a nationality often hinders their access to basic rights such as education, health care, work, financial services, and freedom of movement.⁶

Large-scale arrivals in 2015 – 2016 highlighted the limits of conventional approaches to refugee integration and called for more coordinated responses across different stakeholders and levels of government. This led to the creation of innovative urban agendas on refugee inclusion,⁷ a forging of stronger alliances between mayors, increased city-to-city cooperation, participation of city leaders in global fora,⁸ and unprecedented levels of investment by many major refugee-hosting countries on integration programs and related municipal support programs and services.

All of this has taken on renewed significance since February 2022, which saw one of the largest human displacement crises globally and the largest refugee influx in Europe in decades. It also led to the swiftest, most ambitious, and agile response to a large-scale refugee movement in Europe’s history. This time, cities, and towns throughout Central and Eastern Europe have shouldered the greatest responsibility for integrating and providing services to new

refugee populations. The scale and pace of the influx from Ukraine placed a demand on many cities never witnessed in Europe, while the activation of the [European Union’s Temporary Protection Directive](#) afforded rapid access to rights and services which removed otherwise lengthy administrative hurdles that could normally take years to overcome, and which were resolved in a matter of weeks and months. Unprecedented also was the degree of support from everyday citizens and local communities, the private sector and business organizations.

There are nevertheless historic commonalities that link the experiences of refugees and asylum-seekers of all nationalities in Europe, namely that most seek out economically dynamic and socially inclusive destination cities, tending to settle in territories with favourable employment prospects and strong social infrastructure, or capital regions/large urban centres where they can find job opportunities and rely on pre-existing communities providing social connections and support.⁹

Regardless of the time or place, the bulk of integration services tend to be provided by municipal authorities, many of which struggle to meet existing demands of their local population, particularly following an unprecedented period of public spending during the COVID-19 pandemic. Within national territories, metropolitan areas tend to be the most overstretched¹⁰, while smaller cities and rural towns contend with their own diverse challenges and often under-acknowledged dilemmas related to refugee integration.¹¹

CATEGORIZING URBAN AREAS

| AREA SIZE | NUMBER OF INHABITANTS | CATEGORY |
|--------------------|-----------------------|---|
| VERY SMALL | 50 000 and below | <i>This category proposed by CEMR (2023)</i> <i>Urban areas in OECD countries. According to the OECD, the classification of urban population by city size is determined by population density and commuting patterns. (Population by region - Urban population by city size - OECD Data)</i> |
| SMALL URBAN | 50 000 – 200 000 | |
| MEDIUM SIZE | 200 000 – 500 000 | |
| METROPOLITAN | 500 000 - 1.5 million | |
| LARGE METROPOLITAN | 1.5 million + | |

Integration & Inclusion in Municipalities throughout Europe – Regional & country snapshots¹²

Prior to February 2022, municipal governments in [Czechia](#), [Poland](#), [Slovakia](#) and [Hungary](#), received relatively small numbers of asylum-seekers, refugees and subsidiary protection holders that tended to settle in a handful of capital and/or other larger cities where reception centres were located, and to varying degrees were working toward tailor-made municipal services in support of refugee integration.¹³ This completely transformed after the escalation of the war in Ukraine in February 2022, where along with other neighbouring countries, they made extraordinary efforts to accommodate new arrivals and include them in local services. Now, these countries join with [Romania](#), [Bulgaria](#), [Republic of Moldova](#), [Slovakia](#), and [Baltic states](#) as emerging major refugee hosting countries increasingly in need of support as they shift their focus to longer-term arrangements for housing, decent work, and community inclusion. This also includes support for advanced local language learning, mental health and psycho-social support, skills recognition, up- and reskilling, early childhood, primary, secondary, and higher education.

[France](#) has trialled a program offering job search, housing and settling in support for both locals and refugee and migrant households willing to relocate away from major metropolitan districts, to smaller municipalities, where employment and affordable housing is more readily available.¹⁴ Conversations on national-subnational coordination on these kind of measures are becoming increasingly topical throughout Western and Southern Europe, as housing shortages and the cost of living crisis stoke tensions in major cities, while many smaller and medium-size municipalities with negative net migration, shrinking labour forces and ageing populations undergo a process of decline.

In [Georgia](#), efforts are underway to address obstacles to integration and promote decentralization from expensive city centres and the generation of opportunities in the municipalities of Kutaisi, Rustavi and Poti, aligned with local municipal development plans.

[Western Balkans](#)¹⁵ countries are at different stages in the development and implementation of their integration strategies and related action plans, their municipalities in search of good practices and innovation that can be adapted and built upon to support the integration efforts of temporary protection holders, or those granted refugee status or subsidiary protection in situ. Effective local integration support systems are seen as increasingly necessary with the rise in number of positive decisions on asylum applications in several countries throughout the region and labour gaps.

Local government agencies in municipalities or key provinces of the [Republic of Türkiye](#) have proven to be strong supporters of refugees’ employment and economic opportunities, supporting social cohesion with the host community. The city government of Istanbul hosts one million foreigners – half of which are Syrian refugees. In Gaziantep, over 25% of the local population are refugees.

[Armenia](#) is pursuing a multifaceted development strategy that includes enhancing the capacities of municipal entities to support the long-term integration of its refugee and stateless populations. Through employment programs for refugee teachers and health professionals, the Government encourages settlement of qualified refugees in regions with labor shortages, particularly in remote and bordering areas not otherwise attractive, including due to security concerns, limited infrastructure, and labor opportunities.¹⁶

Once a city of 15,000 residents, the city of Dunaivtsi, [Ukraine](#) has received over 10,000 internally displaced people (IDPs).¹⁷ The war has impacted the city’s financial resources, with disruption of local businesses and the additional costs associated with the needs of returned army personnel. Despite these challenges, its City Council has made a concerted effort to welcome and provide for the needs of arriving IDPs.¹⁸

February 2024, Panel discussion on local level integration planning, coordination and partnership between local authorities and integration practitioners from Nordic and Baltic countries at the final FOR-IN conference in Vilnius.

REFUGEE INCLUSION & INTEGRATION: MAIN ISSUES AND CHALLENGES FOR MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS



1. Funding

To effectively support the longer-term inclusion of refugees, while delivering on wider strategic priorities for their local citizens, municipal actors require access to diverse funding sources. This includes more effective cooperation and streamlined processes with traditional actors, and the forging of new partnerships with urban innovators and investors who can support large-scale, cutting-edge solutions.¹⁹

Main issues & challenges for municipalities:

- **Lack of long-term, predictable financing:** EU and private funding sources are often project-based, while integration is a long-term process requiring multi-year, predictable financing, along with well-funded local public services, to achieve maximum results.²⁰
- **A mismatch between responsibilities and financial support:** Particularly for municipalities whose population size has increased following the full-scale invasion of Ukraine,²¹ current budgets are incompatible with the populations they are hosting, particularly as these same administrations grapple with already existing dilemmas related to cost of living and public service coverage.
- **Municipalities are often not consulted or invited to central-level decision-making spaces on EU funding allocation,** leading to mismatches between the funding allocated and real on-the-ground needs.²²
- Particularly for peripheral municipalities with little communication with the central government, local actors and administrations therein cannot easily access EU funds, as again these are often managed by national or regional authorities.
- **Mayors of EU-accession countries are at a particular disadvantage** and have expressed a need for a rethinking of policies and funding options for local administrations of candidate countries. This might include support for cross-border actions between cities, both within and outside the EU.²³
- **Mayors often exhaust their limited budgets on costs essential to the upkeep of a city and population wellbeing,** such as public health and policing, as well as the provision and support of essential public goods. In turn, strategic long-term investments in innovations are consistently postponed.
- **Catalyzing private sector investment:** The rapid response of business organizations willing to support refugees from Ukraine was extraordinary compared to other refugee crises. However, city administrations now require expert support to develop proposals that will attract private investments and loans to reach the scale of investment needed for larger infrastructural transformations.²⁴

Key background & guidance:

[Understanding the Municipal Finance Landscape for Migrant and Refugee Inclusion:](#) Broadly speaking, city governments can finance their programs, projects, and services through three main channels: municipal or own source revenues, donor funding, or external financing.²⁵

The European Commission has developed a [Toolkit](#) on the coordinated use of EU funds for the

integration of people with a migrant background (2021–2027).

Member States have established national sites serving as single entry points for information on Union funds managed by their national and regional authorities for the 2021-2027 funding period. A complete list is available at: [National single portals](#).

2. Housing

Europe's housing crisis²⁶ has been further thrust into the limelight with the arrival of refugees from Ukraine, with governments in urgent need of policy guidance and resources for augmenting housing stock and finding affordable housing solutions for both refugees and their own citizens. With expenditure on housing costs now representing the highest share of household budgets in most EU countries²⁷, The provision of fair and affordable housing has soared as a priority for mayors in recent years.²⁸

Main issues & challenges for municipalities

- **Multiple structural and policy factors have made housing less affordable over time.** In many places in the OECD and the European Union, demand for affordable housing outstrips the supply, while public investment in housing has been declining over the past two decades.²⁹
- Particularly in the context of the Ukraine Refugee response, there is a **continued emphasis on renewing shorter-term accommodation arrangements**³⁰, rather than strategies to support a shift to acquiring autonomous housing embedded in a broader socio-economic inclusion support program.³¹
- **Scarcity of public/municipal housing stock** due to a region-wide trend of accelerated privatization.
- **Existing stock is uninhabitable:** In many countries, the tiny proportion of housing stock owned by municipalities is dilapidated, and government funding is not available for renovations.
- In most countries throughout Europe, **social housing** is an option for only a small fraction of the refugee population due to strict eligibility criteria, long waiting times, and limited availability of public housing stock.³² Factors which already restrict access for most of the general population.
- **Multiple access barriers for refugees looking to rent on the private market,** related to high costs, documentation issues, and discrimination or reluctance on the part of homeowners to accept refugees as tenants.
- **Lack of support as part of a broader urban development focus:** Attractive, sustainable, and affordable housing developments that enhance social cohesion and offset segregation require multistakeholder partnerships.³³ These often comprise differing combinations of state and local government, non-profit housing developers, community housing organizations, refugees, and private financial institutions.³⁴
- **Housing and social cohesion:** In a comparative study of factors affecting solidarity toward refugees by host communities, collective stress over access to affordable housing for all was noted as a key pain point in shaping public attitudes towards the ongoing presence of refugees from Ukraine in Europe.³⁵
- **Tackling access to housing from a holistic perspective:** Though multiple factors affect refugees' access to housing, access to regular employment is key to overall household prosperity³⁶, and provides refugees with more economic security to cover rent and deposits at market price. In summary, addressing refugees' socio-economic exclusion greatly increases the prospects of accessing independent longer-term accommodation.

Background & guidance

Affordable Housing: While municipalities are predominantly responsible for housing provision, responsibilities on housing at the local level across countries can vary considerably. Existing cross-city analyses throughout the region reveal common responsibilities: granting land usage permissions, management of social housing, regulation of new housing projects or renovation projects, partnerships with key stakeholders (such as housing associations) and provision of housing benefits or subsidies and social evictions and enhance social inclusion.³⁷

For recent research into housing in Europe, and/or resources outlining a range of housing models and approaches to housing solutions, see:

- [Council of Europe - Policy Brief](#) (p. 9- 13)
- [European Website on Integration - Analysis](#)
- [Habitat for Humanity, Housing of Ukrainians in Europe](#)
- [EU Agency for Fundamental Rights - Implementing temporary protection at local levels](#)
- [Fleeing Ukraine: Implementing temporary protection at local levels](#)

Collaboration with Development Actors on Housing

- Proposals for cooperation between the private and public sectors in terms of increasing the affordability of apartments, based on recent experiences and research in Poland: [Models of involving the private sector in the supply of affordable housing](#) (Habitat for Humanity, Poland)
- The European Investment Bank (EIB) provides loans to the private sector for affordable housing solutions: [Affordable and Sustainable Housing](#).³⁸

[Housing Europe's](#)³⁹ site includes up-to date information on [European Funding](#) and [tools to deal with vacant housing](#), among other key resources.



Marcin Bazylak, Mayor, and Bożena Borowiec, Deputy Mayor of the city of Dąbrowa Górnicza, Poland, at the inauguration of the Social Rental Agency run by Habitat for Humanity, UNHCR partner supporting socio-economic inclusion of refugees and other vulnerable groups, December 2023. ©UNHCR/Oskar Grzegorzczak.

3. Opportunity concentration: Municipalities facing over-saturation, or declining populations

How to best redistribute refugee populations in cities and towns throughout national territories remains a key topic of discussion and analysis in Central and Eastern European countries hosting predominantly refugees from Ukraine, but also in countries in the region currently grappling with other large-scale refugee situations, and rural depopulation, such as Armenia, Germany, Italy and Türkiye.

Main issues & challenges for municipalities

- **Smaller cities and towns tend not to be attractive destinations for most refugees:** While highly favourable conditions for the inclusion of new arrivals often exist in smaller, less densely populated urban areas and rural towns, refugees tend to gravitate toward capital-cities and metropolitan areas, where jobs and diasporas are concentrated. Furthermore, a person with any sort of migratory profile with a high level of education is more likely to settle in urban areas where highly skilled job opportunities are concentrated.⁴⁰ In the face of declining populations and a loss of workers needed to boost investment,⁴¹ Chambers of Commerce have been increasingly stepping-up to support integration efforts in these declining areas.⁴² Many case studies reflect that smaller cities tend to offer strong support networks of local NGOs and citizens, more accessible labour markets with critical hiring needs, and ample affordable housing options, facilitating faster integration.⁴³ However, most of these examples are linked to refugee resettlement programs, community sponsorship schemes, or national placement policies within central government-led asylum seeker dispersal policies, where the place of residence is usually designated, and often with limited consideration of economic inclusion prospects.⁴⁴
- **Dispersal policies are posed as potential solutions, but generally do not have a good track record.** The evidence suggests that refugees allowed to gravitate freely toward their networks of co-nationals benefit from improved access to information and labour market inclusion in the long-term, as well as improved social integration.⁴⁵

Background & guidance

The [OECD has developed indicators for assessing regional attractiveness](#) to better help national and regional policymakers assess factors that attract investors, talent and visitors to certain pockets of their national territories over others. Once pinpointed, efforts can be stepped up to enhance the attractiveness of less densely populated territories, which could make certain currently underperforming localities more magnetic. It also considers the need to co-ordinate across levels of government, across policy fields, and with private stakeholders, and highlights good practices to implement regional attractiveness policies.

[Whole-COMM](#) is a multi-stakeholder research and policy initiative focused on integration policies and community cohesion in small and medium-sized towns and rural areas. Resources include a [specific toolbox](#) for supporting effective migrant and refugee integration in these contexts.

The [Municipality of Fundão](#) has become widely recognized for its visionary cross-sectoral and inclusive work on migrant and refugee integration within a progressively depopulating territory of Portugal. See [Fundão: An Embracing Land in Portugal](#).



Anna, a refugee from Ukraine, demonstrates road rules during a driving class as part of an inclusion and integration project funded by UNHCR, the municipality of Naples, and the Ministry of Infrastructure in Naples. © UNHCR/Alessandro Penso

4. Coordination, and developing holistic integration policies

On the one hand, cities have consistently proved to be pioneering hubs of innovation, and capable of taking the lead to develop their own longer-term integration responses, mobilizing non-government organizations and the private sector. Mayors too are increasingly engaged in cross-border challenges, on international affairs and across transnational networks, and have spearheaded progressive urban policies.⁴⁶

On the other, a municipality's success in its integration of refugees in the long-term can be highly dependent on the enabling environment afforded by upper levels of government, and shaped by how competencies related to an area of integration in terms of policy and regulation (e.g. education, work, housing) are spread across levels of government. The division of responsibility and competences for integration work can lead to fragmented governance arrangements.

Municipal governments across Europe have varying levels of political, administrative, and financial independence. In some countries, powers and

resources are significantly devolved to subnational governments, while in others they are highly limited or centralized.⁴⁷ The characteristics and circumstances of refugee residents requiring integration support in specific countries also varies greatly, and many municipalities are dealing with the challenges of offering tailored support based on diverse countries of origin, ages, gender, educational backgrounds, literacy levels, work experience, household composition and personal needs. Some countries with longer histories of migration and asylum may have more effectively mainstreamed integration across a wide range of policy sectors and municipal departments.

Main issues & challenges for municipalities

- **Insufficient consultation between local authorities and national governments,** particularly in the designing of national integration policies and funding plans.
- **Difficulty coordinating across stakeholders** limits opportunities for municipalities to both access and invest resources in a cost-effective manner.
- **Multi-level governance gaps⁴⁸** make it difficult for cities to achieve deeper, structural changes when it comes to major urban and social challenges, many of which are directly linked to

refugee inclusion and integration. Earlier experiences show that bridging these gaps to sustain methodical cooperation across levels of governments on past refugee situations has paid off, with more transformative results achieved on urban and national-level policy challenges and service delivery, that have benefited an ensemble of local governments and the central government all at once.⁴⁹

- **Refugee talent is not being effectively matched with employers and market opportunities:** In towns and cities throughout Europe, refugees

have the potential to fill labour shortages, offer services that investors and local communities are in the market for, and potentially link local businesses with supply chains in distant countries that the host country merchants had

not previously envisioned. Countries often lack fora bringing together consultation mechanisms with refugee led organizations, effective skills profiling and targeted engagement with relevant labour market actors to make traction.⁵⁰

Background, Definitions & Guidance

The potential of a municipality to deliver on its refugee integration potential is shaped by its insertion within a **whole-of-government** and **whole-of-society/community approach**.

- **Whole-of-government coordination⁵¹** refers to coordination up and down tiers of government (e.g. national, regional, municipal) but also across sectors at the same level of government (i.e. inter-ministerial). It is essential to implementing a comprehensive strategy for the inclusion of refugees and developing sustainable integration services.
- **Whole-of-society, or multistakeholder coordination:** Individual cities and local civic groups have been dedicating resources, energy, and innovation into the efforts of refugee integration for well over a decade now. More recently, the agile large-scale cooperation and coordination between local authorities, civil society, businesses, the refugee diaspora, and host communities that occurred as part of the Ukraine response, is a testament to what the impact a whole-of-society response can yield when mobilized effectively.

Multilevel governance encompasses concepts similar to the above. It **'embraces central, regional, and local governments, as well as civil society organizations'**, ideally **'includes a bottom-up element'**, and **'implies the setting up of participatory processes for policy co-creation, co-operation, and co-ordination'**.⁵²

Actors in need of guidance could look to the OECD's [Working together for local integration of migrants and refugees](#) (83-114), which draws on diverse government institutional and financial settings to propose frameworks for improved multi-level governance on integration, and [Effective Multi-level Public Investment in Action](#).

Hands-on practical guidance and training for local practitioners and municipal authorities, including on participatory and inclusive approaches, with good practice summaries from cities:

- [Effective Inclusion of Refugees: Participatory Approaches for Practitioners at the Local Level \(UNHCR & Migration Policy Group\)](#) (Examples of Multistakeholder & Multi-level strategy p62-63)
- [Model Framework for an Intercultural Integration Strategy at the National Level](#) (Council of Europe)

The European Commission's [Governance of Migrant Integration across Europe website](#) maintains dedicated country pages summarizing integration legislation, strategies, policies and programmes, along with general funding available, for each Member State. While these national integration governance frameworks usually encompass asylum seekers and refugees, it's important to highlight the information deals with migrant integration in broader terms.



December 2022: Registration and protection counselling desk at Assistance center Bottova in Bratislava, assisting a Ukrainian refugee. © UNHCR/Zsolt Balla, 2022

5. Data and achieving an evidence-based approach

Main issues & challenges for municipalities

- **Integration is inherently difficult to monitor and measure:** Tracking an individual's progress from arrival through full integration into the market system and a community—let alone a cohort over an established period—is a major undertaking, due to data protection measures in place and a lack of connectedness across systems.
- **Representative data of forcibly displaced and stateless persons in Europe is scarce:** Public surveys, censuses and administrative statistics usually do not disaggregate data by legal status⁵³ but include them under third country nationals (at best). Furthermore, forcibly displaced and stateless persons are not sufficiently considered in the sampling.
- **Weak monitoring mechanisms for integration processes and impact:** Historically, very few municipalities compile and publish statistical data used for monitoring integration.⁵⁴ Because authorities have failed to build data sets of aggregated information on previous refugee cohorts and their integration outcomes, there is a lack of granular data to pinpoint which measures are effective for which group of refugees, develop more systematic targeting criteria, thus leading to reliance more on broader good practice examples.

Background, guidance and recommended studies/frameworks:

A community of researchers and several international studies have provided a robust overview on a macro level in terms of conducive integration standards and national policies, such as the [National Integration Evaluation Mechanism \(NIEM\)](#) based on a UNHCR pilot and the [Migrant Integration Policy Index \(MIPEX\)](#). Key documents are available with comprehensive guidance on the essential building blocks for effective integration policy and planning within Europe, illustrated with real world in-depth case studies of city experiences of national integration policies.⁵⁵

Models to draw inspiration from for countries seeking to strengthen data collection and/or monitoring on integration outcomes:

A [2018 Migration Policy Institute research report](#)⁵⁶ proposes a cost-benefit analysis model. Data sources for measuring integration are based on 4 categories: **Survey data** (large social surveys, such as labour force surveys), **Longitudinal surveys of immigrants** (where routes and dates of entry are recorded), **Longitudinal surveys of refugees** (such as the German [IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Survey](#)) and Service-specific data (such as from Public Employment Services).

- The [German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees](#) and its multiple [research projects focusing on monitoring impact](#) of core integration activities (language acquisition, state orientation/integration courses).
- National programming and policy experiences from a range of countries that have developed specific integration frameworks with inputs from local authorities and other local actors, from [the UK](#), to the [Nordic countries](#).
- **Ireland:** The NGO [Ukrainian Action](#) has carried out [comprehensive periodic surveys tracking the progress toward integration of refugees from Ukraine](#), and offers a model example of effective joint data collection and subsequent advocacy efforts by refugee leaders and host community volunteers.
- **Switzerland – Staggered cohort study:** Using the date of implementation of a government asylum seeker dispersal policy as a starting point, researchers pulled together data from Swiss administrative records and social security data provided by the Swiss Federal Statistical Office to examine the labor-market outcomes and career trajectories of a universe of refugees and migrants in Switzerland over a period of 20 years.

[Link to Summary](#) / [Link to Complete Study](#)

UNHCR AND ITS WORK WITH MUNICIPALITIES

Supporting local governments is a key pillar of UNHCR's work, anchored in its global [Policy on Protection, Inclusion and Solutions in Urban Areas](#), which is based on the rationale that the world's forcibly displaced and stateless persons live increasingly in urban areas, in step with global urbanization trends.⁵⁷ This same strategy recognizes that urban areas receiving forcibly displaced persons are already struggling to provide city residents with low-income housing and other essential urban services. Limitations in capacities within the local and public systems can heighten protection risks for displaced and stateless persons and lead to community tensions, adversely affecting social stability, access to services, and the enjoyment of rights.

The [Global Compact on Refugees \(GCR\)](#) affirmed in 2018 by the UN General Assembly sets out a vision for more predictable, equitable, comprehensive and timely refugee responses, and recognizes local authorities, as frontline actors, while highlighting opportunities for the engagement of city networks.

[UNHCR in Europe](#) acts primarily as catalyst, convenor, and facilitator to support states to identify and provide protection and solutions for forcibly displaced and stateless individuals. It aims to align national and regional frameworks and practices on refugee protection and statelessness with international standards through advocacy with and technical support to all stakeholders including regional organizations, governments, local authorities, civil society, organizations led by forcibly displaced and stateless people, private and development actors, and donors.

In its engagement with municipalities and other local actors it supports the enhancement of an environment conducive to socio-economic inclusion of refugees through: (i) evidence-based advocacy to tackle inclusion gaps and protection risks, capacity building on refugee issues and facilitating exchange of emerging practices; (ii) supporting holistic and coordinated approaches among municipalities and other local actors, including private sector, financial service providers, civil society and refugee led organizations; (iii) facilitating the development of innovative projects, including through access to funding instruments and non-traditional partners, such as the private sector and development actors; and (iv) promoting participatory approaches and contributing to social cohesion.⁵⁸

In recent years, UNHCR has developed common tools and methods to engage coherently and add consistent value across the spectrum of municipal networks and coalitions.

[Effective Inclusion of Refugees: Participatory Approaches for Practitioners at the Local Level](#) – A toolkit Developed in collaboration with the Migration Policy Group (MPG), this toolkit can guide local actors to build participatory approaches in a manner that effectively engages refugees in planning and implementation processes in their respective cities and towns and to enhance sustainable solutions. It builds upon decades of experiences among humanitarian and development actors in creating programs that foster inclusion and integration in host communities, along with the practical experiences of municipal authorities and local actors across Europe and beyond.

The toolkit was developed jointly with local authorities, service providers, civil society and Refugee-Led Organisations (RLOs) in seven pilot countries, MPG and UNHCR over a period of 18 months. It contains a scorecard with a set of clear and measurable indicators through which actors can quickly identify strengths and gaps of their integration and inclusion initiatives or existing services and to assess whether these meet certain basic thresholds to be classified as a good practice. In municipalities where the toolkit has been applied, local actors have used the scorecard as a guide to measure progress and assess impact as they've adapted their programs or

services to become more refugee inclusive, and as part of the process of developing proposals for external fundraising.

The toolkit covers 6 areas essential for achieving a successful and comprehensive approach to refugee inclusion: **Clarity on Support needed by refugees; Ensure support caters to the needs of all; Create service for the long run; Work not only for people but with them; Involve Local Communities and Support Volunteerism; Strive for Comprehensive Integration and Inclusion Support.** Since its release in April 2022, the toolkit has been translated into [24 languages](#).



Effective Inclusion of Refugees: participatory approaches for practitioners at the local level

A toolkit by UNHCR and Migration Policy Group



General recommendations to municipal authorities

- **Work across jurisdictions based on shared territorial characteristics or common thematic objectives.** Initiatives carried out by coalitions of municipalities (or across districts within greater metropolitan areas)⁵⁹ often lends itself to more effective problem solving and cost saving, by adopting an integrated approach and achieving economies of scale.⁶⁰
- **Ensure inclusive policies and programs, addressing the needs of all disadvantaged groups within the host community, including refugees.** The aforementioned [Municipalities Toolkit](#) provides detailed guidance in this regard and is available in 24 languages.⁶¹
- **Improve dissemination of the advantages refugees bring in terms of diversity for economic development and in balancing out local demographic losses.** Governments, the media and other actors with the capacity to influence popular opinion (for examples, local business elites stimulating change of local business mentalities) can devise communication strategies emphasizing aspects of shared prosperity. Evidence and data-driven arguments

highlighting refugees contribution can bolster these efforts, examples of which can be found in [Poland](#) and [Türkiye](#).

- **Foster more opportunities for refugees to directly interact and connect with the private sector,** whether a municipal hub where business associations, unions, refugees and the third sector could exchange information about opportunities available locally, or [virtual platforms](#)⁶² that link supply and demand and connect in-country actors who can provide essential support to refugees and refugee-recruiting businesses. An engaged local business community can be effective in advocating with other local companies to offer internships and work opportunities to newcomers.⁶³
- **Create spaces that foster integration and community cohesion.** Involve both refugees and local residents in neighbourhood-level projects and strategies to increase trust among citizens and the ownership of responsibilities related to integration.⁶⁴



ON DATA

To national governments:

- **Facilitate access to administrative data disaggregated by legal status** around work, social protection, socio-economic profiles, and education, among others, to enhance the capacities of municipalities and regional institutions to develop, implement and monitor targeted inclusion policies and programs. Ensure the data may also be filtered by age, gender and diversity.⁶⁵
- Facilitate the effective inclusion of refugees in national surveys, such as the EU-SILC and the Labour Force Survey (LFS), by collecting data on legal status (not just nationality) and ensuring that sampling is representative for this population group.

- **Coordinate with key refugee-hosting municipalities to assess at least a priority set of integration outcomes** (e.g. labor market integration) and build a solid evidence base for the public on progress towards integration, an activity that is increasingly vital to counteract disinformation and offset community polarization.

To academia and the private sector:

- **Support city or country-specific research modelled on existing studies** that have proved successful in building the evidence base / business case for refugee integration and economic inclusion.⁶⁶



April 2024, Czech Republic: Litomyšl, rehearsal of the Czech-Ukrainian choir Sonjašnyk preparing for a fund-raising concert organized on the occasion of the World Refugee Day. © UNHCR/ Soňa Rysová

RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENHANCE INCLUSION OF REFUGEES IN MUNICIPALITIES ACROSS EUROPE



ON HOUSING

The below consists of general recommendations followed by a compendium of models/practices sorted into **i) flexible or medium-term solutions** and **ii) longer-term solutions**. While most are based on examples implemented in countries across Europe at times of mass refugee influxes, particularly in the latter case, these models are designed to address affordable housing shortages that can benefit vulnerable and disadvantaged populations encompassing national, as well as refugee populations.

To national governments:

- **Ensure a multidisciplinary analysis of the affordable housing crisis⁶⁷ and intersectoral cooperation is in place to work toward effective outcomes.** No one-size-fits-all approach is possible to recommend here given the diversity of country situations in Europe, however, countries that have engaged in sustained and intensive efforts to analyse and devise effective responses are locating the pain points. These include how gaps in affordable housing will continue to widen without appropriate legislative interventions, the essential role of public-private partnerships to increase the housing stock, and the use of EU funding on a larger scale to support affordable housing schemes and integration-related services for refugees at the subnational level.⁶⁸
- It may be necessary to implement **a range of diverse solutions simultaneously**, such as assistance to support the transition from collective centres to independent rental agreements (and with it access to decent work), and affordable housing models such as Social (or Municipal) Rental Agencies.

To municipalities:

- **Prioritize access to: mid and long-term affordable housing solutions**, including housing assistance and social housing schemes for refugees; and to **independent, or semi-**

independent housing for refugee households, ensuring stays in collective accommodation are restricted to limited periods of time.

- **Ensure housing is accompanied by holistic inclusion/integration support⁶⁹** sustained over a period that allows refugees to establish social networks, become proficient in the local language, find decent work, enrol children in schools and access services.
- **Ensure refugees most vulnerable and at-risk receive multifaceted support** to access decent work and a steady income, including through (complementary) social protection schemes where required, literacy and language training, education, and effective access to health care.
- **Further sales of municipal housing should be prohibited or at least limited** to exceptional circumstances. As an alternative to further privatization of social housing, municipal housing companies could instead carry out projects in the affordable housing sector using various sources of financing.⁷⁰
- **Design flexible reception systems / shelter** spaces that can quickly scale up and down their capacity in the case of rapid large-scale arrivals.

Options for flexible or medium-term solutions:

- **Citizen Accommodation:** Government-supported citizen accommodation has been a key component of France's response for refugees from Ukraine. UNHCR conducted research on the scheme in six cities across France and [published a report](#) (available in French) documenting the components of the program that made it such a success, while making recommendations for further strengthening the model.
- **Transformation and flex homes:** In response to its housing crisis, The Netherlands has scaled up government support for temporary housing projects such as modular housing and container units, and repurposed buildings. These projects have been increasingly made available to refugees so they can leave reception centers sooner, or as a more stable and sustainable place to live than other forms of municipal

reception. [A government incentive scheme](#) is available to help municipalities finance flexible housing projects or transform existing buildings. A toolbox with key legal and financial information has been created for municipalities, provinces, housing associations, project developers and construction companies that want to contribute to temporary housing (projects).⁷¹

- **Timebound amendments to regulations to accelerate housing development:** To enable accelerated housing development, the Mayor of Hamburg, Germany proposed an amendment to the Federal Building Code to allow the construction of temporary refugee accommodation in non-residential areas, including industrial areas, car parks and commercial sites, for a period of three to five years.⁷²

Options for long-term solutions

To support **long-term housing solutions**, local authorities can consider several practical measures, including repurposing public facilities, cooperation with private sector actors and schemes to support the transition into independent rental agreements.

- **Affordable Housing Models:** Trial or (where these have already been piloted successfully) scale-up innovative affordable housing schemes implemented by NGOs and municipalities, such as **social rental agencies (SRAs)**. These act as a mediating agent between landlords (private or municipal) and persons in housing need. They benefit local authorities by providing an alternative to council housing, reducing social housing waiting lists, and supporting the needs of disadvantaged groups by offering

complementary socio-economic inclusion support services, such as employment counselling.⁷³

- **Increase housing stock through mobilizing the potential of unused and under-utilized properties.** Examples of approaches include:
 - Renovation and repurposing of vacant housing- Cities in the UK have worked closely across stakeholders and used private sector funding to [bring long term empty homes back into use](#).⁷⁴
 - Levying taxes on properties that are empty or serve as secondary residences, as Paris' city administration has done, generating a significant revenue stream to support the purchase and construction of public housing.⁷⁵
 - Supporting medium-sized cities with subsidies for renovation of unused municipal buildings.
- **Support refugees to transition to the rental market:** via provision of financial support (assistance with the transition and distribution of a one-off lump sum allowance)⁷⁶ or **transferred rental agreements**, in which a local organization, municipality or social services department acts as tenant and signs a rental agreement with the landlord, subletting the accommodation to the refugee.
- Effective inclusion of refugees into existing housing support schemes of host communities, working to remove any legal and de facto barriers they face in accessing these.



ON FUNDING

To national governments:

- The state budget (whether from national or from EU sources) should proportionately finance tasks of local governments of municipalities hosting large numbers of refugees, providing robust multi-year budgets for local municipal administrations to provide integration support.

To the European Commission:

- Develop mechanisms for systematic data collection on municipal housing programs based on funding sources other than government subsidies. These include those derived from issuing bonds (income or regular) by communal companies, direct use of international financial institution loans by cities, and loans from development agencies, local, regional, or national loan funds. Currently these are not monitored systematically and possibilities for expansion/scaling-up with actors involved remain untapped.
- Continue and expand the practices of including earmarked budget for urban investments and greater flexibility to combine different EU funds to focus on integrated urban development and promote metropolitan thinking, both of which have been lauded as positive developments by mayors in several EU countries.⁷⁷
- Conduct a stocktaking exercise of the progress made in line with some of the recommendations/guidelines published as part of flagship migrant/refugee inclusion/integration initiatives (Urban Agenda, Funding Recommendation Toolkit) in relation to meaningful access to funding

mechanisms, with a representative selection of emblematic municipalities of various population sizes throughout Europe.

- Consider supporting new policies and funding options for local administrations of EU candidate countries, which could be administered by supporting cross-border twinning agreements with municipalities situated within and outside of the EU.

To municipal or regional governments (or strategic microregions):

- Create portfolios of investment opportunities⁷⁸ with information and data on business and investment projects by region and sector to attract private investment.

To municipal governments:

- For smaller municipalities, [consider intermunicipal cooperation](#) to raise private investors' interest. Investors often seek larger economies of scale and more integrated development that would make their investments more viable.

To development actors and IFIs:

- In collaboration with relevant municipalities, assess the business case and develop financial instruments to encourage private sector investment for enhancing housing stock for refugees and host communities in areas with housing shortages.



ON OPPORTUNITY DECENTRALIZATION

To national governments:

- **Boost the current potential of municipalities with promising integration prospects:** Strategically selected municipalities or regions (smaller/peri-urban municipalities in relatively close proximity to larger cities), can be supported with area-based mapping of housing, infrastructure and income-generating opportunities (including school places, transport facilities, access to services, employment opportunities, incentives from local businesses, and settling-in support). These can later be promoted among refugee networks/communities as integration support packages to attract interest in these alternative destination towns/cities.
- **Facilitate data-sharing mechanisms** through which local governments, NGOs and businesses can share, with higher levels of government, information on their integration/absorption capacities.
- **Boost the longer-term integration potential of municipalities:** Stakeholders from across levels of government, policy sectors and business, academia, and civil society should be proactive in their development of [long-term regional](#)

[attractiveness strategies](#).⁷⁹ Although only a small minority of refugees can currently be encouraged to move to smaller cities, future arrivals, including within large-scale influxes may be drawn to less popular destinations if opportunities are incrementally decentralized, support infrastructure improves, and diasporas expand in non-metropolitan urban areas.

- **Enhance geographically targeted mechanisms for matching refugee skills and profiles with economic and job opportunities:** Investments by governments in coordinated efforts and more methodical matching of individual skills profiles with labour market opportunities of specific municipalities is a complex undertaking, but one that is likely to pay off in the long run. Linked to the recommendation above, OECD projections indicate that by 2050 half of Europe's economies will need to manage decline and related labour shortages in remote regions.⁸⁰
- **Strengthen rural-urban/metropolitan linkages:** Where such a coordination mechanism is not in place, convene a 'Labour Market Region' observatory comprised of municipalities or regions and the main representatives of the private sector of each.⁸¹



ON ALLIANCES AND PARTNERSHIPS

To the Private Sector

- **Engage with National Associations of Local Authorities:** These associations are a strategic entry point offering collective support to municipalities. Through its [formal collaboration agreement](#) with the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI) UNHCR has been able to amplify its initiatives and activities in support of refugee inclusion, reaching a much larger pool of government, business and community leaders in towns and cities throughout Italy (see emerging practices

section). Associations can also provide unparalleled insights and advocacy opportunities, such as Poland's Union of Polish Metropolises and the [research it produced in the near aftermath of the Ukraine influx](#) to support evidence-based arguments for urgent investment in Polish cities.⁸²

To the European Commission

- **Channel more technical support and funding toward concrete outcomes of city-to-city partnerships:**⁸³ Knowledge exchanges, networks

and forums allow municipalities and other local partners to exchange experiences and best practices, however mechanisms to support their implementation from one country context to another tend to be weak and often lack follow-through. Municipal administrations require a period of sustained technical support to facilitate the transfer or scaling up of practices on to their

own local contexts. The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) has documented the value that can emerge out of [town twinning](#) beyond the exchange of best practices to the joint development of concrete activities between partners, tackling specific challenges faced by local and regional governments.

Conclusion

Municipalities lead the ‘sprint’ of refugee reception, and the ensuing ‘marathon’ of integration.⁸⁴ Those with long-standing experience in hosting and integrating refugees (as well as migrants) have consistently built upon existing mechanisms to scale up their responses to be better prepared should their need to integrate a larger population increase.

Based on UNHCR’s experience, municipal administrations with multi-linguistic staff bases (that include refugees among their personnel), well-established mechanisms of co-ordination with NGOs on provision of language classes, existing agreements with housing associations, and strong mechanisms of dialogue with the private sector to swiftly introduce newcomers to local job market opportunities, tend to experience success with refugee integration.⁸⁵

The sooner a city starts with a strong investment to build its integration ecosystem and adopt a collaborative approach, the more a self-reinforcing effect can commence⁸⁶, and a municipality can

increase its preparedness for future arrivals and large population movements, while also contributing to local development and refugee empowerment.⁸⁷

While refugees will continue to concentrate in large urban centres, which are home to longstanding diaspora communities able to support socio-economic inclusion, the effective inclusion of a refugee household is in many cases more rapidly achievable in less densely populated municipalities where services are less saturated, and local governments are supported by closely-knit communities, civil society organizations and an engaged business community facing acute hiring needs – all of whom are increasingly willing to collaborate on integration efforts.

Tapping into the proven capacities of European countries to coordinate and operationalize effective responses, they could centre part of their efforts toward how to incrementally harness the potential of medium and smaller urban centres – and put in place the necessary support systems so refugee communities are among the groups who opt to set down roots there.



May 2023, Greece: Candidates meet companies’ representatives during the annual Job Fair organized by ACCMR in collaboration with IOM Greece and UNHCR Greece. More than 2,500 job interviews have taken place in 2023. © ITHACA / Marilena Bakouril

PROMISING PRACTICES IN EUROPE

| Country | Municipalities | Area | In short | Further detail |
|----------|---|------------------------------|--|--|
| Poland | Multiple, in the Mazowieckie, Świętokrzyskie, Podkarpackie, Małopolskie, Silesia, Lubelskie voivodeships (provinces). | Affordable Housing Solutions | UNHCR in partnership with Habitat for Humanity support national and local governments to increase their capacity to offer secure, cost-effective, and dignified housing solutions to vulnerable populations in Poland. This partnership endeavours to empower Poland to effectively address housing issues and facilitate the integration of refugees through sustainable housing solutions. | <p>The partnership focuses on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">increasing the availability of social rental apartments while training, mentoring and fostering collaboration among local authorities and organizations. By advocating for the wider application of the Social Rental Agency (SRA) model, this partnership aspires to contribute to the mitigation of housing challenges faced by persons in need of housing in Poland, including refugees;conducting research on private sector-driven affordable housing models and/or temporary housing solutions and identifying key enabling requirements, such as necessary legislative changes or potential incentive schemes. |
| Bulgaria | Nation-wide | Housing | National-level mapping of the state of municipal housing stock and making information and related analysis publicly available on a ‘Municipal Housing’ Platform . | At the end of 2022, Shelter for Humanity Foundation/ Habitat Bulgaria in collaboration with the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works (MRDP) conducted a study of the management of the municipal housing stock in Bulgaria, obtaining data from all 265 municipalities in Bulgaria, including all district administrations of Sofia Municipality. The report revealed that close to 40% of Bulgaria’s housing stock is unoccupied, while municipalities own only 0,8% of all housing units in the country. |
| Italy | Bari, Milan, Naples, Palermo, Rome, Turin, Bologna, Genoa, Ravenna | Holistic integration support | <p>Integration Charter – signed by cities committed to the social, cultural, and economic integration of asylum seekers and refugees. Signed first by six major Italian cities: Bari, Milan, Naples, Palermo, Rome, and Turin and later by the municipalities of Bologna, Genoa, and Ravenna.</p> <p>Spazio Comune are “integration hubs” created with the goal of bringing key local institutions and service providers together to help refugees access information and services to plan their integration into Italian society.</p> | <p>By identifying priorities and commitments from cities, the Charter aims to strengthen collaboration between municipalities on refugees’ integration, encouraging the exchange of practices and the development of new services and new initiatives. Municipalities and UNHCR meet regularly in a working group to address common issues, and a national joint event is organized once a year. UNHCR has recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI), which will promote the signature of the Charter by further municipalities.</p> <p><i>Spazio comune</i> are led by Municipalities, with the support of UNHCR. Integration Charter (IC) signatory cities have been encouraged to join the programme, and centres are now open in Bari, Naples, Rome, Turin and Milan. Spazio Comune centres host legal, municipal registration, employment, healthcare, and housing services or information points. They also host UNHCR projects Community Matching, PartecipAzione, Welcome⁸⁸, Community Outreach Volunteers, and facilitate connections to other projects and services. Under the model, municipalities develop a governance system to streamline intake, case management and referrals, aiming to ensure holistic attention to the needs of each person or family.</p> |

| Country | Municipalities | Area | In short | Further detail |
|-----------------------------|----------------|---|---|---|
| Cyprus | Limassol | Coordination, Access to funding, Developing holistic integration support | Creation of intercultural councils, policies and regional networks for effective long-term integration and access to sustainable funding mechanisms. | The Developing Intercultural Integration Policies project, focused on fostering an inclusive society through meaningful local stakeholder involvement. Key achievements included establishing intercultural councils and launching initiatives like language courses and vocational training for immigrants. The project has benefited from the active role of the Union of Cyprus Municipalities (UCM) and Union of Cyprus Communities (UCC), leveraging their expertise to address operational and legal challenges. Moreover, Regional Intercultural Networks in each district facilitated the mapping of civil society landscapes and created actionable two-year plans, enhancing community outreach. Although this project has concluded, a new initiative known as the 2023 Enhancing Structures and Policies for Intercultural Integration in Cyprus ⁸⁹ is now underway, building on its foundations and continuing with strategies like regular thematic and strategy review meetings, sustainable funding mechanisms, and continuous evaluation to ensure the effectiveness and longevity of intercultural integration efforts. |
| Moldova | Multiple | Holistic integration support / Enhancing municipal-level integration capacity / Effective inclusion of refugees/host communities in planning and service delivery | Cities of Solidarity – promoting social cohesion and the socioeconomic integration of refugees in municipalities of Moldova. | This initiative is part of the transition strategy of Local Refugee Coordination Forums, which were established during the onset of the Ukrainian refugee influx to promote an area-based approach to humanitarian coordination. As the situation stabilizes and the response shifts to the local integration of refugees, UNHCR and Refugee Response partners are working in close collaboration with 8 municipalities to develop local action plans to galvanize support for projects and activities fostering the integration of refugees in the communities hosting them. This initiative aims to promote resilience for all by supporting priorities set by the communities themselves, reflecting municipal and regional development plans, and advocating for refugee inclusion in new development plans in construction. As part of this, UNHCR has set up 10 Community Service Centres in municipalities with a significant refugee population. These centres serve as safe spaces where refugees and local communities can access legal orientation, skills training, and registration for financial aid, as well as a variety of recreational and cultural activities. |
| Baltic and Nordic Countries | Multiple | Multilevel coordination to enhance the integration potential of municipalities | Project For-In , built on wide regional and country-specific partnerships aiming to capitalize on existing initiatives in the Baltic countries and extensive experience in the Nordic countries, to strengthen capacities of local authorities, civil society, refugee and immigrant communities and other integration actors. | During the past ten years, Baltic States have continuously improved integration policies by developing specific national-level programs and action plans and capacity-strengthening for local authorities. In addition to the For-In project, a Pan-Baltic initiative for integration actors has helped to facilitate cooperation among local practitioners as well as national integration actors in the Baltic Countries. Further information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two-year integration project kicks off across the Nordic and Baltic region Nordic-Baltic project 2021-2023 FOR-IN Pan-Baltic Experience Exchange Seminar in Vilnius Best practices in hosting Ukrainian refugees in the Baltic States |

| Country | Municipalities | Area | In short | Further detail |
|-----------|--|---|---|---|
| Lithuania | Akmene | Holistic integration support, Effective monitoring of integration outcomes. | By drawing on first-hand lessons learned, engaging in knowledge exchanges with regional peers, and dedicating well-resourced multi-disciplinary teams, the Akmene District Municipality has developed highly advanced community outreach and integration support and monitoring capacities. | Starting with <i>ad hoc</i> activities from 2014 based on reception of Ukrainians arriving from Crimea, the municipality has developed a systematic approach by appointing a dedicated team and integration coordinator . This has been solidified under the leadership of mayors and vice-mayors engaged in Nordic-Baltic cooperation of integration actors who undertook study visits to Finland and Sweden to further strengthen competencies and learn about available tools and methodologies in the Nordic countries. The dedicated team encompasses various fields and departments including social services, health care, education, welfare, IT and communication, employment agency, business association and local NGOs. A specific outreach roadmap has been prepared by engaging six elders (<i>seniūnijos</i>) across the municipality. It has helped to engage Ukrainian families as well as establish contacts for individual monitoring of integration outcomes and further response. Press coverage of Ukrainians making Akmene their home . |
| Finland | Jakobstad, Larsmo, Kronoby, Nykarleby, Pedersöre | Long-term intermunicipal collaboration on integration | Inclusive Integration in the Jakobstad Region | The collaboration between the 5 municipalities began in 2010 with the aim to concentrate comprehensively and regionally on refugee reception and integration. ⁹⁰ The Integration Services and reception of refugees are based on (i) a common cooperation agreement, which sets out the framework for how the region operates on integration matters; and (ii) on the Integration program for the period of 2022-2025, which has been approved by the councils in the municipalities in the region. Integration efforts in the region are complemented with projects focusing on various matters, including labour market inclusion . |
| Slovakia | Bratislava, Zilina | Holistic integration support | Through proactive leadership responsive to refugees' intentions to remain in the country, municipalities of Slovakia have set up dedicated integration departments / integration service hubs within their municipal structures. | In Slovakia , municipalities have been instrumental in the response to refugees arriving from Ukraine, as well as those in mixed and onward movements. The capital Bratislava has notably assumed a proactive role in the coordination of the Assistance Centre Bottova (Blue Dot Hub) , bringing under one roof a wide spectrum of actors such as the governmental authorities, including the Border and Alien Police responsible for issuing the TP documentation, the Migration Office (Ministry of Interior), international actors, including UNHCR providing registration and protection counseling, and numerous national non-governmental organizations providing support and assistance to refugees in areas such as accommodation, health care, child care, psychosocial support, legal counselling, community activities, educational courses, etc. As a response to the increased demand for coordination and support activities concentrated on needs of refugees, the city of Bratislava established a new integration department within its municipal structures. Several other municipalities across Slovakia have dedicated personnel, including Ukrainians, to coordinate the refugee response at the municipal level . In this regard, UNHCR's engagement with municipalities across Slovakia became key in ensuring refugees have access to social and other services at the local level. Through its proactive local leadership, the city of Zilina (northern Slovakia) is operating an integration and community centre ("Lighthouse"), which will act as a hub for community-based protection and inclusion activities and services. |
| Romania | Brasov | Holistic integration support, | This metropolitan-level community-led centre has transformed a structure set up as part of the Ukraine emergency response into a hub for facilitating refugees' economic inclusion, community engagement and social cohesion. | AMDDDB CATTIA/KATYA (Metropolitan Agency for Durable Development Brasov) is an NGO organized as an intercommunity development agency, founded by cities, towns and villages located in the Brasov metropolitan area. During the emergency response (April '22 - August '23) it functioned as a Blue Dot offering different types of services ranging from basic needs to information and counseling (with obtaining temporary permit, access to healthcare), child-friendly space etc. It now functions as a community-type centre with focus on counseling, livelihoods and economic inclusion services, educational and child protection activities, and social cohesion activities. |

Endnotes

- 1 For UNHCR, the term inclusion refers to the practice of ensuring that forcibly displaced and stateless persons have access to and are included in host government systems on par with nationals and have equal access to the services and protection that these systems afford to their citizens. This encompasses access to affordable housing, documentation, decent work, education, health, social protection and social care services, housing, finance, entrepreneurship, and skills recognition, and wider economic opportunities. In terms of integration, UNHCR continues to rely on ExCom Conclusion No. 104, which defines integration as “a dynamic and multifaceted two-way process leading to full and equal membership in society. This includes preparedness by refugee communities to adapt to host societies without giving up cultural identity, and the receiving communities and institutions equally ready to welcome refugees and meet the needs of a diverse population. The process is complex and gradual, comprising legal, economic, social, and cultural dimensions.” This policy brief uses the terms integration/inclusion interchangeably for two reasons: While integration is a [durable solution](#) for refugees—and implies a permanent stay in the host country—the inclusion of forcibly displaced and stateless persons upon arrival to a host country will limit the negative effects of dependency, facilitate eventual local integration or enable them to live with dignity and a degree of normalcy pending an eventual return to countries of origin.
- 2 For the purpose of this policy brief, the term ‘refugee’ may include refugees, subsidiary protection holders, temporary protection holders, asylum seekers and other persons in need of international protection. While the primary target group are refugees, many aspects of this brief equally apply for the inclusion of internally displaced and stateless persons. See: [UNHCR statistics in Europe](#)
- 3 Coverage of the decline in the size of working population of most countries of the European Union, among other factors, is discussed in: [The Loss of Workforce Potential | Population Europe \(population-europe.eu\). For a summary of the crucial role refugees and migrants have played in sustaining the world of work in Europe, see Cities welcoming refugees and migrants \(UNESCO, 2016\)](#) (p. 12-15)
- 4 “Local” level is understood as municipal administration or actor, however regional levels will be highlighted where relevant.
- 5 Türkiye continues to be one of the largest refugee-hosting countries worldwide, with 3.3 million refugees by end-2023. Germany is the second largest refugee-hosting country in the Europe region and the fourth largest globally, hosting 2.6 million refugees by the end of 2023. See [Europe | UNHCR](#)
- 6 [UNHCR Global Trends Report 2023](#)
- 7 The diverse achievements of local authorities, civil society and refugee-led groups amidst complex contexts have been richly documented by scholars examining city/municipal case studies in [Milan](#), [Barcelona](#), [Utrecht](#), [Thessaloniki](#) and different locations of [Wales](#), to name only a few. The [Urban Agenda for the EU: Multilevel Governance in Action](#) also summarizes several examples.
- 8 “Local Multilateralism” and “City Diplomacy” are relatively recent concepts reflecting the increased collaboration of cities across networks that resemble global governance organizations. These are often led by mayors seeking direct interaction with international peers and greater representation and influence for their constituents over high-level discussions and policymaking on areas such as sustainable development, infrastructure, public safety, migration and climate change. See [Council on Foreign Relations](#) and [Consultation Mechanisms - United Cities & Local Governments](#)
- 9 See: [Impacts of Territorial Flows of Refugees on Europe \(2019\) p. 121-122](#), [Europe’s Refugees: Refocusing on Integration \(McKinsey, 2018\)](#), & [Cities and Refugees - The German Experience \(Brookings, 2016\)](#)
- 10 The most recent example being refugees from Ukraine, most of which have remained in large urban agglomerations. See [The State of Regions and Cities, 2023 Annual Report](#) (p. 18)
- 11 [Whole-COMM](#) is a multi-year research and policymaking initiative on integration in small and medium-sized towns and rural areas in the EU. A recent output is a [policy brief setting out a series of recommendations](#) to enable small and medium-sized towns and rural areas in the EU to overcome obstacles to meaningfully participate in EU policy design, access funding schemes, and strengthen the technical capacity of local authorities on integration, among other key areas
- 12 With a Regional Bureau in Geneva, and office presence in 36 European countries, [UNHCR Europe](#) covers 49 States, from Iceland to Azerbaijan, including 27 EU Member States, and one territory in the Europe region.

- 13 [Visegrad Countries National Integration Evaluation Mechanism](#)
- 14 [Programme Emile](#) was developed as a [cross sectoral initiative](#) to encourage both French and migrant residents to move out of the Paris region.
- 15 The Western Balkans, namely Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo* (Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999). See [Strategy for UNHCR Engagement in mixed movement in the Western Balkans](#)
- 16 The Government Decree No. 1756-L (12/Oct/2023) provides additional remuneration of 30% of the standard salary to refugee teachers employed in schools of Armenia, as well as an additional AMD 50,000 (USD 120) to teachers employed in specific provinces. This program targets over 1,500 teachers from the Karabakh region. Similarly, medical personnel taking up employment in medical facilities in provinces upon the referral of the Ministry of Health receive assistance in the amount of a three-fold of minimum wage for 6 months, in addition to their salary.
- 17 In 2023, Dunaivtsi, was selected as a grantee of [the Global Cities Fund for Migrants and Refugees \(GCF\)](#), the Mayors Migration Council’s instrument to channel international funding directly to cities to implement inclusive projects of their own design. See [Dunaivtsi, Ukraine: A Home Away from Harm - Mayors Migration Council](#)
- 18 Municipalities of Ukraine overall currently display vastly differentiated needs and local integration prospects for the country’s 3.6 million IDPs. They will require strengthened local self-government capacities and access to sustainable finance to drive the country’s eventual recovery and reconstruction. To understand how the war has affected Ukrainian municipalities, OECD proposes several categories, summarized on page 68 of the following document: [Rebuilding Ukraine by Reinforcing Regional and Municipal Governance](#).
- 19 The responses of close to 100 mayors, summarized in the [2024 Eurocities Mayors Pulse Survey](#), provide a more detailed picture of specific needs and goals.
- 20 Impacts of Territorial Flows into Europe (2019, p. 79). Presentation of report, synthesis of findings and full research report and individual case studies available at the following link: [MIGRARE - Impacts of Refugee Flows to Territorial Development in Europe](#)
- 21 In April 2022, the Union representing mayors from 12 central cities and metropolitan areas of Poland published research findings to support calls for an urgent boost to their local budgets from the central government, highlighting that hosting refugees from Ukraine rests almost entirely on the shoulders of local self-government.
- 22 [Research for REGI Committee - Social Challenges in Cities \(europa.eu\)](#) (2022, p. 72)
- 23 [2023 Eurocities Pulse Mayors Survey: A state of cities report through the voices of mayors](#), (2023, p. 17)
- 24 [Municipal Finance for Migrants & Refugees: The State Of Play - An Overview of the Barriers Facing City Governments and a Path Forward For Building More Inclusive Cities](#) & [How the EU can work better with cities - Eurocities \(2023\)](#)
- 25 For more general guidance, see [Brief: Municipal Finance for Migrants and Refugees: The State of Play - Mayors Migration Council](#)
- 26 The crisis of housing affordability and shortages has been the subject of multiple reports, regional fora, and multi-stakeholder urban initiatives for well over a decade now, reflecting its status as a longstanding structural problem for states throughout Europe. In 2016, 80% of people were already reporting challenges in finding affordable accommodation in major European cities. [Policy Guidelines for Affordable Housing in European Cities \(2018\)](#)
- 27 See [The State of Housing in Europe](#), 2023 (p. 22-23).
- 28 The issue has continued to gain importance in the [2023](#) and [2024 Eurocities Pulse Mayors Surveys](#). When asked in the 2024 survey what they would like to see in the next EU budget, there were two noticeable differences: the added prominence of housing and the creation of quality jobs and skills.
- 29 Other factors include increased costs of housing development, land scarcity in major urban agglomerations, demographic changes, and rising interest rates. See: [Building for a better tomorrow: Policies to make housing more affordable \(OECD, 2021\)](#).

- 30 While UNHCR recognizes that authorities continue to face vast challenges relating to reception and collective accommodation, as a brief focusing on integration and longer-term inclusion, information on medium and long-term housing strategies has been prioritized. [EASO Guidance on reception conditions: operational standards and indicators](#) can provide support to Member States in the implementation of the key provisions of the Reception Conditions Directive (2013/33/EU) to inform the planning and in running of reception facilities (along with [complementary 2024 guidance](#)). Due to the unprecedented expansion of collective government-run facilities following the escalation of the war in Ukraine, humanitarian agencies and national authorities developed [Standards for Collective Centres and Communal Housing](#) (example from Poland) based on national, European and international standards, to guide relevant authorities, stakeholders and partners in the management of collective centre accommodation assistance.
- 31 Autonomous or independent housing differs from accommodation provided in the context of temporary arrangements (i.e. private hosting) or material reception conditions (i.e. collective centres, flats, hotels or other premises adapted for housing applicants). Autonomous housing solutions include any housing within the private housing market for which refugees may receive financial or in-kind support, but not directly provided in the context of material reception conditions. Public housing (i.e. social housing) provided outside the context of material reception conditions (as part of mainstreaming policies for the general population) is included under the definition of autonomous housing. Based on: [European Migration Network \(EMN\), 'Access to autonomous housing in the context of international protection - EMN inform](#)
- 32 By social housing we're referring to residential rental accommodation provided at sub-market prices that is targeted and allocated according to specific rules, such as identified need or waiting lists. Also referred to as "social", "subsidised", "public", "council" or "general" housing. For further reading see: [Social housing: A key part of past and future housing policy \(OECD/2020\)](#)
- 33 For recommendations on multistakeholder approaches to more efficient and climate-friendly use of urban space, including essential actions for municipal and regional governments (p. 51) and public and private capital holders (p. 53), see [Efficient and balanced space use – shaping vibrant neighbourhoods and boosting climate progress in Europe](#).
- 34 The Austrian and German housing systems are often presented as among the best performing in Europe. See [Lessons From a Renters' Utopia \(2023\)](#) and [Housing of Ukrainian Refugees in Europe Options for Long-Term Solutions \(2023\)](#).
- 35 [Confronting Compassion Fatigue: Understanding the arc of public support for displaced populations in Turkey, Colombia, and Europe \(migrationpolicy.org\)](#)
- 36 'Regular' employment defined as working for an employer full- or part-time on a regular basis, as opposed to temporary work or self-employment [Helping Hands - The Role of Housing Support and Employment Facilitation in Economic Vulnerability of Refugees from Ukraine, \(2024\)](#) an Inter-Agency report by UNHCR, IOM, UNDP, UNICEF, and UN Women report based on data of the situation of refugees from Ukraine in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Republic of Moldova, Poland, Romania, Slovakia.
- 37 Based on an analysis of 24 cities in 14 EU member states: [Access to affordable and social housing and support to homeless people, Eurocities 2020](#).
- 38 See also the European Investment Bank's (EIB) support for refugee housing solutions in [Germany](#), and its investment in [improving housing conditions for refugees in Southern Italy](#) through a recently signed agreement with Banca Etica.
- 39 The European Federation of Public, Cooperative & Social Housing, with a network of 45 national and regional federations, as well as 16 partnering organisations in 31 countries in Europe.
- 40 [Indicators of Immigrant Integration, Settling In. OECD 2023](#) (p. 56)
- 41 [The future of work in Europe | McKinsey](#)
- 42 [Public-private cooperation for better local refugee inclusion: The case of Ukrainian Refugees](#)
- 43 ICMC Europe (2022), Building Inclusive Territories: Refugee and migrant integration for rural revitalization, Share Network. & [Another Story from the "Refugee Crisis": Resettlement in Small Towns and Rural Areas in France \(ifri.org\)](#)
- 44 [Integrating refugees: Lessons from Germany](#) (2023) and [\(The Struggle for\) Refugee Integration into the Labour Market: Evidence from Europe](#) (2022) are two sources referring to the counterproductive effect of dispersal policies on labour market integration.

- 45 An analysis of tendencies in findings on asylum seeker/refugee dispersal programs available in [Analysis of the impact of refugees from Ukraine on the economy of Poland, Deloitte \(2024\)](#), pp 24-25
- 46 The [Pact of Free Cities](#), founded by the Mayors of the Visegrad Four capitals (Warsaw, Prague, Bratislava and Budapest) in 2019, is a global network of cities determined to stand up for progressive values and fight against nationalistic populism.
- 47 ["Structures and competences" by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions](#), provides a detailed comparative overview of how functions and competencies are assigned to regional and municipal governments in 42 European countries. The European Committee of the Region's [Division of Powers](#) site also offers interactive tools/maps showing levels institutional and fiscal decentralization, systems of multilevel governance and subsidiarity mechanisms in EU countries, (potential) candidate and Eastern Partnership countries.
- 48 The challenges multi-level governance poses are characterized by the OECD as gaps – information, capacity, fiscal, administrative, policy, objective, accountability and participatory – which impact governance relationships and the effective delivery of public services and programs. A full definition is available on page 12 of [Multi-level governance for migrant integration \(europa.eu\)](#)
- 49 As an example, many of the game changing innovations on housing and integration by the city governments of Hamburg and Berlin during the refugee crisis were made possible in large part by frequent communication of parties within a "direct vertical line of communication and collaboration from cities to states and from states to the federal government" that is innate to the workings of the state in Germany. From [Cities and Refugees— The German Experience \(Brookings, 2016\)](#)
- 50 Economic inclusion entails access to labour markets, land, secure housing tenancy, finance, entrepreneurship, services, the digital economy, and economic opportunities for all, on par with nationals, including non-citizens and vulnerable and under-served groups. It empowers people to meet their needs in a safe, sustainable, and dignified manner, and to avoid aid dependency and negative coping mechanisms.
- 51 Ideally, a national integration plan would set out programmatic priorities to incentivize implementation of local innovations and practices, and assign funding to municipalities that adopt them, and at a scale proportionate to the number of refugees whose integration they supported.
- 52 [Model Framework for an Intercultural Integration Strategy at the National Level. Council of Europe, 2021, p. 12](#)
- 53 That is, different categories are not distinguished in data systems, so data cannot be aggregated separately for a given status of protection (e.g., recognized refugee, person with subsidiary protection, temporary protection holder, person with humanitarian protection, stateless person).
- 54 [Working together for local integration of migrants and refugees \(oecd-ilibrary.org\) / 142](#)
- 55 [The European Benchmark for Integration \(NIEM\)](#) Pages 31 & 32 [Working Together for Local Integration of Migrants and Refugees | OECD Regional Development Studies & Local inclusion of migrants and refugees - A gateway to existing ideas, resources and capacities for cities across the world \(UN-HABITAT 2020\)](#)
- 56 This is modelled on the public health and criminal justice policy fields where, just as with integration, the real social value of the return on investment takes years or even generations to be fully felt. [A Needed Evidence Revolution: Using Cost-Benefit Analysis to Improve Refugee Integration Programming \(MPI, 2018\)](#)
- 57 Today, some 56% of the world's population – 4.4 billion inhabitants – live in cities. This trend is expected to continue, with the urban population more than doubling its current size by 2050. [\(World Bank, April 2023\)](#).
- 58 [Regional Inclusion Strategy - Ukraine refugee response | UNHCR Europe](#)
- 59 Examples include the [Metropolitan Area Vision of Gdańsk, Poland](#) and the [Jakobstad Region of Finland's collective integration programme](#), coordinated across several municipalities.
- 60 The Council of Europe (CoE), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Local Government Initiative (LGI) of the Open Society published an [Inter-municipal Cooperation Toolkit](#) to provide detailed guidance on intermunicipal cooperation, based on concrete experiences. As well as outlining benefits and potential approaches, the toolkit provides information on complexities and potential risks involved.
- 61 See also ['What Makes a City Inclusive?' in Urban refuge: How cities are building inclusive communities | International Rescue Committee \(IRC\)](#) (p. 15)

- 62 A solution for this purpose is [UNHCR's Refugee Employment Platform](#) (REP) initiative. Brought together under the umbrella regional REP initiative, national REPs link companies, refugees, and support services, promoting refugee socioeconomic inclusion. They streamline the job placement process and offer guidance, skills training, and data-driven insights. They maximize job prospects for refugees, better match company needs with refugee talent, effectively connect stakeholders across all sectors who can offer essential socioeconomic inclusion services and build relationships with the private sector to commit to refugee hiring and an overall refugee-welcoming business environment. Links to currently operational national REPs with available vacancies and refugees support services, general information on the Refugee Employment Platform along with information on how to become involved is available on [UNHCR's Regional Refugee Employment Platform website](#).
- 63 [Working together for local integration of migrants and refugees \(oecd-ilibrary.org\)](#) (pages 151-161 for more detailed guidance). For businesses seeking private sector-led experiences on refugee inclusion that have enjoyed the trifecta of success from a business, social impact and community engagement perspective, see the INGKA Group's [Skills for Employment Initiative](#), dating back to 2019. INGKA's toolkit for businesses with its 7-step process for refugee job integration is also available on the site.
- 64 Examples of social cohesion and peaceful coexistence good practices at the local level are available in: [Global Compact on Refugees \(GCR\) - good practices and innovative approaches of cities and Effective Inclusion of Refugees: participatory approaches for practitioners at the local level and Working together for local integration of migrants and refugees \(oecd-ilibrary.org\)](#) (pages 122 – 131).
- 65 Refer to [UNHCR's Age, Gender and Diversity](#) approach for more details.
- 66 Examples of research evidencing refugees' contribution to the host country economy: [Analysis of the impact of refugees from Ukraine on the economy of Poland, Deloitte \(2024\)](#) and on the business case for hiring refugees: [How Helping Refugees Helps Brands: Europe - The Tent Partnership for Refugees](#). See also: [There's a Very Practical Reason Why Germany Is Taking in so Many Refugees \(Business Insider, 2015\)](#)
- 67 The August 2023 report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing discusses various policy responses to housing affordability. Findings and recommendations are based in part on first-hand analysis undertaken in Europe and [inputs received from states and civil society in Europe](#). It includes a series of clear recommendations for measures to enable housing affordability, including on social and public housing provision, cooperative housing, rental interventions, social and housing subsidies, and tax incentive programs (pages 15 - 21) [Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context, Balakrishnan Rajagopal A place to live in dignity for all: make housing affordable](#)
- 68 [Long-term housing solutions for Ukrainian refugees in Poland, Germany, Hungary, Romania & Slovakia: A Policy Brief](#)
- 69 The time period and methodology for this form of support varies greatly between countries. In UNHCR's experience, national and municipal governments seek out experiences similar to their own country contexts, which tends to mirror their own cultural, budgetary and institutional context. To offer a sample of the diverse approaches available, see Switzerland's [Integration Agenda](#) and its Cantonal Integration Programs ([Example from Canton of Geneva](#)), [Germany's program for promoting the integration of foreigners](#), and the [Czech Republic's State Integration Program](#). These documents may not offer a detailed breakdown of entitlements as part of the integration process, rather they outline each country approach to integration.
- 70 See the results of Poland's [2024 Housing Forum, Decent and affordable housing without borders](#) as an example of progress in this regard.
- 71 Detailed information available on the [Housing Netherlands site, Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations \(BZK\)](#). Policymakers can consult [Integrating refugees through 'flexible housing' policy in The Netherlands](#) for recent critical insights into the complexities of planning and designing flexible housing solutions while underscoring how they might more effectively accommodate refugee integration needs and incorporate refugee and host community perspectives.
- 72 [Cities and towns, Forced Migration Review, Issue 63](#) (p 11-13)
- 73 For a comprehensive and detailed overview of how SRAs are structured and operate, see Habitat For Humanity Poland's [Guide on Social Rental Agencies](#) and [Paper on the development and scaling potential of SRAs](#).
- 74 See also Habitat for Humanity's "Empty Spaces to Homes" initiative, piloted in the UK and Poland, [with plans to expand to more countries throughout Europe](#).

- 75 [Paris Preserves Its Mixed Society by Pouring Billions Into Public Housing - The New York Times \(March 2024\)](#)
- 76 Particularly for vulnerable households, pairing this with comprehensive support tailored to specific needs and a holistic approach to offering services is essential to achieving a sustainable transition. See the example of the [Emergency Support to Integration and Accommodation \(ESTIA\) programme](#) implemented by UNHCR in collaboration with the Greek Government and NGOs, with the financial support of the European Union.
- 77 [Eurocities Pulse Mayors Survey 2023: A state of cities report through the voices of mayors](#) (p. 20)
- 78 Example from the Municipality of Plovdiv, Bulgaria: [Invest in Plovdiv](#)
- 79 A roadmap for taking this forward is provided on pages 118-135 of [Rethinking Regional Attractiveness in the New Global Environment | READ online \(oecd-ilibrary.org\)](#)
- 80 [Shrinking Smartly in Estonia: Preparing Regions for Demographic Change, OECD 2022](#)
- 81 An example is that of Amsterdam's, comprised of 35 municipalities (Amsterdam included) which are members of the Labour Market Regions. They co-operate and have regular meetings involving representatives of the private sector to involve the biggest employers of the region. This region can also apply for grants, making additional finances available to municipal authorities.
- 82 Many are [partner associations of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities](#) of the Council of Europe, and/or [member associations of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions](#).
- 83 See [Cities 4 Cities | United 4 Ukraine](#) as an example. The [2023 EU Annual Report on the State of Regions and Cities](#) evidences the rise in bilateral partnerships and peer reconstruction efforts between EU and Ukrainian regions and cities since the escalation of the war, while pointing to significant gaps leaving room for greater sub-national collaboration.
- 84 Phrases originally attributed to Ioannis Mouzalas, former Greek Minister for Migration Policy.
- 85 [Working together for local integration of migrants and refugees \(oecd-ilibrary.org\)](#) (p. 35)
- 86 Even greater potential can be unlocked by long-term enabling efforts at the national/federal level, via solution-oriented political leadership, and facilitating a high degree of autonomy and access to resources for subnational entities. While Germany's state structure and historical trajectory on migration policy have unique properties, other countries can nonetheless glean important aspects and apply overarching principles from its experiences: 'The capacities built up in response to integrating the arrivals from 2015 and 2016, as well as the lessons learned in this context, arguably left German [...] municipal authorities, and civil society better equipped to respond to the arrival of Ukrainians than would have been the case without this prior experience [...] a society's absorption capacities cannot only—as is often feared—be exhausted but can be expanded over time'. [Integrating refugees: Lessons from Germany since 2015–16](#) (p. 36)
- 87 Medium-term planning can help countries better prepare for possible refugee movements by putting in place institutional and financial arrangements to better absorb the shocks. See: 'Preparedness is critical when refugee situations are predictable or chronic' in [World Bank. 2023. World Development Report 2023: Migrants, Refugees & Societies Washington, DC: World Bank.](#) (p. 217)
- 88 In 2016 UNHCR Italy launched the '[Welcome. Working for Refugee Integration](#)' project to promote the broader involvement of the private sector, in conjunction with institutions and civil society organizations, in the labor inclusion of refugees. Employers can offer internships, apprenticeships, on-the-job training, and different types of contracts and apply to be 'certified' with a 'Welcome: Working for Refugee Integration' logo and receive materials and tools to support hiring of refugees along with training in international protection and diversity in the workplace. Capitalizing on the success of the 'Welcome' initiative and its network of partners, '[Welcome In-one-click](#)' online platform was launched in 2023 to expand access to labour inclusion pathways throughout Italy.
- 89 Implemented by the Intercultural Cities Programme and the European Commission's Directorate General for Structural Reform Support, in partnership with the Civil Registry and Migration Department of the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Cyprus
- 90 The approach was developed over several years by establishing a local level action plan, cooperation across all relevant stakeholders and operationalizing integration policies and practices through the Ager & Strang (2008) model: [Domains of Integration – A Conceptual Framework Defining Core Domains of Integration](#).