Local Welcoming Policies for EU Mobile Citizens

Conference Report

Day 1: 18th of May 2016

Niels Tubbing, project leader from the City of Amsterdam, and Sorina Untu from Mira Media open the European conference in Amsterdam

Welcome and Introduction

Niels Tubbing discusses some of the objectives of the conference: improve cooperation between policy makers, professionals and EU migrant organizations; to see where we stand at the European level with regards to welcoming policies for EU mobile citizens etc.

He goes on to address the steps taken so far and steps to be taken in the future:

- Research on the welcoming policies of the project's participant cities;
- Take the best practices from the different cities into account;
- Build an infrastructure in the upcoming years, not just during the project period

Opening Speech by Ronald Venderbosch, Director of Community Participation on behalf of the City of Amsterdam

There are 180 nationalities in Amsterdam and we need some creativity. The building's history (Casa400) goes 50 years back. It is an interesting mixture between student housing and a hotel. It is an example of creatively thinking about issues such as housing and how to find ways to deal with them.

The Welcome Europe project was initiated by the City of Amsterdam together with Mira Media in 2014. The idea was to work together with six other European cities to see if we could learn from each other's experiences with policies for EU mobile citizens. We are not only looking at what the city government can do, but we also bring other levels of policy making to the table. What can be done at a local, a national and a European level?

There is no such thing as the 'EU-migrant'. Their socio-cultural backgrounds and education levels vary widely, and therefore their information needs vary widely. Providing the right information and making sure all EU citizens are able to receive and find this information is a key factor for inclusiveness and a successful integration.

Local Welcome Policies for EU Mobile Citizens, Project Presentation by Niels Tubbing, City of Amsterdam

The project supports the right of EU citizens to freely move to and live in any EU country – it is a fundamental right.

At the city level, most EU mobile citizens face problems of:

- Bad and overcrowded housing;
- Poor language proficiencies;
- Limited information of their legal rights etc.

The project's focus is to adapt and improve present welcome policies in order to:

- Remove barriers to mobility and to full inclusion of the EU mobile citizens in the host communities;
- Enhance the full participation of EU mobile citizens in the political and civic life of host country;
- Promote intercultural dialogue among people of different backgrounds etc.

Additional information about the project can be found here.

Video address by Vera Jourova, European Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality

Free movement of people is one of Europe's strongest assets, it is a fundamental right and a pillar of our internal market. Being a European citizen means being at home wherever you go in the EU. For this to happen, we need to take concrete measures to help EU mobile citizens settle in their host societies and, more generally, to improve the life of citizens.

The Commissioner intends to come forward with concrete proposals in the next EU Citizenship Report.

Networking of cities makes it possible to foster debates and share successful projects.

We invite you to watch the video address in full, here.

Keynote speech: Welcoming EU Mobile Citizens – Mapping Local Policy Responses and Making Recommendations by Dr. Gregg Bucken-Knapp and Alexandra Bousiou

The project's research had in mind the following aspects:

- Appropriate information at hand for EU mobile citizens;
- Access to the appropriate labour market, civic and educational opportunities;
- A smooth transition from the status of mobile to settled residents

Alexandra Bousiou gives an overview of the good practices developed by participating cities. The general information needs & challenges of the newcomers are being mentioned:

o Training of front desk staff in local administration: make front desk staff aware of rights and obligations of EU mobile citizens; staff in need of intercultural training and a more flexible language policy (customer services in different languages);
o Language education policy: language is a very substantial barrier and challenge, therefore, language education is the main road to integration and most important policy area; the speaker then provides several examples of good practices related to language education in the participating cities;
o Housing: EU mobile citizens face challenges related to abusive landlords, overcrowding, unfair rents, acute housing shortage, lack of legal protection etc. Some good practices are information in English about housing, counselling in one stop services, International House of Copenhagen's attempt to

establish a network of municipalities and social housing organisations in order to promote social housing in suburban municipalities;

o Labour market: there are problems related to low pay, temporary contracts, exploitation in fields like agriculture, hospitality, cleaning and sex industry; workers are not well informed about their rights.

Thinking beyond the Data: What might cities keep in mind - Dr. Gregg Bucken-Knapp provides the final conclusions:

Path dependency and cognitive locks:

o New challenges met by drawing on old ways of addressing seemingly similar problems
o Can be both helpful and a hindrance
o Existing institutional backbone that can be drawn upon
o Cognitive locks: vulnerable EU mobile citizens. Think of the preconceptions that you have as a city to work with EU mobile citizens. If you understand your target group, the more full engagement is possible;
o Each of the cities has extensive experience with earlier waves of migration – back to refugees and colonial legacy, and this can be valuable informational resource. Yet, there is a path dependency, getting stuck in thinking the same old way, may close eyes for what is different in new waves of migration. Need to explore whether and how it is necessary to divert from earlier understandings and solutions to meet the new challenge;
o We see this with all the city partners, e.g. policies to deal with vulnerable EU citizens can be a hindrance in dealing with less vulnerable, more mobile EU citizens. Not all migrants are vulnerable or refugees – see beyond this imprinted notion; basic labour market and education may not be what is needed, e.g. students and other categories;

Media as a societal actor:

- Societal challenges not made in vacuums; discursive landscape shaped by media frames
- Media matters greatly because of how EU mobile citizens are framed/problematized
- And thus, which policy and administrative solutions become salient?
- News media affect mind sets of more than the general public, they also affect those working in the public administration sector. Officials will make reference to media discourse as an authoritative source. They have read a newspaper article – this is an issue that needs problematization. Counteract excessive role of the media! Projects such as these are very good, a reality check! Fieldtrips to other cities, countries. Keep moving and looking around, encourage critical awareness

Video presentation of 28 EU nationalities in Amsterdam & interview with EU mobile citizens

Niels Tubbing talks about the video that will be presented in a few minutes. The video is a part of the '180 Amsterdammers', a project initiated by Amsterdam FM and Amsterdam Marketing. The project aims at making a short portrait of an Amsterdam citizen of every nationality. The project kicked off with 28 EU-Amsterdammers and the video is a compilation of interviews with EU mobile citizens sharing their first impressions and experiences as Amsterdammers.

Niels Tubbing and Sorina Untu invite to the stage three of the participants in the video who share their experiences and challenges of moving and living in Amsterdam to the audience.

Conference workshops:

Ed Klute, Director of Mira Media, is invited to the stage to give an overview of the workshops. The conference holds six thematic workshops and the participants are encouraged to share their experience and come up with local, national and European recommendations of improving public policies. The workshops are: Welcome Information, Social Inclusion and Integration, Healthcare, Housing, Labour market and Cooperation with NGOs.

After the workshops, all participants return to plenary room to discuss the ideas and recommendations coming out from the six workshops. You can find additional information about workshop recommendations in the Policy Recommendations Report.

Day 2: 19th of May 2016

Niels Tubbing opens the second day of the conference and gives a short presentation about the project and the first day of conference.

Looking back at recommendations from the first day

Ed Klute from Mira Media and Brendan Doggett from the City of Dublin are invited to give an overview of the workshops that took place the previous day and the recommendations that came out of the workshops.

Brendan Doggett discusses language as a barrier: when it comes to languages it is difficult to understand which challenges migrants encounter. They have their own network to use for translations. Ed Klute: The emphasis should be on correct information and the way mobile citizens are getting information. Where do I go, where can I register? They need trusted information. They use unconventional communication and social media. It is important to see which community is using which social media sources.

With regards to health care: knowledge and information are solutions to challenges. Important issue: Which health care insurances suit their circumstances? The European Health Insurance Card is not very useful anymore, because it is often not accepted due to lack of budget. City counsellors have to see in which way they can assist citizens.

With regards to housing, the Danish want clear information on this topic. Possible solutions to challenges: more cooperation between social and private housing organisations, make employees more aware, better infrastructure and public transport. Finding creative solutions. Actors at local level have more to say about local housing. At the European level, the EU Commission is also making policy on housing, there might be a miss match.

Labour market issue: The right information, recognizing foreign certificates and education, vulnerable migrants, abuse, policy in the town compared to child abuse. Possible solutions: the coordination of the networks is important; work on the miss match between cities and NGO's at the EU level; the recognition of the role of the NGOs; responsibility of Embassies (a lot of expertise and are able to support the cities towards labour market; training of civil servants; intercultural awareness training; more diversity in personnel staff.

Pattern Cards – EU Citizen Integration – A few Dutch examples of good practice by Inge Razenberg from the Verwey Insitute/KIS

EU migration to the Netherlands has increased, 70% of Dutch municipalities indicate challenges regarding EU mobility and 61% don't have policies yet.

Creating a toolkit to inspire, inform and connect municipalities regarding best practices related to: registration, welcoming EU mobile citizens, language policies, labour market, social contacts with locals, children of EU mobile citizens.

Best practices:

- The Municipality of Westland implements group registration, organizing meetings at the town hall (in the evening, after work hours) or at employer's offices;
- Migrant Information Point Eindhoven: information and support in language of EU mobile citizens;
- Municipality of Amsterdam provides language courses to EU mobile citizens;
- Municipality Peel & Maas providing dual programme: language & work;
- Kumpel project in Noord-Limburg: EU mobile citizens matched with Dutch residents in undertaking activities together;
- Amsterdam also offers language courses for parents at their children's school, improving both language and parent involvement;

Interview with Marina Johansson, Deputy Mayor of Gothenburg

Gothenburg has almost 19,000 EU mobile citizens. More than 500 of them live in a social and economic deprivation, and belong to a vulnerable group who are often found begging on the street. The city's focus has been so far on the vulnerable EU citizens and implementing policies to alleviate their situation: collaboration with NGOs offering services such as open preschool, a day centre with laundry, showers and dining services, information and advice centre, and a night shelter. The city is now looking at the possibility of establishing a Welcome centre to provide information and assistance for the resting 18,500 EU citizens and other expats residing in Gothenburg. With regards to the labour market, the Deputy Mayor of Gothenburg emphasized that the vulnerable are at risk of being abused as work force. 'We don't want them to live outside society', says Marina Johansson.

Debate on Policy Recommendations with Marina Johansson (Deputy Mayor of Gothenburg), Lucienne Gena (City of Hague), Piotr Kobza (Embassy of the Republic of Poland) and Derk Bonthuis (Ministry of Economic Affairs).

Issues discussed:

- ✓ We'd like EU mobile citizens to feel welcome, well and at home and participate in all vital issues such as schooling, education, sports etc.
- ✓ The main reason for EU mobile citizens to move is to make money (some have children back home). But it isn't easy finding a job because many have no or little education.
- ✓ The free movement of people did not include the free movement of families. But if EU mobile parents come with their family, for two years, what to do with the children?
- ✓ Mobile citizens can only get information in Dutch or in English and that is not right. It should be proper information in their own languages, the embassies can have a role in that.
- ✓ There is a network of volunteers. They can spread the information. Churches are still an important point. Private schools, as well. Problem is the miss match of people. How do we match the right people to the right institutions?
- ✓ City of Gothenburg: Focus on the children and give them a good start in life and where you come from should not matter.

Marlous Dompeling presents her concept Amazing Amsterdam to Kajsa Olongren, Deputy Mayor of Amsterdam.

Marlous Dompeling, student enrolled at InHolland University, studied the information needs of EU citizens in Amsterdam as part of her Bachelor thesis research project. Her concept *Amazing Amsterdam* reflects on the four stages in which EU mobile citizens need different types of information: Almost in Amsterdam/ Arriving in Amsterdam/ Already in Amsterdam/ Adore Amsterdam.

Interview with Kajsa Olongren, Deputy Mayor of Amsterdam.

All kinds of people move and live in Amsterdam. All these groups are welcome as long as they are contributing.

Language is essential. If you know some basic English, you can communicate in Amsterdam, but it is also important to understand Dutch..

People with a lower education are also reached, or at least we try to reach them. We also have an introduction course, a 5-day course concerning all the things you need to know about our cultural heritage, explaining about the Dutch history, not as a tourist but as part of the city. We try to reach all kinds of groups. We must continue with it.

People keep going and coming. But the EU has a lot of different countries. We should be more proud of these differences. The stereotypes are not so useful. We are all free to travel. You want to keep some of your cultural identities. We have all kinds of ethnic shops, and at the same time you need to feel that you are part of Amsterdam.

Health care, housing, labour rights - migrants experience problems with these matters. Where lies the solution? We have to look at national, EU, and city levels of policy making. The WE project and this conference are aimed at getting a better understanding of what it is that EU citizens working and living in an other city and country need, and how to go about providing them with the correct information. The recommendations made during this conference are a great starting point for further examination and exploration of how to make better policies, and implement them, and have better collaborations between different governmental bodies and others parties like ngo's and migrant organisations. Of course the cities have to be in close contact with the different migrant groups and should be well equipped to help them find their way.

Information on working visits

Niels Tubbing offers details about working visits:

1. Welcome information at the [Expat Centre](#)
2. Language acquisition at [Taalhuis Amsterdam](#)
3. Health care and corporation with NGO's at [GGZ Keizersgracht](#)
4. Housing at Expat Center by [Flexwonen voor arbeidsmigranten](#) & [OIS Department for Research information and statistics](#)
5. Corporation with NGO's at the [Rainbow Group (De Regenboog Groep)](#)
6. Introduction and welcome courses for EU citizens at [Amsterdam City Archives](#).

Evaluation of the working visits and the event in general

Ed Klute gives a short reflection at the end of the conference.

Welcome Europe event was an opportunity to show you what was happening in European cities with regards to EU mobile citizens. If we encounter an obstacle, where do we address it, at the local, national or European level?

Registration is a very important aspect. There is incomplete data of how many EU mobile citizens are living in the city because some of them do not register.

Health is another important point. Mobile citizens not only lack information on the subject, but there are also challenges with regards to being covered by European health insurance cards. Cities have to deal with it.

With regards to labour market, key aspects are providing language courses, the existence of organizations giving support to migrants, recognition of certificates etc.

What is the responsibility of the city council concerning information? How do we provide trusted information for EU mobile citizens? The students from InHolland have offered suggestions in terms of using unconventional sources for information, such as social media.

The deputy-mayors of Gothenburg and Amsterdam are aware of the different issues of EU mobility, and have had a look at what the other cities are doing and ways of implementing it into real policies. It is important to share information and lessons learned, and to keep doing so.