

## **Project UNITE**

### **Realities on UNITE partner territories and good practices**

#### **1. Discrimination – main challenges**

Local reports of the UNITE partners confirm that discrimination regarding different aspects of life is still widely spread on their territories and may happen consciously or unconsciously. Before going in detail on some of the domains concerned, a short summary of main problems that have to be addressed through intercultural dialogue and participation will be given:

For the field of employment nearly all partners report selective and discriminative practices in the public and private sector.

First of all, third-country nationals and other persons with migration background still experience much higher barriers while applying for work than other parts of the local population. This is not only due to a lack of specific knowledge, technical know-how or language skills, but also very much a result of prejudices and stereotypes.

One local working group held that discrimination due to prejudices is even more widely spread in public authorities, particularly in the (para-)public service sector!

Names of a specific origin or the colour of skin may for a number of employers already be reason enough not to consider an application.

Another obstacle that cannot be neglected in this context is the missing recognition of diploma. A large number of third-country nationals/migrants enter the European Union with university degrees. However, member states lack means, methods and probably also a certain (administrative) flexibility to establish and apply adequate instruments that would allow for a fast assessment and certification of skills and a “translation” of diplomas into similar certificates that exist in the host country.

In case specific (vocational) training is offered, third-country nationals/migrants may often not be able to seize this opportunity, as they have to work in order to ensure a regular income.

The necessity to prove this regular income (in order to keep the residence permit) makes a number of third-country nationals accept any kind of low-skilled work that might not at all correspond to their real abilities and skills. These are often positions in which the worker is faced with bad working conditions (including atypical and long working hours, low salaries, lack of work safety, illegal employment). Furthermore, as already mentioned before, the worker might not be able to follow any other kind of activity such as vocational and language training.

Finally, discriminative practices have also been observed when it comes to the selection of candidates for a specific apprenticeship or a training. UNITE partners reported, for instance, the rejection of black women who applied for a training as hairdressers.

In these conditions, it also becomes hard to migrants to keep a certain work-life balance, ensure care for the own family and develop social networks in the city/neighbourhood. Their active participation in public local life is , which might in turn generate a wrong image among locals about “separatist behaviour” and “isolation” of migrants.

Due to the difficulties described above, third-country nationals/migrants are frequently also unable to follow language classes in order to overcome language problems.

Schools that offer specific (individual) support to migrant children risk to slowly become “ghetto

schools”: Out of fear of a possible lower quality and lower level of education, locals tend to send their children to less mixed schools, i.e. from public to private institutes. The benefits of intercultural education, the existence of measures specifically for migrant children (which enable them to follow the lessons with the same capacities as locals) as well as the learning capacities particularly of youngsters are often ignored or underestimated.

In other cases schools are not able or not given the means to provide additional support to migrant children or to effectively address missing intercultural training/capacities for teachers. Language problems and other difficulties might therewith also lead to lower levels of education of migrant children.

Another field in which discriminative behaviour is still widely spread is housing. Migrants experience major difficulties to access affordable and decent housing. This might first of all be related to rents that prove too high (given also, that in a number of cases migrants work in badly paid jobs). Affordable housing opportunities are often limited and also applied for by a number of locals. In addition, in a number of cases, landlords tend to reject applications by third-country nationals due to their origin and related prejudices.

Moreover, third-country nationals/migrants tend to exclude themselves from certain services. This is due, for instance, to the lack of intercultural training of service providers that are not always able to understand or respond to the needs of a person having a specific cultural/religious background or biography.

Cultural mediators are employed on some partner territories. However, their number is limited, and mediation often focuses on specific domains such as school or health services only.

In addition, all local UNITE working groups could observe a lack of knowledge among migrants regarding their own rights.

One of the sources of this problem can partially be found in shortcomings regarding the dissemination of information on services among migrants (inappropriate places where information is distributed, linguistic problems, missing references to the specific needs of migrants...). Even though especially public authorities made efforts to better address migrants, e.g. through service maps or guides edited in different languages, much remains to be done in order to improve the situation.

Finally, project partners with migration background stated that migrants are scared to exercise and claim their rights, as they fear even stronger discrimination not only for themselves, but also for family members, friends, compatriots, colleagues with migration background etc.

In the following chapters, some of the above mentioned challenges will be illustrated more in depth. Moreover, some practice examples to overcome described obstacles will be given.

(Remark: It is interesting that the local UNITE working groups listed *problems/discrimination linked to a religious background* above all in relation to service provision. They were less mentioned with respect to employment or participation in public and political life. This does surely not mean that they are not present in these areas. However, it appears that such barriers might be more easily overcome than others linked to prejudices appearing with the colour of skin etc.)

## **1a. Participation in Employment/Entrepreneurship – Obstacles and good practices**

With respect to aspects regarding employment and entrepreneurship, migrants in different European member states encounter very similar problems.

Most of the UNITE partner territories have to deal with (partially increasing) unemployment. Together with other disadvantaged groups, migrants often have more difficulties than locals to access the labour market. They may much more frequently find themselves in a situation of unemployment.

This is not only due to missing language skills, a lack of (technical) knowledge or a non-recognition

of diploma, but also a result of the aforementioned prejudices.

However, even while being in employment, migrants have to deal with a number of obstacles and unfair treatment. In a number of cases they find themselves in jobs of low quality, in which their real capabilities are not taken into account. This way, migrants are not given any opportunity to further develop their skills and/or adapt them to the needs of the local community they live in. Moreover, they risk losing their capabilities.

Notwithstanding these facts, migrants find it rather hard to escape this situation, as they are strongly dependent on a regular income which is a condition for the permit of residence. They are thus forced to take on low quality jobs that might go hand in hand with unfavourable working conditions (long working hours, low salaries etc.).

An under-estimation of own capabilities and skills by migrants themselves adds to the difficulties described above and leads to the creation of a vicious circle.

This lack of self-confidence is to a certain extent related to the non-recognition of formal and informal competences.

Vocational training opportunities are usually not fully exploited, as migrants need time to search for jobs and/or work in order to ensure they are allowed to stay in the host country.

Regarding entrepreneurship two opposed tendencies, not just between cities and regions in different member states, but also between territories in the same country, became visible.

On some partner territories, entrepreneurship is seen as a chance and opportunity for migrants to access the labour market and carry out activities that match their abilities.

Moreover, a project partner stated: "Entrepreneurship is probably the form of employment for migrants that is best accepted by the local population."

Migrant business can frequently be found in the area of so-called "ethnic business", e.g. ethnic grocery or other kind of small commerce. These businesses provide migrant communities with products from their home country which they cannot necessarily find in the host country. On the other hand, they attract locals who might be interested in "exotic" products.

However, activities also increasingly extend into other business areas such as media, handicraft, production...

In several partner cities and regions, specific business support services for migrants exist.

On other partner territories, in turn, migrant entrepreneurship is not easy to realize.

First of all, it is still considered as a risk which might even be greater for migrants, who have to prove a regular income in order to obtain or keep their residence permit. Employment might thus often come before entrepreneurship.

A lack of knowledge regarding legislation, technical issues, administration or bureaucracy are other factors that prevent a number of migrants from setting up and running business successfully.

Whereas in a part of UNITE partner territories an even large number of different services regarding business support and training for migrants is on offer, only few measures seem to be in place in other cities and regions.

Finally, it has been observed that entrepreneurship might also depend on business opportunities migrants experienced in countries of origin.

## **Good practice examples promoting active participation of migrants and intercultural aspects in the labour market**

### **1. Reggio Calabria (IT): Migrant Entrepreneurship**

In the framework of the REVES project "Transform" and with the support of the city of Reggio Calabria, five migrant women and an Italian woman founded the co-operative Piccolo Mondo. The co-operative offers a variety of services in particular for (small) children and youngsters. For the city of Reggio Calabria it manages, for instance, a multi-ethnic kindergarten. Piccolo Mondo contributed to intercultural dialogue and integration of migrants not only through the creation of

jobs and care facilities for (migrant) children. With its diverse initiatives and implication in a number of local cultural events it also promotes intercultural education and opportunities for parents and youngsters – be they locals or third-country nationals - to meet each other. In 2008, Filipinos, South Americans, Eastern Europeans, Moroccans and Italians were members and/or employees of the co-operative.

## 2. Italy: Agenzia della Cittadinanza

The Equal project “Agenzia della Cittadinanza”, had the objective to promote, in Italy, partnership initiatives between local authorities and the third sector, in order to develop a new local welfare system, including a higher quality of services etc. Emphasis was put on the participation of (socially) disadvantaged groups. Here, migrants were of special concern.

Among the actions developed by the project also figures support to migrant entrepreneurship in the social economy sector. The aim was to create a network among already existing information desks for foreign entrepreneurs-to-be that were present on the territory. The aforementioned information desks provide orientation to foreign citizen, according to the specific experiences of the latter. Moreover, they put a person that requires further information in contact with other local services.

## 3. Forum for Employment:

In Dunkerque, the socio-cultural association of the Grande Synthe district organises, on a regular basis, so-called job dating sessions. The objective of these events is to create direct contacts between persons searching for employment (among them a high number of third-country nationals and other persons with migration background) and employers. Through this approach the organisers hope to prevent discriminative practices regarding the (pre-)selection of applications, their relegation or applications remaining without answer.

The persons that take part in the job dating sessions are identified by the National Employment Agency beforehand.

## 4. Genoa: Working on skills and abilities of third-country nationals

A valorisation of skills and qualifications of third-country nationals has been at the centre of the project « Extracompetenze », realised in Genova (Italy) from 2002 to 2005. The project was carried out in the framework of a partnership between the city of Genova and the most relevant local structures working with migrants, among them a number of social economy organisations, trade unions or mixed structures such as the Federazione Regionale Solidarietà e Lavoro.

The objective of the project was not to provide global assistance and services to integrate migrants into the labour market, but to accompany qualified third-country nationals in an individual way so as to enable them to become aware of and refresh already acquired skills and abilities, as well as to have their qualifications recognised, certified and used.

Activities were based on two main processes:

In a first step, persons have been encouraged to work on their own skills and abilities, i.e. to first of become aware of, recognise and therewith somehow re-gain qualifications they actually already acquired in the past. The promoters of the initiative considered this step as vital, as the recognition of his/her own abilities *by a person* constitutes also the basis for a recognition of a person's abilities *by others*.

Once this awareness on own capabilities had been created, a second step followed: the 'translation' and formalisation of experiences and abilities in order to address the « outside-world », i.e. a specific objective or interlocutor. One of the tasks of the beneficiary and the structure accompanying the former in this phase is also to define a descriptive framework of reference for one or several skills and abilities. This exercise was followed, wherever possible, by a traineeship in an enterprise that committed to certify the abilities and skills observed. Even though this certification did not have any legal value, it meant an important step forward for the beneficiary whose skills were finally valorised in the socio-economic context of the host country. Moreover, third-country nationals found themselves finally in a position of being able to provide potential employers with certain references.

With 439 third-country nationals using this innovative local service during three years, and an ever increasing demand, « Extracompetenze » proved to be an important instrument in mediating between different socio-economic and cultural context in order to allow for a better integration of third-country nationals into the labour market.

4. In the city of Rome, the administrative unit “Autopromozione Sociale” which is in charge of the management of funds for the development of entrepreneurship, had issued, in 2004, a call for proposals targeting solely third-country nationals. This call foresaw financial support to the creation and development of enterprises run by third-country nationals. Around 50 million Euros had been earmarked for this initiative, of which the city put at disposal 40% as financing which does not have to be repaid, and another 40% as low interest loans (1,5%) being reimbursable within 5 years. In February 2008, a new call for migrant entrepreneurs has been published. With this initiatives, the city hopes to foster active participation of third-country nationals in economy and society and interaction with the host society through entrepreneurship.

### **1b. Participation in political and public life**

When it comes to political participation *through local elections*, third-country nationals on nearly all UNITE partner territories do not have any possibilities to bring themselves in. They do not have any local voting rights, i.e. they are not allowed to vote or stand for elections themselves.

Regarding UNITE partner territories, participation in local elections (including candidature) is possible only in all cities/municipalities in Finland.

In the case of Barcelona, specific agreements between the Spanish state and home countries of third-country nationals enable *some nationalities* to vote at local level.

#### **Good practice example:**

##### **A symbolic vote: “Votation Citoyenne”, Grenoble**

In Grenoble, France, a so-called “Votation citoyenne” (vote of citizens) has been organised on a regular (annual) basis since 2002.

During three days, approximately twenty ballot-boxes are posted in proximity to highly frequented public places such as markets or train stations.

Every inhabitant – be he/she a national or third-country national - has the right to express, through a symbolic vote, his or her opinion on the following question:

« Are you in favour of a recognition of voting rights for third-country nationals, including their right to stand as a candidate? »

The only criterium of eligibility to this vote is to have the age of consent.

However, interested persons do not have to show any identity card or other documents.

Each voter is asked for a signature. Moreover, each person also has the opportunity to leave contact details if he or she wishes to receive information on other, related initiatives.

The "Votation Citoyenne" is organised by the Consultative Body representing Third-Country Nationals in Grenoble (Conseil Consultatif des Résidents Etrangers Grenoblois, CCREG) in partnership with different political parties, local associations and organisations such as the League for Human Rights. Additional support is lent by the anti-discrimination unit of the city of Grenoble.

The initiative helped raising awareness of locals on the situation and rights of third-country nationals. Moreover, it fosters interaction between both groups (different migrant communities and locals) and encourages third-country nationals to participate – even though just in a symbolic way – in a political debate concerning their interests. Results of the vote are sent to the French government.



Institutionalized consultation procedures and specific consultative bodies representing migrants exist in most UNITE partner territories.

Examples are the Conseil Consultatif des Résidents Etrangers Grenoblois in Grenoble (FR), the Consulta cittadina per la rappresentanza delle comunità straniere in Rome (IT) or the future Consiglio Territoriale per l'Immigrazione in Messina (IT, currently still a political initiative to be adopted). In other cases, mixed consultation structures were created. They are composed of representatives of third-country nationals and other persons with migration background, local citizens, politicians, administrators etc. Among the examples mentioned in the UNITE local reports figure the "Integrationsbeiräte" (Integration Councils) that exist in the different districts of Berlin (D) or else the Tavolo d'Immigrazione (Immigration Council) in Genoa (IT).

### **Good practice example:**

#### **Rome: Third-Country Nationals as Deputy Councillors**

Third-country nationals in the city of Rome have the right to vote for four persons that would represent them as deputy councillors in the city council as well as for one representative in each of the 19 district councils of Rome.

(However, they are not entitled to vote for the ordinary councillors or the mayor.)

Eligible are all third-country nationals that are residents of the city of Rome or that reside in the city for study or work reasons.

The deputy councillors elected by third-country nationals do not have the right to vote in the city council. However, they might present opinions, motions and proposals for the agenda. Moreover, they have access to information linked to the work of the city council.

To stand as a candidate in local elections, third-country nationals should have reached the age of 18 and be in a position to prove that their stay in the host country is legal.

Yet, nearly all UNITE partners deplore the absence of a number of migrant groups or individuals from such consultation processes.

Reasons may be multi-fold: First of all, some (groups of) third-country nationals might feel unfamiliar with the (formal) procedures, feel not at ease with ('official') venues such as town halls or conference centres or lack information, time and self-confidence.

Moreover, tensions between different migrant groups exist regarding the representativeness and composition of specific consultative bodies. The majority-based voting system of advisory boards in many cities made it impossible for smaller minority groups to participate. For this reason, interest and the turnout of elections to these bodies has been continuously plummeting, leading to frustration and conflicts between different groups (problem of the so called "community leaders").

In addition, the frequent existence of so-called community-leaders in the above mentioned bodies promotes a factual under-representation of views of other community subgroups and individual members in local initiatives regarding intercultural dialogue and (political) participation.

Face to these realities, certain (groups of) third-country nationals might also refuse to take part in elections of these bodies.

Linked to this problem is the lack of means to take part in existing dialogue and consultation procedures (small groups of immigrants and individuals experience frequently higher obstacles than big immigrant associations etc.).

Furthermore, consultation bodies such as they have been mentioned before are sometimes even perceived as a kind of mere "alibi" for domestic politicians and an obstacle for the introduction of real possibilities of participation such as the active and passive right to vote. This fear might be one of the reasons for the low turnout of the elections for these bodies.

In this context, all UNITE partners highlighted the importance of other, alternative structures allowing especially third-country nationals to contribute to planning and implementation of local (political) initiatives.

Several partners mention district assemblies as important places of aggregation that bring together migrants and locals, whilst giving them opportunities to jointly shape their closest environment

through a number of actions, to be heard by local politicians and administrators etc. It seems important to stress that these district assemblies, due to their rooting in smaller local communities such as neighbourhoods, give *individuals* the opportunity to participate. It is thus of less importance if the person is an elected or nominated representative of the migrant population.

Due to their success, district assemblies sometimes replaced other practices of consultation with the migrant community (be it through consultative bodies representing migrants, or other consultation exercises).

Another platform for political participation of third-country nationals that should not be underestimated are trade unions. In France, for instance, third-country nationals and other persons with migration background succeeded several times in making their voice heard by politicians through trade union membership. Spanish partners consider trade unions as one of the first bodies to pay attention to needs of migrants/third-country nationals and to promote their rights and abilities.

UNITE partners and members of their local working groups also agreed that associations play a crucial role: On nearly all partner territories third-country nationals have the right to be member of an association or to found an association.

Particularly French and German partners consider membership in associations as one of the simplest forms to get involved and influence local policies and strategies.

Third country nationals are either part of the mixed local associations or member of a specific migrant association (a broad range of migrant associations can be found in most UNITE partner cities or regions).

Finally, opportunities created through informal networks among third-country nationals, persons with migration background and locals might also be of relevance for participation in social and, sometimes, political life.

Nevertheless, notwithstanding the above mentioned options and a willingness to participate in political and social life, by far not every third-country national/migrants is able to seize these opportunities.

A major reason for this is the lack of time to devote for activities other than work (which, as mentioned above, is vital to ensure a regular income and the residence permit).

Moreover, due to the problem described before, migrants might also lack important social networks. Another problem regarding participation of immigrants in different initiatives relates to their abilities to keep up with nationals in terms of rhetorical skills, expertise as well as 'general education' (as defined by the respective cultural context of a country).

## Good practice examples

### 1. Dunkerque: Promoting political participation of women

In Dunkerque (France), the project « Parole de Femmes », carried out by the association AJS since 2005, aims to mobilise women and to encourage them to shape their environment by raising their voice .

The project addresses particularly those women that never or rarely had the occasion to express themselves on issues linked to their living context and preoccupations. A large majority of them are third-country nationals and other persons with migration background.

Specific objectives of « Parole des Femmes » are:

a) to enable women to take part in the public debate and an exchange on diverse aspects of today's reality of French society and

b) to encourage women with migration background and others (many of them living in unfavourable social conditions) to express themselves, whilst ensuring that those persons that do not have the habit to speak in specific types of meetings are not prevented by others to do so.

An important element here is that local politicians and other actors are invited to the meetings on a regular basis in order to ensure that the opinion of above mentioned women is heard. Moreover, guests are encouraged not only to listen, but also to react and deliver their point of view or knowledge to the debate.

## 2. Cinisello Balsamo (IT): Social Empowerment of migrants

Social empowerment of migrants is promoted by a new project, carried out by the Municipality of Cinisello Balsamo (Italy) in collaboration with associations, voluntary organisations (Gruppo di Volontariato Vincenziano and Casa degli amici dell'accoglienza) and a Croatian cultural mediator. The initiative "UNITED COLOURS OF CINISELLO" aims, in particular, to create a place of privileged reception for migrants as well as to develop the latter's social networks as a basis of social empowerment and active participation.

Among the activities that have been realised figure:

- a) the promotion of Italian language laboratories, which take into account – through an individualised approach - the requirements of the users, and therefore diverse cultural and religious origins (example: ad hoc courses for women from Arab countries);
- b) creation of a centre in which third-country nationals and other persons with migration background may find a person (a local or a migrant) listening to their worries and concerns;
- c) development of a space for active listening and guidance regarding health issues and
- d) the provision of a space for cultural exchange on and mutual assistance (between different migrant groups and locals) in questions related to everyday life such as childcare, ways of tackling family problems in respect of different cultures, information and guidance on the services provided by the city etc.

It should be stressed that the project does not only address migrants. Through its manifold activities, it brings together different migrant groups and locals. Senegalese youngsters, for instance, teach Italian children in the framework of French languages classes; locals and migrants help each other in improving abilities to use a computer etc. ...

## 2. Intercultural Dialogue

Concrete local strategies for intercultural dialogue, reported by the local UNITE working groups, seem to be fairly recent or only in preparation.

From the examples provided by both local authorities and social economy, it becomes obvious that social economy organisations such as associations, co-operatives and foundations are important promoters of participation and different forms of interaction (dialogue) between third-country nationals, persons with a migration background and locals.

It has been observed that initiatives are often very much concentrated in the domains of education and leisure.

A range of different instruments for intercultural dialogue, which are applied on the partner territories, have been mentioned:

Often, intercultural dialogue takes place in the framework of discussions, seminars, conferences, sometimes organised in cooperation with universities.

Another tool for intercultural dialogue is campaigns, prepared and carried out jointly by both third-country nationals/persons with migration background and locals.

Important and widely spread instruments to bring together and make interact locals and different migrant communities are festivals, markets or other socio-cultural events such as concerts.

Also sports events take an important place and seem to have significant effects when it comes to the promotion of intercultural dialogue.



Other, additional instruments which are not necessarily linked to a specific meeting place are diverse audiovisual and print media. They may be at the same time engine and result of interaction between different groups of the (migrant) population. Apart from complementing above mentioned events and keeping interaction alive, these media have the potential to enable persons that might be not be able to attend meetings or other events to have access to information and to communicate with the local community. UNITE partners mentioned, for instance, specific local radio programmes made by persons of different national communities, or print media such as newspapers or magazines.

Print media might cover a broad range of issues and have different kind of target-groups and objectives: Neighbourhood newspapers may be found next to publications for schools or scientific magazines which aim to launch interaction among academics of different nationalities.

On nearly all partner territories, different forms of guides have been published in order to facilitate persons with a migration background access to diverse services and/or contact with their host community. However, given the content and service-orientation of most of these guides, it appears appropriate to consider them rather as an outcome of intercultural dialogue than an instrument. They do not necessarily promote interaction between different migrant groups and locals, but serve rather as an instrument of orientation.

One of the local working groups also highlighted the role of twinning as a motor for intercultural dialogue. Several cities or regions maintain twinning relationships with municipalities in the countries of origin of third-country nationals and other persons with a migration background. Different project between twin towns, which also involved third-country nationals, had been launched and proven to be fairly successful in fostering dialogue and a better understanding of the situation and background of migrants.

Yet, all in all, local UNITE working groups on the partner territories still deplore the lack of sufficient and real physical spaces and moments for dialogue between migrants and locals and/or dialogue between different migrant groups.

Have been identified as parts of the migrant population that are – at least partially - harder to reach than others:

- specific migrant communities (e.g. the Chinese community in Italian cities)
- youngsters (depending on the circumstances and the issues, it might be very easy or very hard to have them involved in specific initiatives)
- women (partially – their absence might be due to problems of work-life balance and responsibilities regarding care for their families, to constraints imposed by the role women have to play in certain cultures etc.)

In the opinion of most UNITE partners, a larger number of third-country nationals and persons with migration background may be involved in diverse initiatives for intercultural dialogue, if the latter are combined with events in other fields of activity (sports, catering, music ...).

Especially local authorities, but also social economy partners highlighted the need for cultural mediators. These persons are in a position to promote mutual understanding between migrants and locals on specific habits and needs. Therewith they facilitate, for instance, an appropriate treatment of migrants in specific services. By 'translating' different cultural codes of migrant communities and the host society, cultural mediators also help to increase participation of migrants in politics and social life. In a number of reported cases, mediators have a migration background themselves (example: Integrationslotsen – so-called integration pilots - in Berlin), which evidently enables them understand the situation of a third-country national much better than other persons. However, on several UNITE territories mediators are employed above all in the education and health system. They are still missing and requested in a number of other domains of everyday life and cohabitation.

Moreover, UNITE partners, in their local analysis reports, stressed the necessity for service providers to take part in intercultural training activities.

Nevertheless, several partner stressed that, in their cities and regions, emphasis in policies lies very much on the security issue. Migration is still all too often considered as a threat. Offensive security measures sometimes prevail over real dialogue and interaction (which also has to go hand in hand with a real empowerment of third-country nationals and other persons with migration background).

### **Good practice examples:**

#### **1. Servizio Integrato per l'Interculturalità/Reggio Calabria:**

A specific service to promote intercultural dialogue and participation has been established by the Department of Social Affairs of the City of Reggio Calabria. It is managed in cooperation with several local social economy organisations.

The objective is to provide a kind of intermediation between third-country nationals, on one hand, and public and private actors, on the other hand.

Apart from acting as a social secretariat in order to facilitate migrants' access to services or their integration into training and into the labour market, the initiative carries out diverse programmes to reduce all kind of obstacles that prevent intercultural dialogue (including linguistic barriers or culture-related problems of communication). Through these activities, the service is strongly promoting interaction between third-country nationals, other persons with migration background and Italians. It also fosters the creation of mixed associations and different types of social networks.

#### **2. Genoa/Barcelona: Interaction with so-called Street'gangs'**

In June 2006, the city of Genoa, in cooperation with other local and international actors, organised a public convention with representatives of Latino 'gangs', a large number of which can be found in Genoa. This meeting took place in the framework of a project which aimed to integrate these 'street organisations' into local society. It draw on results of successful initiatives of integration and 'pacification' in New York and Barcelona. Several protagonists of these initiatives such as Luis Barrios, anglican priest and initiator of integration processes of latino groups in New York, attended the event, as well. Through his work and social intervention, Barrios paved the way for the City of Genoa as well as for researchers of Barcelona to establish contacts with several representatives of the Latin Kings and the association Neta. His intervention in Barcelona helped bringing hostile relations between both groups to an end and to launch a process of legalisation of the so-called 'gangs'.

The conference in Genoa represented one of the public moments of a long process of integration of 'gangs' of youngsters. The initiative started with several months of establishment of contacts to latino representatives in the city, Italy and in their international networks – a crucial basis for the development of a successful and continuously developing process of integration.

The gangs, or better 'street organisations', were founded in North and South America. However, they bring together also a large number of migrants in Europe. The phenomenon of 'street gangs' is still perceived, by both the Italian and European public opinion, as a source of insecurity, whilst, in reality, many of them serve as reference systems for a common identity and self-protection in a foreign environment without pursuing any criminal objectives.

With the project « Tresegy », the city of Genoa and its partners built on the capacity of these groups to organise themselves in structures sthat are similar to associations. This feature proved helpful in promoting integration processes.

The conclusions of this long process of mediation were drawn during the aforementioned public event, which saw the participation of representatives of the street organisations, public administrators, researchers, forces of order and other actors from different countries. In the end of the conference, the « Declaration of Genoa » was published and signed.

#### **3. Aberdeen (UK)/Jakobstad (FI)/Grenoble (FR): Creation of intercultural meeting places**

In Scotland, the Aberdeenshire Community Learning and Development Partnership, although not covered specifically in the published strategy, have been targeting funding and effort towards the

literacy (in the wider sense of 'ability to communicate') of migrants. They promoted the establishment and development of initiatives such as the HotSpot project in Peterhead. Hot Spot is a community facility offering locals and third-country nationals diverse services such as free access to computers and internet, equipped meeting rooms at low rates and information and advice regarding various aspects of daily life such as housing, financial issues, education, employment or health. Moreover, visitors have the possibility to enlarge their social networks and enjoy affordable healthy meals or drinks in a café area.

A project with similar objectives is the initiative 'Quiet Cup', an Internet café run by GREC (Grampian Racial Equality Council) in Aberdeen City main library. Here, the promotion of literacy and computer literacy are combined and complemented with opportunities of cultural exchange and social networking.

In February 2008, the Finnish social economy structure "Musikcafé After Eight", in cooperation with the public agency Concordia Jakobstad, started special café evenings with integration purpose called "Café Social". This initiative concentrates on the life outside the job or the family. It aims to facilitate the creation of a social network for those persons who do not have it. Target groups are both Finnish locals and immigrants who have moved to the region for different reasons. Café Social does not distinguish in detail between different migrant groups, but focuses on the individual, i.e. on every person that wants to participate. The initiative was based on an enquiry among migrants. With this enquiry AfterEight tried to find out in which types of activities third-country nationals and other persons with migration background were interested in. The program of "Café Social" evenings consists of music, games, 'food and culture', film, dance, karaoke and a garden party.

The objective Café Social is to involve migrants more strongly in the *planning* of its activities.

Grenoble (FR): A meeting place for elderly migrants and locals

Solutions to the isolation particularly of elderly migrants are developed by the association "Les Amis du Café Social", which was founded in the city of Grenoble (France) in 2007 by several structures working in the field of migration and integration. With the café "Pays' Ages – la maison des Sages" elderly migrants are offered a place not only to meet among themselves, but also with locals. They may have conversations with each other, play games from different countries and enjoy affordable drinks from the bar. Several hours a day, elderly third-country nationals and migrants also have the opportunity to receive assistance in filling in documents, communicating with public institutions etc.

4. Grenoble (FR): Intercultural radio broadcasting

Radio K was founded in 1981 by its supporting association *Kaleidoscope des Cultures*.

Its objectives are multifold: First of all, Radio K offers all different groups, communities and individuals that live in and around Grenoble the opportunity to raise their voice so as to increase visibility *of* and knowledge *on* different cultures among inhabitants.

Moreover, with its programme, the radio station aims to place the human being at the centre of all socio-economic or cultural issues discussed and to fight all forms of discrimination, racism and xenophobia.

With its activities, radio K also pursues the objective to enhance intercultural dialogue and social cohesion. Finally, it supports diverse initiatives of disadvantaged neighbourhoods that aim to change the (bad) reputation of the latter.

Due to financial limits the radio has only one full-time employee. However, it is supported by a number of volunteers from different backgrounds who realize radio transmissions all throughout the year.

Radio K finances its activities through its own services (creation of radio programmes on order, selling of reportages etc.), specific publicity (limited to general interest areas such as health, recycling etc.) and diverse partnerships. In addition, it receives some financial support from the Ministry of Communication (0,01% of the turnover generated through publicity in public and private audio-visual media are re-distributed to non-commercial radios in France), the Conseil Général de l'Isère, and Métro (agglomeration).

Every inhabitant has the opportunity to participate in the radio project by proposing diverse broadcasts. The latter should, of course, be in line with the objectives of Radio K.

After examination and approval of the proposal, the radio provides technical and editorial assistance in order to realise the broadcast.

#### 5. Berlin: Networking and mediation for diversity

An important mediator and promoter of intercultural dialogue in Berlin is the “agency against right-wing extremism, for democracy and diversity - “moskito””. This agency operates as a relay between those initiatives, individual citizens, schools and other multipliers that are committed to counteract racism, right-wing extremism and intolerance in everyday life. Projects, seminars and other events - organised by moskito in particular for young people, but also for community centres and other structures - contribute to the realisation of diverse ideas as well as to a stronger networking between different local actors.

Moskito gained particular popularity through its role as a mediator in a local conflict that arose due to plans for the construction of a mosque. In several meetings with the inhabitants, a dialogue between the different parties was launched. The conflict could finally be solved – the mosque was built.

### 3. Local partnerships promoting intercultural dialogue and an active participation of migrants

According to the local UNITE reports, co-operation between local authorities and social economy organisations is to be found above all in the framework of projects, agreements (which are generally rather limited in time) or activities of temporary associations.

Such cooperation can be found above all between public bodies, social economy structures, schools and other training institutions.

Examples for these partnerships have already been mentioned in the previous chapters: social cafés, initiatives for migrant entrepreneurship, the promotion of participation of migrants in public life, the creation of specific services etc.

However, despite these activities, a lack of networking has been stated in most partner cities and regions.

Stable and proper *strategic* partnerships for intercultural dialogue still have to be formed.

On some territories, the basis for partnerships between diverse public and (social) private local actors has been established with local actions plans and similar local strategic programmes or the creation of platforms of cooperation. (They might sometimes also be the result of a national programme or initiative.)

These are often actions plans linked to more general issues such as social inclusion etc. Integration measures and intercultural dialogue might be included in the actions proposed.

#### Examples

##### 1. Italy: Piani di Zona

In Italy, the so-called “piani di zona’ (local plans) serve as an instrument to conceive, realize and evaluate integrated local strategies regarding services and initiatives in the social and health sector.

As established by the new “Legal framework on social services” (Legislation 328/00), local authorities are expected to develop and implement these plans together with all relevant actors operating in the social and health domain.

The conception of a “Piano di Zona” includes the following steps:

Identification of problems, needs, resources and local actors that are willing to take part in the programming process

Draft and adoption of the plan

Joint implementation of the plan (by the local authority in cooperation with interested local actors)

Italian UNITE partners confirm that Piani di Zona are becoming more and more an important driving force also for the establishment of local partnerships for intercultural dialogue.

## 2. UK: Community Planning Partnerships/Race Equality Schemes

A potential to develop stable partnerships for intercultural dialogue in the UK can be found, for instance, in community planning partnerships. They could be probably be considered as being very similar to the partnerships and processes launched with the “Piani di Zona” in Italy. Community Planning Partnerships involve public authorities, but also (social) private structures, voluntary organisations etc. In the city of Aberdeen, different forums on diverse aspects of life have been created in order to discuss and identify needs, priorities and joint actions.

Also activities related to the fight against any form of discrimination and the promotion of intercultural dialogue have been included in the community plan. Moreover, they were taken up by the Aberdeen Race Equality Scheme. Both documents, the race equality scheme and the community plan, have, amongst others, the objective to:

1. promote equal opportunities and prevent discrimination
2. contribute to raising the awareness of race equality
3. promote consultation with different (migrant) communities
4. foster interaction and cooperation between persons of different racial groups
5. enhance participation in the economic and social life of the city
6. create and/or provide venues for participation and exchange, including venues for the expression of minorities .....

The *Race Equality Scheme* is implemented by local administrators, in cooperation with local politicians and with consultation of diverse public and private local actors.

Actions identified through the *community plan*, however, are realised by different public and private structures and groups.

## 3. Dunkerque: Anti-discrimination platform

In Dunkerque, an anti-discrimination platform contributes to interaction between different migrant groups and locals since October 2007. It gathers a broad range of social economy organisations and NGOs such as AJS (REVES member and UNITE partner), the association Egalité Républicaine, CEFIR (Centre d’Education et de Formation Interculturel Rencontre), Emmaus or the MRAP (Mouvement contre le Racisme et pour l’Amitié entre les Peuples) as well as individuals, among them local politicians such as the Councillors Martine Beuraert or Roland Fourmentel. All of them committed to join forces to fight discrimination and social exclusion of divers groups or persons in different spheres of live. The promotion of dialogue between different migrants and locals figures among the priorities of the platform and is perceived an indispensable means to fight discrimination.

Members of the platform meet once a month to discuss their experiences and conceive joint initiatives. Jointly elaborated strategies facilitate a coordination of the activities of the different members in a most effective way. Thereby, overlaps, isolation and incoherences are avoided. Emphasis is laid on action instead of mere advocacy or even accusations.

An interactive homepage will be established and serve as an important instrument of communication for the platform and its target groups. Persons experiencing discrimination will be directly integrated in the development of activities such as studies, the conception of an anti-discrimination label etc. With these activities, the platform also applies and tests *innovative* measures for intercultural dialogue.

## 4. Germany: Federal Programme “Soziale Stadt” (Socially Integrative City)

In Germany, actions for intercultural dialogue have been integrated in initiatives realised in the framework of the federal programme “Soziale Stadt” (“Socially Integrative City”). Soziale Stadt focuses on deprived neighbourhoods. Important financial support is given to activities that promote urban regeneration in 447 districts of 285 German cities and municipalities. In Berlin, approximately twenty districts benefited from the programme in 2008.

Among the priorities of the programme figure not only economic development or the improvement



of housing and other services, but also the promotion of instruments that strengthen networking, interaction and partnership between different groups of inhabitants.

However, on some partner territories, topics related to intercultural dialogue and integration have not been considered at all in the conception of action plans for local development, social cohesion and related issues.

*Specific* plans for immigration and integration exist only some UNITE partner territories.

### **Examples:**

#### 1. Barcelona/Andalusia: Immigration and Integration Plans

In order to combat discrimination of third-country nationals and to encourage their active participation in society, Barcelona's local government elaborated a Citizenship and Immigration plan.

This plan contains three strategic lines:

- 1) promoting integration in a framework of social cohesion;
- 2) defending and disseminating values linked to diversity and cohabitation;
- 3) cohabitation and development of policies to prevent conflict situations.

Twelve main objectives were formulated. Moreover, for each objective, priority action areas in fields such as housing, culture, education, equal access to services in general etc. were defined.

Similar plans have been established in the city of Cordoba and the province of Cordoba. Emphasis is laid on equal opportunities, intercultural dialogue, direct participation of migrant communities and cooperation in the sense of a stronger coordination of actions of different public and private structures in the domain of immigration and integration.

#### 2. Andalusia: Immigration Forum

Social policies adapted to the needs of migrants are at the centre of the work of the Andalusian Immigration Forum. This consultative body, which is attached to the Andalusian Ministry of the Interior, gives diverse local actors such as social organisations, migrant associations and others the opportunity to exchange and deliver their input in the programming of regional policies for the social integration of migrants.

A priority action for the forum is to facilitate dialogue and communication between diverse migrant communities and the host society.

Remark: Local, regional and national immigration and integration forums also have also been launched in other countries such as Germany, France etc.

Nevertheless, it should be stressed that the existence of local action plans for integration and intercultural dialogue or other instruments does not necessarily ensure their proper application and communication. Moreover, one of the local UNITE working groups mentioned, in their report, that an existing plan for the integration of migrants was not at all known to the inhabitants.

## **4. Contribution and role of the Social Economy in Intercultural Dialogue**

UNITE partner, in their reports, agreed on the vital contribution of social economy to intercultural dialogue or at least its *potential* (by far not fully exploited!) to foster interaction between locals and different migrant communities.

First of all, given its local roots and close contacts to citizens and residents (in many, though not all cases also to migrants), social economy is in a central position to help raising the awareness of locals on the situation and needs of migrants and vice versa.

Moreover, social economy represents an important promoter of intercultural dialogue, empowerment and participation *due to its principles*: It focuses on the individual, valorises his/her abilities and provides opportunities to use and develop the latter. This again enhances the autonomy of a person, auto-determination and the capability to assume own responsibilities.

With its specific forms of 'functioning', direct participation of members and users in its activities, social economy also fosters knowledge and capacities linked to democracy, dialogue and problem resolution. Specific concepts of participation are conveyed through services, in education, leisure etc.

In the case of co-operatives and their "one-member – one vote"-principle, this extended model of participation also in business life becomes particularly evident.

A local working group stressed that participation of migrants in economic life may be an important means to raise the acceptance of their active contribution in social and public life: "Recognition of migrants as economic actors might help them to finally play a more important role also in the political and public arena."

Through its services and initiatives in its closest environment, social economy has the capacity to mobilize its members/service beneficiaries/target groups and to directly involve of specific parts of the population in joint actions.

According to the local UNITE reports, social economy also plays a vital role when it comes to the creation of physical spaces for intercultural dialogue, e.g. in kindergarten, schools, sports, culture ...

Finally, social economy organisations often act as a mediator between citizens/residents and politics. In particular associations, but also other social economy structures, have the capacity to table proposals and be the initiator of actions – also in the field of intercultural dialogue.

It seems obvious that all these features are of importance also for locals, i.e. for the integration and participation of any kind of person!

However, project partners agree that social economy does by far not fully tap all the aforementioned potentials. It needs to make use of its abilities, further elaborate existing good practices and push for a stronger cooperation with other local actors (creation of local networks). Sometimes, social economy organisations are still not even aware of the contribution they could deliver to intercultural dialogue.

A local UNITE working group in Spain criticised that the issue had not even been taken up in an important Regional Pact for Social Economy Development. What might seem to be, at a first glance, a paradox should make social economy actors all over Europe think: In the case of the Spanish region, social economy achieved an esteemed and high position also in politics. It is perceived an important actor in a number of different sectors. For this reason, social economy enterprises do not seem to consider themselves as having, in the first place, a 'social' role.

Social economy enterprises have thus also to become aware of and rethink their own principles and values!

**Several of the aforementioned examples of good practice, as well as experimentation carried out by UNITE partners in the aforementioned fields will be presented more in detail in the following chapters of the publication.**



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