



PROJECT

"Internationally about migrations in local governments"

Report and recommendations



Bytów, April 2023

Introduction

The aim of the report is to summarize the activities carried out during the implementation of the partnership project titled “Internationally about migration in local governments” and indicating recommendations for future thematic cooperation of local government partners.

The leader of the project was the municipality of Bytów. The foreign partners were invited local governments from Germany (the Vorpommern-Rügen district, Schmalkalden-Meiningen and the city of Frankenberg), the city of Taurage in Lithuania and the Swedish municipality of Markaryd. The partnership was complemented by the Bytów District and the Foundation for Local Development Parasol in Bytów.

The project “Internationally about migration in local governments” was originally to be implemented in the years 2020-2021. However, at that time there were two historical events that changed the original intentions of the developers. How known in spring 2020 due to the increasing number of virus infections SARS-CoV-2 human contacts have been limited. It was the time of isolation, the so-called lockdown, which lasted intermittently within the framework of the so-called several waves and accompanied at least until the middle of 2022.

The next event was directly related to the theme of the project. On 24 February 2022, Russian aggression against Ukraine broke out (an unprecedented event in 21st century Europe), as a result of which nearly two million Ukrainians sought refuge from war in neighboring Poland, and more than two million in other European countries, including Germany, Sweden and Lithuania.

In Poland, the year was marked by unprecedented solidarity of Polish society and intersectoral cooperation (private entities, local governments and civil society organizations), navigating between the enormity of the needs of refugees and the social and institutional readiness to meet them immediately. After several months, we noticed that the ad hoc aid infrastructure created must withstand the next years. We have now entered a new and difficult phase of long-term reception and integration activities, mainly at the local level, where qualitative cooperation and diagnosis of what has worked during this time and what needs to be changed are necessary.

As a matter of fact, these activities were a kind of laboratory for the participants, who, during the partner visits, exchanged experiences on the reception of migrants into their communities and on the practices of integrating residents and migrants into the life of the municipality or the city.

Due to these circumstances, the implementation fell for the period between September 2022 and June 2023. “Internationally about migration in local governments” was an opportunity

for seven partners from Poland, Germany, Sweden and Lithuania to work together on local migration management. The effectiveness of such a management process depends on identifying and updating needs, strengthening cross-sectoral cooperation and communication, and involving refugees and migrants themselves in decision-making.

The applied project method, i. e. networking institutions or organizations, including matching people with similar competences and positions, is a very popular tool for education and planning and implementing institutional changes. Networking (connecting people and solutions) often helps to avoid management mistakes and provides an opportunity to benefit from knowledge and good practices.

In response to the settling of immigrants in many cities in Poland and other EU countries, various entities are being set up to manage the influx of people and create conditions for integration.

Part I

VISITS AND KEY CONCLUSIONS

1st visit: HISTORY OF MIGRATIONS CONTINUES! BYTÓW, SEPTEMBER 2020

The organizers were convinced that immigration is not a new phenomenon. To a greater or lesser extent, it has always affected each of our communities and is an enduring part of the local worlds in which we live. Therefore, the aim of the first meeting was to get to know each other in a broader context.

A special role was played by the hosts, who had the task of introducing the participants to the migration experience of Bytów on the spot.

key activities of participants:

a/ “Our local migrations old and new” open seminar in Bytów with a lecture introducing: „European post-migration communities, with Bytow in the background. The mobility of people in the perspective of a sociologist”. author’s speech by a researcher of the ISP PAN in Warsaw.

b/ workshops and presentations on “How did our local communities evolve?” Based on the storytelling method, each group told the story of the last 100 years and presented a contemporary image of the city or district.

c/ Study tour: Multiculturalism in everyday life. An expedition in the footsteps of events and places that testify to the presence of many languages, religions and countries in this area.

the most important demands and conclusions

1. Over the last few years, Poland has changed from a country of emigration to a country of immigration. Until recently, Polish cities sent migrants more often than received them, but already a few years ago this situation began to change. Bytów is the best example of this phenomenon.
2. Among the cities and counties participating in the Bytów project, it is distinguished by the cultural diversity created as a result of migration processes.
3. In each of the cities and counties, the process of deepening cultural diversity is felt. This phenomenon is not in itself a threat, but a social challenge.
4. The greater the awareness of cultural diversity, the functioning of this issue in the sphere and the public narrative (education, culture, politics, etc.), the greater the ability of a given community to resolve social conflicts.

photo report



“OUR LOCAL MIGRATIONS OLD AND NEW” OPEN SEMINAR



STUDY TOUR

“Internationally about migration in local governments”



WORKSHOPS AND PRESENTATIONS ON “HOW DID OUR LOCAL COMMUNITIES EVOLVE?”



WORKSHOPS

**2nd visit: LANGUAGE EDUCATION AND THE LABOUR MARKET FOR IMMIGRANTS.
MARKARYD/SWEDEN, JUNE 2022**

The main objective of the meeting was to exchange experiences in the field of language education and socio-professional activation of immigrants. The visit took place 3 months after the municipalities of Bytów, Taurage, Frankenberg and partner counties from Germany faced the challenge of supporting and integrating people fleeing the war in Ukraine.

key activities of participants:

a/ the participants had the opportunity to listen to the presentation and participate in the discussion about how the Swedish labour market includes immigrants and what it offers them at the beginning, and how entrepreneurship of people with immigrant experience develops. These issues were presented by the employees of the Labour Market Department of the Municipality of Markaryd. Two of the three speakers had migrant backgrounds (Czech Republic, Philippines)

b/ the participants were introduced to the Swedish system of adult education Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) and took part in Swedish lessons at the local municipal school.

the most important demands and conclusions

1. The practices presented by the local government partners from Germany and Sweden are based on systemic/national policies for the inclusion of migrants and have been applied in these countries for decades (with many changes). Coordination activities in this area is one of the tasks assigned to the field of government administration.

2. Representatives of Polish and Lithuanian local governments did not have such experience working with immigrants. It was only as a result of the influx of Ukrainian citizens after 24.02.2022 and the legal regulations introduced that they dealt with the reception and legalization of the temporary stay of foreigners on their own territory. However, these are intervention-type activities and do not constitute a proper integration process.

3. In Markaryd commune, the Labour Market Department of the Office is responsible for integration services. The faculty has employees (these are people with migration experience) prepared to work with foreigners and offers immigrants highly individualized integration programs.

4. According to the Swedish model, integration means the acquisition of certain skills by the immigrant, but above all the desire to become part of the new community. According to the European Social Survey (ESS), the Swedish public sees immigration as just as important as the health and social security system, as well as environmental, climate and energy issues.

5. Immigrants are not the only beneficiaries of integration programs. Integration challenges are broadly understood in Sweden. Social disintegration also affects non-immigrant people.

6. Swedish language courses for adult (16+) foreigners take place in municipal schools. An immigrant registered in a given municipality is obliged to start the course within 3 months of registration.

photo report



**PARTICIPANTS OF THE VISIT IN FRONT OF THE BUILDING OF THE OFFICE
IN MARKARYD**



WORKSHOPS



PARTICIPATION OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS IN A SWEDISH LESSON

3rd visit: LOCAL INTEGRATION POLICIES. STRALSUND /GERMANY, OCTOBER 2022

The main objective of the third meeting was to exchange information and practices on local integration management and to present the various integration activities of the partners in the field of culture, sport, leisure and non-formal education.

key activities of participants:

a/ thematic session during which participants presented local ways of migration management implemented in the 1st half of 2022 in cities and counties, and the hosts introduced the integration management system so-called “Runde Tische” in the district Vorpommern - Rügen;

b/ thematic session devoted to the exchange of applied integration experiences through sport activity, informal education or culture;

c/ visits of participants to three organisations working with migrants and refugees within the Runde Tische network, i. e. Kreisdiakonisches Werk Stralsund e. V., SOS-Dorfgemeinschaft Grimmen-Hohenwieden and Willkommen in Barth e. V.

d/ workshops, during which participants learned about the good practice of organizing events or introducing institutional changes of an inclusive nature in accordance with the principles recommended in integration guides (e. g.

<https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/a/2/393554.pdf>)

According to these rules, participation means involving migrants at the planning stage, cooperating during the implementation stage, defining an active role in the event and planning their participation in such a way as to avoid stereotyping.

The most important demands and conclusions

1. During the visits to the institutions, the participants had the opportunity to get acquainted with the specifics of the work of people working with refugees and migrants, i. e. with a local politician, a teacher of German for foreigners, a coordinator of integration activities, street workers and youth workers, intercultural assistants, etc.

2. The Vorpommern-Rügen local government has developed a support structure for immigrants. The model assumes, among other things, the division of the district into five territorial areas. Each of them has a collegial coordination center, i. e. a round table. On the other hand, the executive role of the center is played by a non-governmental organisation,

which receives local or financial support from the local government. All integration issues are managed by the Mayor’s Plenipotentiary for Integration.

photo report



STUDY VISIT PARTICIPANTS



FIRST DAY OF THE WORKSHOP



BOAT WORKSHOP



WORK IN GROUPS

4TH VISIT: CONDITIONS FOR GOOD INTEGRATION. SUMMARY. BYTÓW / POLAND, MARCH 2023

This time, attitudes towards immigration and integration were discussed. At the same time, the visit was also of a wrap-up nature.

key activities of participants:

a/ visits to facilities dealing with Ukrainian refugees in Bytów and its surroundings and places suitable for collective accommodation of war refugees;

b/ workshops about social diversity with students from Bytów secondary schools led by animators and trainers from Germany and Sweden;

c/ main workshops for participants with prerequisites for integration led by a diversity coach, specialist in social inclusion and participation;

d/ forum and discussion panels summarizing the implementation of the project with the participation of decision-makers in partner local governments, employees of institutions supporting migrants in all partner countries, representatives of regional administration and researchers.

the most important demands and conclusions:

1. From a psychological point of view, almost every migration (individual and social) is a risky phenomenon, that is, it is considered one of the most traumatic human experiences.

2. The total assimilation of migrants into a new community cannot be demanded. Integration forces the members of the host group to self-reflection, to define the foundations of social cohesion, to renegotiate municipal, urban and citizenship anew.

3. Migration is a universal phenomenon with a global dimension. The development of integration policies at national and subnational level (regional or local) is the norm and standard. The main objective of policies is to counter the marginalisation, isolation and separation of migrants, as well as to counter radicalisation of attitudes towards migrants.

4. The example of the city of Gdańsk shows that making integration policy an act of local law (Gdańsk Model of Integration of Immigrants as a tool for managing migration and integration

was adopted by a resolution of the City Council of Gdansk in 2016) reinforces its social and political significance.

5. Responsibility for managing integration is not evenly distributed. It rests mainly on the host group, its leaders and public institutions. They should bear the main burden of managing migration and integration, including risk management.

6. An extremely important factor influencing the integration of immigrants is the attitude of social and local government leaders. The local community needs role models and opinion leaders who communicate challenges clearly and openly.

7. When creating an integration policy, it should be remembered that it is intended to serve all inhabitants, not only immigrants who have come to the city or county. In this context, one of the objectives of integration policy is to prevent social exclusion. This approach is based on human rights values. The priority here is the assumption that everyone has the right to be treated equally. Traditional planning based on the identification of marginalised or vulnerable groups is of secondary importance.

photo report



WORKSHOPS



CONFERENCE SUMMARIZING THE PROJECT



WORKSHOPS WITH STUDENTS FROM SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN BYTÓW

Part II

Cooperation between cities and counties - a platform for cooperation on integration.

One of the longer workshop sessions was devoted to post-project cooperation within the Thematic Network. In the proposal submitted to the Europe for Citizens Program, the project developers set themselves the task of developing rules and mechanisms for cooperation networks in the field of reception and integration of foreigners into local communities. This plan was implemented during workshops moderated during the meeting in Sweden (June 2022) and Germany (October 2022).

Below we present a description of the developed arrangements regarding common values, objectives, principles and forms of cooperation. In this way, the partners' representatives initially defined how they envisioned future cooperation and what it would serve.

It should be stressed that from the first to the last meeting the partners declared their willingness to cooperate in the area of integration of migrants after the project activities. However, this does not mean that during the visits, there were no doubts. They appeared because the participants assess the chances of such cooperation through the prism of different national conditions, primarily legal, social, cultural, including mental differences, etc.

No cooperation is meaningful if the parties do not share common values, the so-called list of principles, which will form the basis of its functioning. This was therefore one of the first issues to be agreed. Among the values on which the integration network should be based are: commitment, responsibility, respect, reliability of information, timeliness, transparency of actions and information.

The objectives of the cooperation network were outlined, namely:

- promoting the idea of building inclusive local communities as one of the priorities of EU policy;
- developing an effective system for the reception of migrants, including the development of a standard for reception activities (developing a catalogue of activities to be implemented, irrespective of the origin of the persons and the host country);
- increasing institutional competences in the field of integration and reception of migrants by each of the partners in their cities and districts.

Further, during the workshops, the groups identified the most important specific objectives cooperation in the field of integration of foreigners. They identified that further joint

networking meetings on integration could be used to:

I. exchange of educational practices and solutions; In the area of education, specific issues have been identified, such as:

a/ ways of integrating migrant children into the school system;

b/ methodology of language teaching for children and adults (learning the language of the country immigration);

c/ organisation of educational internships with partners;

d/ combating discrimination in schools on grounds of nationality (origin);

e/ teaching intercultural competences.

II. sharing experiences on facilitating access to the labour market for foreigners, in particular the organisation of accommodation, adaptation courses, recognition of competences and education, ways of associating workers and employers;

III. to develop effective measures in the area of so-called soft integration, i. e. inclusion through culture or sport, etc.

IV. introducing institutional changes to adapt public services to constantly changing social needs due to cultural differences (information points, integration programs and policies, etc.)

It is proposed to monitor network performance periodically using the following indicators:

1. number of cooperating (networked) professionals, organisations and groups working with migrants;

2. the number of resources made available (especially specialist, expert) to be shared through online communication channels;

3. number of working groups set up on specific issues (such as language education, labour market, financing integration measures).

Subsequently, the workshop planning focused on the question of form and management structure.

The participants envisage a cooperation network for integration in the form of a platform or website with information, training, educational or legal resources.

It was also proposed that the website should have a user interface containing information on refugee procedures, etc. in force in Poland, Germany, Sweden or Lithuania.

Remote cooperation between partners should be based on a tool enabling instant communication, acquisition and transmission of information (activity board). Other

indicated functional panels are the so-called Helpline containing profiles of specialists-practitioners on specific issues: education of children, youth work, studies, social work, professional activation, etc.

According to participants, cooperation within the network should be based on planned, regular and targeted contacts between representatives of the partners. It should be at least a semi-formal structure. An example of this degree of formalisation is the appointment and delegation of partners' representatives to permanent cooperation (principle 1 representative from each of the local government partners). Networking planning means the need to set tasks for the future, e. g. for a year. In turn, it would be useful to determine the results of cooperation and to set indicators for their achievement.

Persons designated for further working contacts:

	Name and surname	partner/country	competence	contact
1.	Mateusz Oszmaniec	Municipality of Bytów/Poland	position: 2nd Deputy Mayor; knowledge of English;	m.oszmaniec@bytow.com.pl
2.	Mindaugas Piecia	city of Taurage in Lithuania	position: Department of Culture and International Cooperation of the city; knowledge of English;	mindaugas.piecia@taurage.lt

“Internationally about migration in local governments”

3.	Lesya Lange	Schmalkalden-Meiningen County/ Germany	work in the administration of the county managerial position for the integration of migrants, since March 2022 she manages the Coordination Centre for Assistance to Ukraine; knowledge of English and Ukrainian	ukraine@lra-sm.de
4.	Erhard Wagner	City of Frankenberg/ Germany	Member of Frankenberg City Council; Chairman of the Frankenberg Partnership Towns Association; proficiency in English	ase.wagner@t-online.de
5.	Aladdin Almakmal	Municipality of Markaryd/ Sweden	position: Integration Specialist, Department of Labour Market and Integration	klas.lundstrom@markaryd.se
6.	Cornelia Schäfer	Vorpommern-Rügen County/ Germany	position: Integration Specialist, Labour Market and Integration Department in the administrative structure of the county	cornelia.schaefer@lk-vr.de
7.	Paweł Chodorowski	Bytowski country /Poland	position: Head of the Department of Development and Social Affairs; knowledge of English	p.chodorowski@powiatbytowski.pl

Appropriate recommendations:

Before presenting the recommendations of this report on thematic cooperation, it is important to note two key issues that are necessary to ensure that the cooperation has proven effective. The first key element is the long-term sustainability of the planned cooperation network. Cooperation should be planned at least in the next six months. Longevity assumes the second important element - adapting to the needs or expectations of migrants and refugees. These, in turn, evolve into a constant change over time with the change conditions. This implies continuous and systematic collection of local data (in order to understand the context and adapt local programs and services), continuous evaluation of the activities carried out and the inclusion of migrants in decision-making processes.

1. In order for cooperation and networking of partners to be sustainable, it is necessary to formalize contacts by concluding a cooperation agreement, to plan and implement position responsibility (appoint a representative of the local government partner and his/her deputy), and finally to allocate funds for this purpose in the budget.
2. The project leader and the Bytów district have a good chance of obtaining funds for integration activities supporting the integration of immigrants under the Program European Funds for Pomerania 2021-2027. It is therefore worth allocating these funds to the activities of the Partner Integration Network.
3. A network leader should be appointed from among the partners for a minimum period of 12 months, and the leadership should be transitional.
4. In order to run an effective migration support network, it is necessary to conduct a coherent internal policy within the competence of the local government.
 - a) Gradual institutional change is needed, particularly from the Polish or Lithuanian perspective. In order to improve access to services, we recommend providing appropriate training on working with migrants and refugees (including representatives of various minority groups), people working in administrative institutions and subordinate institutions (labour office, municipal office, social welfare center, etc.).
 - b) this also involves the adoption and promotion of public policies that integrate refugees and migrants into the community. This means analysing strategic documents, programs and key resolutions of local law with a view to increasing their participation in civic and public life. It means trying to treat foreigners, including refugees, in the same way as other residents, regardless of their decision to return or stay.
5. The cooperation network should be a space for testing and checking what is

happening, i. e. it should be a kind of integration observatory consisting in the cyclical sharing of experiences, practices and solutions by partners.

6. The issue of socializing networks is important. Ultimately, it should function as a contact platform for those working in the field of integration (teachers, social workers, labour market specialists, activists and volunteers, representatives of churches and other religious associations, etc.). The role of officials should therefore be limited to coordination, including network planning, administrative and financial support.

7. Migrants and refugees should also be included in the planning of the network.

8. Indirectly, the network should be a forum for strengthening activities aimed at an open community, an antidote to negative social phenomena, e. g. hateful narratives based on origin, behaviour and manifestations of discrimination against individuals or groups.

9. The results of the work within the network should be "feelable" and "visible" to society. Therefore, each of the partners should, as far as possible, carry out cyclical information activities on its territory.

10. Network infrastructure (website) should also be used to disseminate information from other sources, e. g. The European Migration Network https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/about-emn_en

