



Cities of Welcome

Driving Integration
and Equality in a
Changing Europe

6th Integrating Cities Report

About this study

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Eurocities is the network of more than 200 cities in 38 countries, representing 130 million people, working together to ensure a good quality of life for all.



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Executive Summary

Migration developments in Europe, particularly the arrival of Ukrainian refugees, have significantly impacted cities, requiring them to constantly adapt and update their integration policies. While this does not come without challenges, cities across the board are progressing to welcome, include and integrate newcomers, both migrants and refugees. This report explores how European and North American cities are putting strategies into action, focusing on their roles as policymakers, service providers, employers, and contractors of goods and services.

This sixth Integrating Cities Report charts cities' progress from mid-2022 to mid-2024. It thus forms part of a series of Integrating Cities Reports produced by Eurocities and further develops the analysis of previous years. It is structured along three main chapters:

1. the methodology and context of the Integrating Cities Charter;
2. the current migration developments in Europe and how they shape integration policies and outcomes in cities;
3. integration support implemented in cities in their capacities as policymakers, service providers, employers and contractors of goods and services.

Throughout the report, and particularly in the second chapter, a focus is put on the reception and integration of refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine.

The report brings together main integration trends at the local level, as well as highlighting good practices that may inspire other cities to develop similar initiatives. As such, it reiterates the crucial role cities have as main integration stakeholders that create open and inclusive societies for all.

Methodology

The Integrating Cities Charter continues to guide cities across Europe in their journey to becoming more open and inclusive towards migrants. First drawn up in 2010, the charter has been signed by 52 cities in the last 14 years.¹ While European migration and integration policies and their local implementation may have changed over the years, the core principles of the Integrating Cities Charter continue to be relevant: to provide equal opportunities for all residents, to integrate migrants, and to embrace the diversity of their populations.

To support cities in implementing these principles, the charter harnesses their duties and responsibilities in their roles as policymakers, service providers, employers and buyers of goods and services. Perceiving integration in such a holistic way creates a complete picture of how cities are integrating migrants today.



¹ A list of signatory cities of the Integrating Cities Charter can be found here: <https://integratingcities.eu/charter/>

The specific commitments are as follows:

As policymakers:

- Actively communicate their commitment to equal opportunities for everyone living in the city
- Ensure equal access and non-discrimination across all their policies
- Facilitate engagement from migrant communities in their policymaking processes and remove barriers to participation

As service providers:

- Support equal access for migrants to services (particularly language learning, housing, employment, health, social care and education)
- Ensure that migrants' needs are understood and met by service providers

As employers:

- Take steps to reflect the city's diversity in the composition of workforces across all staffing levels
- Ensure that all staff, including staff with a migrant background, experience fair and equal treatment by managers and colleagues
- Ensure that staff understand and respect diversity and equality issues

As buyers of goods and services:

- Apply principles of equality and diversity in procurement and tendering
- Promote principles of equality and diversity amongst contractors
- Promote the development of a diverse supplier base

In the context of the current Integrating Cities Report, more than 30 cities submitted a self-assessment of their progress with regard to these individual commitments.² Not only does this allow Eurocities as the author of the report to chart the cities' progress and present it as part of a larger picture of European integration developments, it also allows the individual cities to take stock and draw their own conclusions on their policies and projects to support the integration of migrants.

This report has two primary objectives: firstly, to summarise, analyse and contextualise the progress in integration measures and policies at the local level; and secondly, to illustrate how cities are embracing their role as significant political stakeholders, extending their influence beyond their geographical limits. Against the background of the war in Ukraine and the subsequent arrival of millions of Ukrainian refugees to European cities, this report includes a specific chapter on local integration policies and outcomes for this particular target group.

By offering these insights into local integration initiatives, objectives and challenges, the report aims to support evidence-based policymaking across different levels of governance, including the EU.

² For the 2024 Integrating Cities Report, the following cities filled in a self-assessment questionnaire: Amsterdam, Athens, Berlin, Bilbao, Bologna, Bristol, Dortmund, Dusseldorf, Ghent, Helsinki, Leipzig, Lisbon, Madrid, Malmo, Manchester, Milan, Munich, Nuremberg, Oslo, Oulu, Paris, Riga, Rotterdam, Stockholm, Tampere, Toronto, Turin, Utrecht, Vantaa and Vienna.



Migration developments in Europe and their impact on cities

Across Europe, cities are implementing a variety of initiatives to enhance the accommodation and integration of migrants and refugees. In responding to the questionnaire, several cities mentioned efforts to expand reception shelters and temporary housing for asylum seekers, driven by both national accommodation challenges and specific crises, such as the displacement of Ukrainians. Other cities reported on their initiatives to provide more stable and extended housing contracts for newcomers, including through tackling structural discrimination in housing markets.

The labour market integration of migrants and ensuring that they are employed according to their skills and qualifications remains a major topic of concern for cities. An increasing number of cities are experimenting with programmes that facilitate faster job-matching for newly arrived people, including recently recognised refugees, that then allows for language learning on the job.

Additionally, there are targeted programmes to empower migrant women and increase their access to employment.

To improve the participation of migrants in local society, cities have enacted policies to enhance the involvement of migrants in public administration and have launched projects that highlight the contributions of migrant communities. Non-discrimination efforts include renewed commitments to diversity and anti-discrimination, aligning with the spirit of the Integrating Cities Charter. Digitalisation initiatives are being developed to provide accessible, reliable information to newcomers. Furthermore, several cities have established one-stop shops to streamline services for migrants, offering comprehensive support, counselling and integration services under one roof, ensuring easier access to legal, social and administrative assistance. And lastly, cities are increasing their efforts to support migrants in their naturalisation process – for instance, by organising

informational events and preparatory activities for naturalisation exams, which can significantly reduce waiting times and improve applicants' understanding of the process.

Since 2022, cities have implemented these measures against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine and a significant number of Ukrainian refugees seeking shelter and protection across Europe. The following chapter outlines how the arrival of people fleeing the war in Ukraine played out in European cities and how this has affected integration policies and outcomes at the local level.



Ukrainian refugees in cities: impact on local integration policies and outcomes

Since the start of the Russian invasion in Ukraine in February 2022, close to 6 million refugees from Ukraine have been recorded in Europe.³ Most of these refugees have settled in cities, where their arrivals have had a considerable impact on the local integration and service provision landscape. The activation of the Temporary Protection Directive in March 2022 was a game changer in terms of the reception and provision of services to Ukrainians at the local level. It immediately granted access to a residence status, employment, accommodation, social welfare and healthcare, education and banking services, to all beneficiaries of temporary protection.⁴ Not only did this alleviate expected pressure on national asylum systems, it also facilitated and accelerated the inclusion and integration of Ukrainians in cities.

This was a necessary step, given the scale of arrivals. Through the questionnaire underlying this report, many cities reported on the numbers of refugees from Ukraine that either settled or passed through their cities. **Berlin**, for instance, has seen more than 460,000 refugees passing through the city since February 2022. As of spring 2024, around 50,000 have received a status under the Temporary Protection Directive.

Similarly, **Munich** reported a total of 17,000 Ukrainian refugees registered in the city, while **Leipzig** registered and took care of around 11,000 refugees from Ukraine, and **Nuremberg** reported the registration of almost 12,000 Ukrainians. Italy's Lombardy Region saw the highest numbers of arrivals nationally, with close to 34,000 Ukrainians lodging an application for temporary protection there, of which around 9,000 were registered in **Milan**, the region's capital. **Vienna** has welcomed more than 27,000 Ukrainian refugees, which almost tripled the total numbers of individuals that were covered by the Austrian system for basic care that also extends to asylum seekers more generally. The capital of Norway, **Oslo**, reported having resettled more than 2,000 refugees from Ukraine, while **Stockholm** is housing more than 5,600 Ukrainian refugees as of spring 2024. In the Canadian context, about 1 million people applied for the Canada-Ukraine Authorisation for Emergency Travel (CUAET), under which almost 300,000 people have arrived in Canada. Around one third of those have settled in **Toronto**.

The arrival of such considerable numbers of refugees from Ukraine to European and Canadian cities has had an impact on local perceptions and expressions of welcome and solidarity. Many cities reported on the local population's and civil society's immense efforts in collaborating with the local administration to accommodate new arrivals from Ukraine, often by going above and beyond to provide (private) housing, counselling and information about services and rights.

³ UNHCR (2024), "Operational Data Portal: Ukraine Refugee situation", accessed 2 July 2024. Available at: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>

⁴ European Commission (2024), "Temporary protection", accessed 2 July 2024. Available at: https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/common-european-asylum-system/temporary-protection_en

Having an already established Ukrainian diaspora in cities – such as in **Athens, Bilbao, Dusseldorf, Helsinki, Nuremberg** and **Toronto** – was a considerable factor in city administrations being able to activate and support a welcoming movement. For **Bilbao**, one of the biggest milestones was the inclusion of the Ukrainian community in the local immigration board. This body aims to foster solidarity and respect, while giving Ukrainians in the city the opportunity to have a say on the development of public policies in a more structured way. In addition, in order to encourage the information and the participation of the Ukrainian community in the social and public life of the city, Bilbao gave municipal premises to the Ukrania Euskadi association.

At the same time, this difference in access to rights between beneficiaries of temporary protection on the one hand and other status holders or asylum seekers on the other did not go unnoticed at the local level. Several cities reported that this prompted a discussion around inequalities in treatment of different refugee and migrant groups, based on their difference in protection and residence status. There was a warmer welcome received by Ukrainian refugees as compared to other refugees that were facing lengthy asylum procedures and cramped living conditions in reception centres. These double standards were reported to have caused friction between Ukrainian refugees and other refugees.

Conversely, other cities saw a positive shift on the narrative surrounding the right to work for asylum seekers. Seeing that so many Ukrainians found a job right away helped to shift the discourse on allowing asylum seekers to work, despite the currently high legal threshold set by regulations. In the Netherlands, for instance, the national government is now looking to adjust the rules for asylum seekers who want to work. **Helsinki** in particular saw a growth in the local economy through the employment and entrepreneurial activities of Ukrainian refugees.

Cities also reported on a lack of guidance from the national level and missing coordination with the local level, especially when it came to the reception of Ukrainian refugees. In this situation, cities relied on sharing good practices amongst each other and exploring innovative solutions in terms of organising a support system for Ukrainian newcomers. Cities specifically mentioned the added value of discussions organised by Eurocities within the framework of the Working Group on Migration and Integration, which allowed them to discuss ways to find responses to pressing issues with colleagues across Europe.

These discussions underline the need for a standardised set of rules governing access to rights for different protection categories. Given the positive impact of a facilitated access to services and rights under temporary protection, cities are hopeful that the rights of asylum seekers, refugees and other protection or status holders can be better aligned and brought to a higher standard.

City-led responses to the reception of Ukrainian refugees

In a highly political context, cities across Europe saw themselves confronted with the reality of a sudden increase in the number of people in need of services and support. All the cities included in this Integrating Cities Report provided information on how they made immense efforts to accommodate and include Ukrainian refugees in their reception and integration policies.

Riga's Support Centre for Ukrainian Residents and Heart of Riga Centre

Immediately after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the city of Riga, in anticipation of a large number of people fleeing across the border into Lithuania, established a one-stop-shop for Ukrainian refugees. This structure brings together all the main state and local government services to support individuals with registration, temporary residence permits, social assistance and humanitarian aid, employment opportunities and unemployment benefits and housing, as well as healthcare and consultations. Moreover, several NGOs are housed under the same roof. They provide additional support in terms of access to services, but also social inclusion and information on language classes.

Since May 2023, Riga has provided free-of-charge premises of 720 square metres for the functioning of the 'Rīgas sirds' ('Heart of Riga'), where non-governmental organisations regularly organise various creative and cultural activities for Ukrainian refugees, both children and adults. The aim of all the activities is to promote and improve socialisation of Ukrainian refugees, reduce the negative effects of loneliness and stress, and create a supportive and high-quality environment for refugees living in Riga. Local residents are invited to participate as volunteers and participants in the activities organised. Supported by over 200 volunteers, Heart of Riga holds daily Latvian language classes, leisure activities for children, yoga classes for adults, and concerts in support of Ukraine and Ukrainians.

In general, one-stop-shops and comparative structures played a significant role in providing services to a quickly growing target group. In **Leipzig**, for instance, the city set up an arrival centre for Ukrainian refugees, where several offices offered their advisory services in one place.⁵ This enabled applications to be processed quickly and directly, and also saved people who had fled Ukraine from having to go to numerous authorities. Particularly in the initial phase, the offices were able to directly exchange and implement information on (legal) requirements and changes that were important for the processes in the arrival centre. **Bologna** set up a hub for prompt reception close to the train station, in partnership with other public institutions and NGOs to provide information and to organise reception, legal support, linguistic mediation and guidance, including on health care and schooling options.

Stockholm, through its Welcome House one-stop-shop, applied for additional funding from the European Social Fund (ESF) to start a new project there specifically for Ukrainians. This allowed the city to efficiently provide employment and education counselling, healthcare guidance and social inclusion activities. There is a particular service for young Ukrainians, as Stockholm realised their additional support needs. Similarly, **Dortmund** used its already established MigraDo one-stop-shop, where the direct proximity of counselling services for Ukrainians to the foreigners' authority and other administrative units made it possible to provide people with a wide range of information in different languages.

An arrival centre was also set up in **Munich**. In addition, the city reported that it could quickly reactivate the support infrastructure built up since the 2015 arrivals of refugees from wars in the Middle East. This infrastructure resumed or intensified its activities with a focus on Ukrainian refugees, including an interdepartmental team for extraordinary events that primarily focussed on accommodation and initial care of newly arrived refugees from Ukraine. **Toronto** activated its refugee capacity plan in 2022 to monitor developments related to a significant increase in the number of Ukrainian arrivals under the CUAET programme. The plan allows the city to facilitate seamless and efficient mobilisation of resources and support during periods of significant and unforeseen increases in refugee populations in Toronto. To support the settlement of Ukrainian arrivals, the city implemented a response similar to the approach taken during Afghan resettlement, focused on coordination and information exchange.

Other cities had to rely on more creative solutions to cater to Ukrainian refugees. This has been particularly the case in the Netherlands, where municipalities were responsible for the shelter and integration of Ukrainian refugees, while the national government is responsible for other asylum seekers.⁶ **Rotterdam**, for instance, accommodated Ukrainians on cruise ships, converted vacant office buildings and care centres. **Utrecht** similarly relied on temporary accommodation in sport halls, holiday houses or hotels to accommodate Ukrainians that could not be sheltered in centres run by the national government. This experience now allows the city to also think creatively when it comes to the accommodation of other groups of refugees, despite ongoing challenges. At the same time, cities are critical of the fact that such temporary accommodation does not constitute a sustainable reception or integration environment.

⁵ In October 2022, the City of Leipzig's Arrival Centre received the 2022 Award for Good Administration. The award for innovative and citizen-centric administration is an initiative of the Public Service Lab and HTW Berlin and stands for more user-friendliness.

⁶ As the competency for sheltering Ukrainian refugees was delegated to the local level in the Netherlands, this led to political tensions where municipalities would or could not provide accommodation spaces. This resulted in a new distribution law (Spreidingswet), where each municipality has to provide a certain number of reception places depending on its size and financial ability, similarly to the Königsberger Schlüssel in Germany.

Impact on integration policies and outcomes

While the impact of the arrival of Ukrainian refugees on local integration outcomes in general will become clearer in the medium to long run, many cities have already reported that this has had an impact on their policies and led to the adjustment of strategies. Moreover, given the volume of arrivals in some cities, other policy fields, such as housing or education, were also implicated.

Berlin reported that its existing local integration policies were complemented by new measures to respond to the arrival of Ukrainians. At the same time, integration outcomes have been affected in the fields of housing, education and access to health services, as many schools and medical practitioners find themselves with limited resources to offer adequate services to refugees, migrants and EU citizens. In addition, Berlin's competitive housing market is very difficult for migrants to enter, a challenge shared by cities across Europe.



However, these challenges reflect structural issues that have only been exacerbated by the arrival of Ukrainian refugees. Similar issues were voiced by **Bristol**, where the arrival of people fleeing the war in Ukraine has led to an adjustment in policies related to housing, education and employment support. Moreover, the local authority has been prompted to reassess existing integration policies and review its strategy for refugees and asylum seekers. Additional pressure on city services already under stress, such as housing, schools, healthcare and residential procedures, was also reported by **Ghent**. This also highlighted the need for a more coordinated local governance structure to respond to high numbers of refugees arriving. At the same time, other cities such as **Leipzig** highlighted that, while housing was one of the main challenges, the majority of Ukrainians were not dependent on accommodation provided by the city. Rather, and especially in comparison to other refugees, Ukrainians have had easier access to the housing market.



The displacement of people from Ukraine led the City Council in **Madrid** to implement a new integration plan for families from the country. The plan included urgent, as well as short- and medium-term measures on the provision of information, counselling, social and health care, education, training and employment. In **Helsinki**, the arrival of Ukrainian refugees and ensuing needs led to the local authority allocating more resources towards initial and basic integration services. And in **Oulu**, the city is planning to incorporate the needs of Ukrainian refugees for the first time in its new integration strategy. In doing so, Oulu pays specific attention to stakeholder participation and promoting inclusion via a human rights-based approach.

Several cities reported that the arrival of Ukrainian refugees led to some fundamental changes in the cooperation between different municipal departments and the structures in place to provide integration services.

For **Bologna**, the management of the reception of Ukrainian refugees has strengthened inter-institutional collaboration. It led to the reactivation of the local management body for the reception system which involves different institutions in the field and can act swiftly based on emerging needs. **Milan** reported on a new agreement with the prefecture concerning the accommodation of Ukrainians. This took the form of a public-public partnership between the two institutional levels of the national government and local authorities to better provide immediate and emergency reception measures. In **Turin**, many municipal services have been increasingly involved in the

management of interventions targeting Ukrainian refugees, specifically to provide information, assistance, reception and social integration. In **Bilbao**, coordination has been strengthened between the Department of Social Policy and the Department of Youth, and there has been participation in multi-level committees with the Regional level (Basque Government) to coordinate the reception of refugees.

Other cities, such as **Athens**, **Vantaa** and **Paris**, reported that the impact of the war in Ukraine on local integration responses has been rather limited. This is both due to smaller numbers of Ukrainians arriving and more difficult challenges faced in relation to other groups of refugees. In the French capital, for instance, social emergency responses to support asylum seekers sheltering in informal urban camps often have to take precedence over more strategic integration support. Other cities such as **Lisbon** highlighted that general integration policies were not changed as they built a completely parallel new support structure to respond to the Ukrainian refugee population.

A recurrent concern for nearly all of the cities included in this report centres around the status of Ukrainian beneficiaries of temporary protection. While the Temporary Protection Directive was set to run out in March 2025, EU member states agreed on extending the legal limit set for this protection status until March 2026.⁷ This extension has generally been welcomed by cities but it still raises questions regarding a more permanent solution for the stay, residence and rights of the millions of Ukrainians settled in European cities.

⁷ Council of the European Union (2024), "Ukrainian refugees: Council extends temporary protection until March 2026". Available at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2024/06/25/ukrainian-refugees-council-extends-temporary-protection-until-march-2026/>

Cities as policymakers

In their role as policymakers, cities agree to three commitments through the Integrating Cities Charter: actively communicating the city's commitment to creating equal opportunities for everyone (Commitment 1); ensuring equal access and non-discrimination across all city policies (Commitment 2); and facilitating engagement from migrant communities in policymaking process and removing barriers to participation (Commitment 3).



Strategic approaches to integration in cities

In 2023, **Oslo's** City Council reaffirmed its commitment to diversity and anti-discrimination through the updated 'Oslo as a city for all' Charter, aligning it with the Integrating Cities Charter and adopting an intersectional approach to diversity. In 2024, the City Council is set to adopt a policy to welcome positive contributions from religious and lifestyle communities.

Dortmund emphasises integration and diversity through several key initiatives, including equal participation of migrants in social, economic, cultural and political life in the city. Dortmund's 'Overall Strategy for New Immigration' focuses on the cooperation between the city administration and welfare organisations in a collaborative and transparent manner. The success factors of this cooperation are the city's responsibility for coordination and the development of a common understanding of problems and solutions, as well as cooperation on an equal footing, reliable structures, transparency and knowledge transfer beyond the logic of

departments and organisations. This strategy, last updated in 2022, includes 13 strategic goals and emphasises migrant organisations' involvement in creating integration action plans. As part of this process, these organisations are consulted in the formulation of the action plans and can contribute their perspectives and expertise.

Tampere's 2022 strategy, 'The City of Action', emphasises equality and active communities, stating a commitment to non-discrimination and successful integration of new residents. In 2023, Tampere introduced a non-discrimination and equality plan as well as a participation and social inclusion plan. These plans are regularly updated and reported by the city's media unit to highlight progress and emphasise equal opportunities.

The **Toronto** Newcomer Strategy 2022-2026 aims to ensure city services are sensitive to newcomers' diverse circumstances and identities. The strategy includes newcomer access plans, which address barriers newcomers face in accessing municipal programmes and services. These plans provide specific recommendations and actions to enhance accessibility for newcomers.

In **Manchester's** Inclusion Strategy (2022-2025), a particular focus was put on fostering an inclusive and cohesive city by promoting diversity, addressing inequalities and ensuring that everyone feels welcome and valued. This is supported by Manchester's approach to equality and diversity, which has as its objectives "knowing Manchester better, improving life chances, and celebrating our diversity".

Utrecht's inclusion strategy for 2024-2033 focuses on equal opportunities in education, health, work, social development and housing. An anti-discrimination strategy is central to accessing these services, as is a contact point where residents can report discrimination. Similarly, **Ghent** recently launched an action plan against racism and discrimination, featuring a campaign with films shot using concealed cameras to show reactions to racist behaviour. This initiative aims to educate and empower both victims and bystanders to respond effectively to hate speech. The city also offers courses on how to react to discriminatory behaviour.

The Local Plan **Bilbao**, Intercultural City has identified four strategic priorities: 1) welcoming, 2) awareness-raising and social advocacy, 3) assistance for migrant groups with greater social vulnerability (migrant women and young people without family references), and 4) participation and interaction. The projects focused on raising awareness and preventing discrimination include the Municipal anti-Rumour Strategy and the SCORE Project against racism, xenophobia and intolerance in sport. SCORE is an initiative supported by the European Commission to create a coalition of European cities and local entities for the promotion of inclusive sport. Moreover, the 'Women, Health and Violence' programme aims to empower vulnerable communities.

Helsinki's landscape of integration strategies, action plans and projects

Helsinki's city strategy 2022-2025 focuses on promoting non-discrimination, equality and human rights and is seen as a strategic and ethical duty of the city. This is evident in various city programmes, plans and principles, including updated accessibility guidelines and participation in UNICEF's child-friendly city process.

The equality and non-discrimination plan for services (2022-2025), adopted by the city board in 2022, has as its objective the equality and non-discrimination of all Helsinki residents and service users regardless of their personal characteristics. It includes 93 measures targeting disadvantaged groups. These measures involve training on anti-racism, inclusive city communications and safer spaces in city-managed facilities such as libraries and youth centres.

The city is also investing in a multilingual communications project that examines the needs, wishes and barriers faced by people speaking minority languages as their first language in communications with the city. The project pilots multilingual services and news content in various channels in order to find the best ways to reach minority-language speakers. Based on the results, the project will draft city-wide language and channel recommendations as well as develop guidelines for multilingual communication.

Helsinki's efforts were recognised when it won third place in the European Capitals of Inclusion and Diversity Awards 2023.



Working with migrant communities to develop policies

Migrant councils and advisory boards play an important role for the integration, representation and political participation of migrants in European cities. As such, they are an instrument that local authorities, as policymakers, can rely on to ensure that policymaking processes are inclusive of the voices of communities that are most affected.

Dusseldorf has established an integration council, comprising councillors and elected migrant representatives, which serves as the political representation for migrants and has the right to make enquiries and proposals to the City Council. All foreigners and naturalised citizens in Dusseldorf are eligible to vote for this council. Since 2023, a member of the Integration Council has had an advisory vote in other council committees, and expert residents from non-EU countries are also appointed as advisors.

Madrid City Council facilitates immigrant participation in public policymaking through several mechanisms. These include a sectoral council on immigration to promote migrants' engagement with policy processes and so-called 'proximity councils' that aim to improve participation processes and debates on the neighbourhood level. Similarly, **Riga's** consultative board on society integration issues, established in 2011, involves non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in integration policy planning and evaluation. Since 2023, the board includes representatives from migrant-led NGOs or organisations representing the interests of newcomers. And the municipal council for interculturality and citizenship in **Lisbon** actively collaborates with migrant associations by organising various forums for exchange.

Munich's migration council, operational since 1974, saw significant support during its 2023 election campaign. The city facilitated information dissemination in 14 languages through various media, enhancing voter outreach. To further strengthen the migration council's administration and visibility, an additional full-time public relations and social media employee was appointed.

In addition to migrant councils and advisory boards, several cities are implementing diverse and effective consultation processes to ensure robust engagement with migrant communities, fostering inclusivity and representation.

Amsterdam is enhancing resident participation through its new participation regulation, which outlines how residents, including migrants, can influence municipal plans and projects from the outset. This regulation has a particular focus on early and continuous involvement rather than just end-stage consultation.

To support this initiative, Amsterdam has introduced a participation workshop, where residents and officials collaborate in sessions to improve participation skills. Additionally, the city works closely with the Amsterdam refugee advisory group to assess and refine integration policies, ensuring they are responsive to the needs and feedback of status holders.

Milan values the role of civil society organisations (CSOs) in combating discrimination and has established a co-designing procedure to partner with these entities. This collaborative approach, initiated in 2021, is leading to the creation of an anti-discrimination plan and an anti-discrimination observatory. The observatory serves as a planning tool for public policies based on empirical evidence, ensuring sustained efforts towards equality and anti-discrimination.

The community connectors project in **Dusseldorf**, launched in 2024 with Eurocities' support, recruits individuals from various migrant communities to gather and represent their views in the city's integration structures. These community connectors are integrated into all phases of the policy cycle, ensuring continuous and meaningful participation in the development and implementation of integration policies.

Stockholm is running the famous 'Neighbourhood Mothers' initiative, where newly arrived women are trained to support and motivate other migrant women in their neighbourhoods. This programme helps newcomers take steps towards education and employment and encourages the enrolment of children in day care to aid their language learning. In 2024, Stockholm plans to pilot a similar project, 'Neighbourhood Sisters', this time targeting younger foreign-born women, further extending support and guidance to facilitate integration.

Vienna's commitment to equal opportunities is exemplified by its integration and diversity monitor, a tool that systematically collects data on the living conditions of residents with migration backgrounds. This monitor helps assess the impact of the city's services, policies and diversity management practices. Vienna also actively engages migrant communities in policymaking through events and dialogue series, such as 'Dein Wien. Deine Stadt' ('Your Vienna. Your City') and 'Community Kommunikator*innen' (Community Communicators), which foster communication and understanding between migrants, the city administration and politicians.

In the Local Immigration Council of **Bilbao**, 29 associations of migrant people participate in the design, execution and evaluation of the municipal policy on immigration and interculturalism. In addition, the Immigration Council promotes projects with their own budget such as the annual recognition of migrant women.



Public commitment to equal opportunities

Several cities across Europe demonstrate strong public commitments to equal opportunities through various innovative practices aimed at fostering inclusivity, equity and integration.

Bristol has renewed its City of Sanctuary commitment, a public-facing statement affirming its dedication to equal opportunities. This renewal involves co-producing strategies with input from experienced experts, ensuring that those directly impacted by policies have a voice in their development. Additionally, Bristol City Council has introduced a new equity and inclusion policy and strategic framework for 2023-2027, explicitly including refugees and asylum seekers. Similarly, **Manchester** is working towards a City of Sanctuary status to publicly commit to creating a culture of welcome, inclusion and empowerment of people seeking sanctuary in the city.

Leipzig is part of the federal 'Demokratie Leben' ('Living Democracy') programme and is implementing the partnership for democracy, 'Leipzig. Place of Diversity', from 2020 to 2024.

This programme promotes civil society actions against inequality and inhumane attitudes while fostering democratic coexistence. It supports activities that enhance civil courage and teach democratic values such as tolerance, dialogue and respect.

Lisbon has significantly invested in its communication plan. The city hosted several events and developed the 'Lisboa Acolhe' web platform to provide resources and information to migrants. This platform and the associated events are part of Lisbon's broader strategy to promote integration and equal opportunities for all residents. In January 2024, **Paris** organised a public event, 'Paris, welcoming and integrating city', to reaffirm its openness and celebrate its diversity. In February 2024, the City Council introduced new measures to support migrant integration, such as creating informative videos about marriage ceremonies in multiple languages, establishing a new reception centre for young migrants, and partnering with the social security fund to improve undocumented migrants' access to medical insurance.

The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the need for effective communication strategies in **Vantaa**, especially among migrant communities. In response, Vantaa translated crucial information into various foreign languages with the help of community members. Despite challenges in translating content into over 120 languages spoken in the city, Vantaa has focused on communication in plain language or simple Finnish. The city published a local newspaper in simple Finnish, delivered free to all households, which received national recognition for its inclusivity.

In 2023, **Bilbao** developed an information campaign on the requirements for exercising the right to vote in local elections for people of foreign origin and EU nationals. Several videos explaining the requirements and encouraging participation were produced to promote the right to political participation of migrant communities.

Cities are increasingly using their role as policymakers in the integration process, demonstrating their commitment through various strategies and actions. In doing so, they rely on integration strategies and action plans, establishing migrant councils and advisory boards, and engaging in targeted consultation processes. These efforts ensure structural involvement of migrants in city decisions, facilitating continuous and meaningful participation, and publicly showcasing a commitment to equal opportunities for all residents. These integration efforts can strengthen local democracy by ensuring diverse community representation and active participation in policymaking processes, fostering a more inclusive and responsive local governance system.

Cities as service providers



The Integrating Cities Charter emphasises the city's responsibilities as a service provider for its residents. This includes commitments such as ensuring equal access to services for migrants – particularly in areas like language learning, housing, employment, health, social care and education (Commitment 4), and making sure that service providers understand and meet the needs of migrants (Commitment 5).

Equal access to services

Signatory cities of the Integrating Cities Charter pledge to be inclusive service providers. This involves taking specific actions to ensure that migrants have equal access to services they are entitled to.

With a clear focus on newcomers, **Bristol** set up an asylum team that provides bespoke services to unaccompanied young asylum seekers, adapting policies based on consultations with the youth to meet their specific needs. Established in 2023, this team offers specialised care, immigration advice, and support in education, employment and healthcare, welcoming unaccompanied minors from various countries.

Dortmund and its municipal services for newcomers and migrants

Dortmund has developed municipal services to improve access for migrants residing in its territory. These services work in an integrated and holistic manner. Firstly, the MigraDo Service Center for Migration and Integration, launched in 2022, provides newcomers with comprehensive guidance on city and non-city services, ensuring they feel welcome and oriented in their new environment. Staffed by city employees, independent welfare organisations and Jobcentre representatives, MigraDo serves newcomers, facilitating a smooth arrival process with minimal friction for new residents, city offices and volunteers. The service is free, with interpreter services available upon request. MigraDo benefitted from insights gained through CONNECTION, an EU-funded project led by Eurocities.⁸ Dortmund participated in mutual learning activities together with Athens, Cluj-Napoca and Stockholm, including site visits to existing one-stop shops that were used as a model by the city to set up its own in February 2022.

Another example is the 'Lokal Willkommen' (Local Welcome) programme that fosters integration through local teams composed of municipal and welfare association specialists. They offer advice on German and integration courses, leisure activities, childcare, education, employment and housing. This programme emphasises the importance of needs-based support and cooperation among all civic actors for successful integration.

⁸ More information about CONNECTION is available at www.integratingcities.eu/projects/connection

In **Berlin**, the Welcome Center provides independent, individual, multilingual, social and legal advice and orientation counselling and it is currently developing digital solutions for potential newcomers and new arrivals in order to improve their access to reliable information.⁹ It also introduced a weekly counselling day on workers' rights, job market orientation and the recognition of certificates and academic degrees. In November 2023, **Milan's** welcome centre¹⁰ signed a memorandum of understanding with UNHCR to expand services for refugees and asylum seekers within the centre, operating as a multifunctional space under the one-stop shop approach. In response to societal changes, **Tampere** focuses on integration through development programmes like the Welcoming City Development initiative¹¹ that aims to attract skilled labour into Tampere's job market, preventing segregation, and support the learning of the Finnish language by migrants. In this programme and others that promote the wellbeing of Tampere's residents, a city's representative is present, emphasising the importance of both hearing the migrants and making services accessible for them.

Similar to the previous reporting period,¹² cities continue to offer services in multiple languages to support migrant communities. For example, **Amsterdam** uses various communication methods, such as WhatsApp, to engage with status holders, while **Bilbao** has an online multilingual resource guide,¹³ available in seven languages to help new families integrate into the Basque education system. **Tampere** emphasises English and simplified Finnish to promote inclusion and tackle segregation, reflecting its multiculturalism. **Vienna** provides multilingual advisory services (such as forms and guidelines in several languages) and has added Ukrainian to its offerings, showcasing its commitment to Ukrainian refugees. All departments recognise the importance of gender-sensitive communication, and most ensure accessible communication for people with migrant backgrounds or any impairments through easy-to-read formats.¹⁴

Cities regularly train their staff to address diversity, including socio-cultural backgrounds, gender and disabilities. **Bologna's** local action plan includes specific courses for its municipal staff to interact with migrant communities.



⁹ More information about Berlin's Welcome Centre is available here: <https://www.berlin.de/willkommenszentrum>

¹⁰ Milan Welcome Centre provides services for newly arrived foreign citizens in Milan including information, guidance, advice on legal status, mobility processes, and social inclusion activities. Moreover, the centre provides information, guidance and advice to the Municipality of Milan, other institutions and organisations in the city. The centre is accessible to everyone, regardless of citizenship, including those without or awaiting residence permits.

¹¹ For more information, please consult <https://www.tampere.fi/en/organisation/tampere-welcoming-city-development-program>

¹² The 5th Integrating Cities report is available at: <https://eurocities.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/5th-Integrating-Cities-Report-2022.pdf>

¹³ Bilbao's multilingual resource guide is available at: https://www.bilbao.eus/cs/Satellite?c=BIO_Servicio_FA&cid=3007514299&language=es&pagename=Bilbaonet%2FBIO_Servicio_FA%2FBIO_Servicio

¹⁴ Vienna's 2023 Diversity Monitor is available at: <https://www.wien.gv.at/english/social/integration/facts-figures/monitoring.html>

Between 2022 and 2023, a mandatory seven-hour training programme on intercultural diversity was conducted for **Bilbao**'s police and security officers focused on understanding the migrants' context and addressing issues faced by young migrants without family support, particularly migrant women and girls in Bilbao. In 2023, **Oslo** renewed the municipality's commitment to diversity and anti-discrimination through the 'Oslo as a city for all' Charter. In the last two years, 31 out of 42 city districts and municipal agencies carried out diversity training for managers and employees. **Vienna** relies on an integration-oriented diversity management approach and relevant teams. For example, the Department for Integration and Diversity offers training by in-house trainers for employees of the City of Vienna, which either take place at Wien-Akademie (the further training institution of the City of Vienna) or take the form of in-house events tailored to the needs of participants.

To access services, knowledge of the national language for migrants is paramount. Support to learn the national language is reportedly needed by migrants, and cities go beyond national legislation to provide migrants with access to language courses. For example, the regional government of Flanders in Belgium recently introduced a policy requiring migrants to pay for civic orientation and language courses, but **Ghent** subsidises these costs to ensure accessibility. Germany is piloting German language support for vocational trainees, coupled with social counselling. **Munich** offers similar language support alongside state programmes.

Tampere's Mainio, a multilingual information service, provides guidance in 14 languages and more with interpreters, free of charge and accessible without an appointment on certain days. Mainio also fosters collaboration, linguistic accessibility and anti-racism efforts in partnership with local NGOs and integration networks.

Access to housing remains a significant challenge for migrants, leading cities to provide specialised support, such as professional housing search assistance and public aid. For example, **Athens** faces challenges with homelessness but coordinates with NGOs and UNHCR to offer temporary accommodation. Affordable housing is a major challenge in Ghent too.

The city funds a civil society organisation that employs a professional 'house searcher' to help refugees find suitable housing. **Malmö**'s Labour Market and Social Service Department successfully provided housing for all Ukrainian refugees assigned to the city in accordance with the Temporary Protection Directive. In addition, Malmö offered support and advice to the target group to move on to their own accommodation, whenever possible.

Cities reported critical issues with labour market integration, especially for newcomers, in the last two years. To promote access to jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities, cities, such as Athens and Riga, organised job fairs or entrepreneurial classes on business creation for migrants.

Athens collaborated with other Greek cities and universities, such as Panteion University, through the Cities Network for Integration to address workforce mobility needs. A relevant survey by Athens' Panteion University was published in 2022, mapping obstacles and challenges for migrants and refugees.

Riga focused mainly on facilitating employment for Ukrainian citizens. Between 2022 and 2023, the Support Centre for Ukrainian Residents organised 24 job fairs, attracting thousands of visitors and ensuring that over 700 Ukrainians secured a job. To foster economic development, **Bilbao** supports business creation and job growth, particularly through the Bilbao Ekintza Entrepreneurship Centre (BIG Bilbao), which offers guidance and business courses for entrepreneurs.

In **Helsinki**, a pilot programme (2022-2024) run by public employment services targeted stay-at-home parents, offering part-time language courses with childcare. This programme, which will become permanent in 2025 (when public employment services will be transferred to the local level), sees the city and state employment services acting as coordinators and providers of these services. Cooperation with public employment services and the private sector was also deemed important by **Toronto**. The Mentoring Partnership is a collaboration with the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC) and its network of community-based settlement agencies. The initiative matches internationally educated professionals with staff from across the City of Toronto in similar professional roles to help ease the transition of newcomers into the local labour market.

In education, **Ghent**'s EDINA platform, an EU-funded project,¹⁵ supports teachers with newcomer students through a toolkit, ensuring a robust support network for unaccompanied minors, and increasing class availability for Ukrainian refugees. **Helsinki** enhances teachers' language awareness with a permanent multilingual advisors model in early childhood and basic education. Efforts continue to improve educational paths and study guidance for immigrant students, particularly at the upper secondary level.

¹⁵ More information on the EDINA platform is available here: <https://edinaplatform.eu/en/edina>



Making sure migrants' needs are understood

With the aim of improving access to services for migrants and vulnerable groups, cities continue to closely collaborate with civil society to gather information on migrants' needs and ensure consistent service standards across all providers.

Cities continued to report close and strategic cooperation with civil society to better respond to migrants' needs. Since late 2023, **Amsterdam's** partnership with the Newcomers Network Amsterdam has focused on holistic newcomer integration beyond language education and employment. This coalition of diverse organisations aligns efforts to support the new Integration Act's goals, fostering societal participation. The network emphasises tailored solutions and collaboration. It faces precarious funding but continues to advocate for sustainable financial support to ensure newcomers feel genuinely welcome and integrated.

Bristol is renowned for its proactive approach to supporting refugees and migrants, proudly holding the title of a City of Sanctuary since 2011. The Refugee Resettlement Team aids resettled refugees and asylum seekers by providing specialised advice and assistance with housing, welfare benefits, education, employment and healthcare services, in partnership with Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations.¹⁶

In **Malmö**, parental support courses and counselling through family centres reached more newly arrived and foreign-born parents, leading to increased participation in preventive support programmes. A particular focus has been on interventions for foreign-born women, including those on parental leave, and young foreign-born individuals through outreach work with civil society. The administration has also launched a strategy to rebuild trust in social services, particularly within migrant communities. This includes Dialogsocionomer (Social Workers in Dialogue), aimed at improving communication and understanding of social services.

Milan works closely with NGOs and civil society organisations to develop and implement services and intervention projects for newly arrived foreign citizens. In July 2023, Milan launched a public call to identify civil society organisations for co-planning and co-designing the city's reception and integration system. In addition, the city established partnerships for a project focused on case and network management for international protection beneficiaries in the SAI system.¹⁷ This aimed to consolidate case management with a multidisciplinary approach and extend the model to unaccompanied minors, addressing their specific needs. The goal was to create structured partnerships for integrated public-private territorial interventions, some developed through the Milan Welcome Centre's one-stop-shop approach. Daily contact with NGOs working with migrants also ensures that **Paris** remains informed and responsive to migrants' needs.

Cities reported on studies and innovative methods used to collect information about migrant communities' needs, and to review their municipal services.

¹⁶ More information on Bristol's partnership with VCSE is available at <https://www.voscur.org/partnership/strategy-and-relationships>

¹⁷ SAI stands for *Sistema Accoglienza e Integrazione* (Reception and Integration System), the Italian public system for the reception and integration of asylum seekers, refugees and unaccompanied foreign minors.

More and more, cities are using co-design and other participatory methods to ensure that migrant voices are heard and included from the early research stages.

Through the UNITES project, **Bologna** wanted to review and strengthen the work of its city education services, and critically involve migrants in an evaluative process in the framework of the municipal Local Action Plan. The city established an audit panel that included people working in the services under review (colleagues from the city administration and the six city districts responsible for these educational services), as well as six residents of Bologna with a migrant background, recruited through an open call for their diversity of experience and interest in the topic. They were joined by three of the city's five 'diversity managers' – a new type of voluntary consultant role that Bologna established in 2023 to advise the mayor on human rights and anti-discrimination issues and make the link between city services and civil society. The full audit panel's recommendations will be ready in September 2024 and will be used to revise the aforementioned services. This review will also serve as a pilot for other departments and services.

Over recent years, **Ghent** has been using methods like the 'customer journey' and 'life event scan,' to evaluate its services from the citizen's perspective using several criteria such as literacy, financial means and digital skills. These approaches help identify and mitigate barriers users might face. The 'process walk', another innovative method, involves volunteers navigating city services while being observed and recorded to highlight usability issues. Based on these observations, services are adjusted for better accessibility.

Amsterdam conducted research on the accessibility of social infrastructure facilities, such as neighbourhood rooms, community centres, youth centres and playgrounds, focusing also on the municipality's awareness of their accessibility status, particularly for vulnerable residents. The research assessed the effectiveness of the measures taken by the city to improve access to these services. Similarly, **Paris** conducts studies on migrant needs and situations, such as access to prefectures,¹⁸ homeless migrant families' needs, and climate migration. These studies help the city adapt its services accordingly.

In 2023, **Vantaa** commissioned a study on Finnish language training accessibility in the city to gather data about the different training possibilities. The study showed how difficult it is for migrants in the city to find information about language support. Following the study's results, the city is looking into ways to strengthen the offer of language courses. In **Vienna**, over two-thirds of city departments conducted customer surveys in 2023, with more than 90% using staff feedback and complaint management systems to analyse customer needs.

In the reporting period, cities have particularly focused on newcomers to ensure early integration. As outlined in previous sections, several cities are relying on one-stop shops or welcome points to provide migrants with access to multiple resources from a single point of entry. Additionally, cities offer services in various languages spoken by the migrant community, supported by multilingual city staff. There seems to be an increased focus on training municipal staff to be more aware of the diversity of their population.

¹⁸ French prefectures are the office, jurisdiction, territory or official residence of a prefect. The prefect is the head of a police force, a representative of the national government at local level. This is usually where migrants go and get their residence permits in France (and other European countries).



Cities as employers

The cities that have signed the Integrating Cities Charter have committed to three key principles in their role as employers: taking steps where required to reflect the city's diversity in the composition of the administration's workforce across all staffing levels (Commitment 6); ensuring that all staff, including staff with a migrant background, experience fair and equal treatment by their managers and colleagues (Commitment 7); and ensuring that staff understand and respect diversity and equality issues (Commitment 8).

Inclusive recruitment and representation

An inclusive and diverse workforce begins with an inclusive recruitment process. By implementing targeted strategies and action plans, cities can systematically address barriers and promote a workforce that is representative and inclusive at all levels.

For instance, **Bristol** has introduced a new Equity and Inclusion Policy and Strategic Framework for 2023-27, aiming to cultivate an inclusive, high-performing and motivated workforce that reflects the demographics of the city. The city has also established an Equalities Monitoring process to identify and address any employment inequalities and service delivery disparities. Similarly, in 2023, **Oslo** adopted an action plan to enhance the recruitment of managers and employees from minority backgrounds. In line with these efforts, **Leipzig** and **Rotterdam**, like other cities, are appointing a Diversity Manager or Chief Diversity Officer to strengthen their strategic approach to diversity as employers.

Strategic frameworks, like that of **Oslo**, often include measurable representation goals to ensure workforces – including managerial positions and municipal boards – reflect the diversity of their populations, thereby promoting accountability. For example, **Ghent's** Framework for a Diverse and Inclusive HR Policy (2021-2025) includes 80 measures and a target for at least 30% of new employees to have a migration background, a goal that the city has recently achieved. **Munich** similarly aims to match the proportion of employees with a migrant background to that of the overall population. In **Berlin**, the revised Participation Act aims to make the public administration a more attractive and permeable employer for people with a migration background. The Senate Department for Integration is currently surveying public employees to determine the accessibility of the Berlin public administration for people with a migration background.

Some recruitment strategies include a specific focus on senior-level positions. Employees from minority backgrounds often have less access to professional development, mentorship and networks that facilitate career advancement. Furthermore, historical and systemic inequities may result in disparities in education and professional experience among these groups. For instance, **Rotterdam** is taking steps to diversify the top levels of its organisation by developing new recruitment methods and programmes on inclusive leadership. Additionally, several cities, such as **Munich** and **Tampere**, emphasise the importance of diversity among staff in the educational sector, particularly in early childhood education, to better reflect the diverse student and child population they serve.

More diverse managers in Oslo

Oslo, a city with a diverse population representing over 200 nationalities, has developed an action plan to ensure its municipal workforce and leadership reflect this diversity, particularly focusing on increasing representation of individuals with migrant backgrounds from outside Europe. The plan addresses four main challenges and outlines specific measures to overcome them.

- Increasing ownership and concrete actions among top management and governing bodies. Measures include setting sector-specific targets for the representation of leaders with migrant backgrounds from outside Europe, ensuring at least 25% of new board members appointed by the municipality come from these backgrounds, and communicating the importance of diversity to top and middle managers.
- Professionalising the recruitment process to prevent declining representation of these candidates during selection. Measures involve training managers in diversity recruitment, offering similar training to trade unions, and requiring a justification in selection processes where the representation of candidates with a stated migrant background is lower among successful candidates than among applicants for the position.
- Encouraging more candidates with migrant backgrounds from outside Europe to apply for management positions. To address this, the municipality will develop a communication strategy to promote itself as an employer committed to reflecting the city's diverse population, tailor job advertisements to attract candidates from these backgrounds, and ensure that recruitment agencies incorporate a diversity perspective in their processes.
- Expanding the search base for board recruitment to include more candidates with migrant backgrounds. This will be achieved by setting diversity requirements for recruitment agencies involved in board member selection.

Through these efforts, Oslo aims to create a more inclusive and representative municipal workforce.

Various tools support inclusive recruitment efforts. To promote equal opportunities, **Stockholm** uses a competency-based recruitment method that focuses on matching the skills of applicants with the needs of the city. Similarly, several cities utilise anonymous recruitment to combat discrimination against jobseekers with foreign-sounding names. **Oulu**, for instance, reports making significant progress since 2022 when the city updated its employee diversity, non-discrimination and equity policy to include anonymous recruitment, with managers trained to implement it successfully. **Helsinki** and **Tampere** also report using anonymous recruiting to promote equality, focusing on the education, skills and experience of applicants. Additionally, offering internships in the public sector – often coupled with language courses – is another tool used in **Dortmund**, **Leipzig**, **Paris**, **Tampere** and **Utrecht** to support inclusive recruitment and set up young professionals with a migration background for a career in the public administration. **Nuremberg** and **Leipzig** also offer support to people with a migration background to help them prepare for the requirements of the application process. In **Vienna**, many city departments and public institutions take deliberate recruitment measures to increase the share of staff of foreign origin, such as including specific language skills in job profiles and emphasising the need for diversity skills.

Active outreach is also crucial.

Dortmund targets young people with a migrant background through campaigns to promote public sector internships and increase migrant representation in the administration. This includes, for example, participation in job fairs and cooperation with schools and organisations in the area of school-to-work transition. Similarly, **Leipzig** actively promotes itself as an employer to diverse communities by creating networking opportunities, co-creating events with migrant-led local initiatives, and participating in local job fairs.

Finally, cities have made structural adjustments to support a more inclusive recruitment process. In 2023, **Munich** intensified the cooperation between the city's HR department and the Advisory Service for Recognition of Foreign Qualifications to encourage those seeking recognition of their professional degrees to consider public sector employment. The goal is to tap into the potential of this pool of qualified individuals for city administration roles. Similarly, in **Dusseldorf**, recruitment procedures now involve the Office for Equality and Anti-Discrimination, which is attached to the Mayor's office, to ensure fairness and equality in hiring practices.

Several cities, including **Bilbao** and **Milan**, reported that legal constraints remain a significant challenge for cities attempting to diversify their workforces, as public servant positions are legally reserved for nationals (Bilbao) or limited to individuals with a permanent residence permit (Milan). To overcome that obstacle, cities often hire workers on temporary contracts, especially for front-office roles requiring cultural mediators, interpreters and intercultural communication experts. In **Athens**, the Multaka project employed individuals with a refugee or migrant background as intercultural guides through temporary contracts. The initiative aimed to guide refugees and migrants through Athens' archaeological sites and museums while providing employment opportunities based on their unique cultural experiences and language skills.

Additionally, changing mindsets, work culture and behaviour remains a major hurdle, as fostering intercultural openness and promoting inclusion may be met with resistance and require awareness at all levels.

Ensuring fair and equal treatment and promoting understanding

Creating an inclusive workplace requires both fair treatment and a deep understanding of diversity issues. Ensuring that all employees feel respected and valued is essential for fostering a positive work environment. By implementing protocols and codes of conduct, cities can lay the groundwork for fair and equal treatment. Additionally, raising awareness through campaigns and training programmes helps promote understanding and acceptance among staff.

The ‘**Dusseldorf** Values and Expertise Model’, implemented in 2020, outlines fundamental values and competences for all employees. It emphasises diversity, equal opportunities, respect and appreciation.

These principles are reviewed during selection processes and serve as the basis for performance-related pay. In 2023, **Leipzig** adopted internal collaboration and leadership guidelines that require fair and equal treatment. These guidelines are frequently communicated to employees and managers, with strong leadership commitment throughout the organisation. Any deviation from these standards can be reported to the Human Resources department, the staff Council or the Equal Opportunities Officer. Similarly, in **Turin**, the Guarantee Committee for Equal Opportunity, Employee Well-being and Non-discrimination at Work (CUG) oversees all forms of discrimination related to recruitment, working conditions, professional training, promotions and safety within the city administration.

Awareness campaigns are also crucial for promoting a culture of inclusivity. As part of a broader campaign coordinated by Finland’s Ministry of Justice, **Oulu**’s City Council declared the city a non-discrimination zone. This includes displaying signs and notices and training staff to handle discrimination cases. The non-discrimination zone concept has been extended to city employees to promote a culture of inclusivity within the city administration. **Paris** remains committed to its professional equality and diversity certification process, which includes surveys, training programmes and awareness campaigns against racism and workplace discrimination. This initiative aims to identify and address areas of discrimination within the municipal workforce. In **Ghent**, the city has partnered with specialists to develop a comprehensive internal communication strategy focused on diversity, inclusion and related actions. This strategy aims to inform employees and raise awareness of diversity and equality issues within the city workforce.

Regular employee satisfaction surveys and feedback mechanisms, like those put in place in **Amsterdam**, **Toronto** and **Rotterdam** are essential for assessing the need for and effectiveness of diversity initiatives. In 2023, **Helsinki** conducted an anonymous personnel survey on gender equality and non-discrimination in the workplace. The responses to the survey helped to develop an improved action plan against workplace harassment and discrimination, including better training and education for personnel. In **Malmö**, the HR department leads on the ‘Skills Supply by Reflecting Malmö’ project, which is funded by the European Social Fund and aims to promote diversity through strategic recruitment and creating an organisation free from discrimination. Among other aspects, the project examines the conditions and opportunities for career advancement and determines whether they differ for various target groups.

Since the last Integrating Cities Report in 2022, cities have increased their investment in training and awareness initiatives. However, most of these initiatives remain voluntary. **Helsinki** offers extensive virtual training programmes on equality and non-discrimination themes, which include interactive group discussions. Similar to **Madrid**, **Nuremberg** provides intercultural and anti-discriminatory training for its staff. In 2023, **Riga** organised a training for its employees who are working with newcomers or could potentially do so in the future. The training, which was attended by 29 employees of the municipality, included topics such as migration, diversity management and intercultural dialogue at its core.



In **Toronto**, in an effort to continue developing their leadership skills, managers are required to complete an e-learning module on 'Human Rights and Workplace Harassment Essentials for Management' followed by a virtual instructor-led training called 'Human Rights Essentials for Managers'. To help staff further their learning and apply these learnings to their work, several resources have been developed such as the 'Fostering Inclusive Workplace Toolkit'. The toolkit was designed to support employees and managers to learn, reflect and engage in dialogue on how to foster inclusive workplaces that are supportive to all staff, with particular consideration given to reconciliation, equity, human rights and psychological safety.

Leipzig's HR Development & Learning offers numerous staff training opportunities focused on diversity and intercultural competencies. Starting in 2024, 25 different diversity and equality-related training sessions, ranging from one to three days, have been made available to employees, supported by a three-day paid educational leave that can be used for that purpose.

The trends highlighted above indicate a strong commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion among signatory cities which increasingly report developing local action plans, strategies or frameworks to formalise their efforts towards a more diverse workforce. However, further action is needed to ensure these initiatives translate into lasting and meaningful change.

Frameworks should incorporate robust monitoring systems and measurable representation goals to be able to track progress and identify areas for improvement. Training programmes on diversity and inclusion are crucial but should be mandatory to ensure widespread participation and impact and to overcome potential resistance. Tools like anonymous recruitment should be further explored and standardised across city departments if proven effective. Additionally, and importantly, cities must continue to engage with local communities to ensure their diversity strategies reflect the needs and realities of the populations they serve, and to enable them to adapt to evolving diversity goals.



Cities as contractors of goods and services

Cities take the lead in applying diversity strategies that honour and celebrate differences, while purchasing a wide range of goods and services. The sections below report on the commitment of signatory cities – as buyers of goods and services – towards the application of principles of diversity and equality. As such, they correspond to the final three commitments of the Integrating Cities Charter: applying principles of equality and diversity in procurement and tendering (Commitment 9); promoting equality and diversity amongst contractors (Commitment 10); and fostering the development of a diverse supplier base (Commitment 11).

Making procurement and tendering more accessible

In several cities, public procurement practices are heavily influenced by national policies, which dictate the frameworks and regulations that must be followed. Among them are **Athens, Bologna, Lisbon** and **Milan**. Many other cities show their commitment towards socially responsible and equally accessible procurement and tendering, such as **Bristol**. In 2023, the city implemented an equity and inclusion strategic framework aimed at ensuring fairness and inclusivity in its tenders, creating opportunities for businesses from diverse backgrounds to participate.

As part of this strategy, Bristol includes specific equality and diversity criteria in its procurement procedures, prioritising activities that tackle poverty and multi-generational inequality. Additionally, Bristol requires potential suppliers to provide evidence of their efforts to support underrepresented groups. The city carries out equality impact assessments for all important decisions and ensures all service providers are committed to equality and inclusion. Their progress is monitored by external audits and reports. Equality and diversity are also an integral part of **Madrid's** public contracting policy. The city includes specific social clauses in its local procurement mechanisms, which directly impacts all contractors willing to provide a service or implement projects on behalf of the city. Social clauses are a mandatory element

to include in all contracts executed by the City Council as they guarantee the integration of vulnerable groups into the labour market, with a focus on people in a situation of social exclusion. The city also includes evaluation measures in its tenders to ensure that social requirements are met.

Specific clauses targeting vulnerable groups are also included in **Paris'** procurement procedures with the aim of integrating long-term unemployed people. In addition, the city reports that all its tenders lasting more than three years are evaluated through a diversity survey, which contractors send while applying. This is a way for the municipality to ensure applicants promote diversity and fight against discrimination. Like Madrid and Paris, **Bilbao** actively promotes socially responsible strategic public procurement by including specific social criteria in contractual offers. The city reports that its 2022 and 2023 annual call for grants for associations and organisations in the city incorporates interculturality as a criterion to evaluate applicants. The city ensures that selected projects include dimensions of cultural diversity and address aspects related to migrants' and refugees' inclusion in Bilbao.

Additionally, projects must align with non-discrimination principles and incorporate elements that promote diversity, such as implementing an intercultural communication strategy.

Between 2020 and 2022, **Leipzig** developed a local action plan aimed at fair procurement. In this context, the topics of development partnerships, migration and sustainable economic development were taken into account. Within its 2021-2025 city strategy, **Helsinki** highlights equality, non-discrimination, strong social cohesion, and open, inclusive ways of operating. Both Helsinki and Amsterdam have published specific guidelines to ensure equality and diversity in procurement and tendering.

In 2024, **Turin** updated its regulations concerning public procurement, limiting participation in certain tenders to organisations and companies pursuing social and professional integration of vulnerable groups. For their application to be considered valid, these organisations must have at least 30% of their staff belonging to categories at risk of social exclusion.

The Amsterdam approach to social return

In Amsterdam, contractors must include a social contribution alongside the products, services or work they provide. This is called 'social return' and the city has a dedicated service in charge of it. The 'Social Return Bureau' acts as an advisor and connector linking contractors, implementing parties and the municipality. It has expertise in social purchasing and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Involved in all the stages of public procurement, the bureau cooperates with various departments of the city involved in the procurement processes, from tender drafting to evaluation following the implementation.

- When preparing tenders, the social return bureau advises applicants on how to incorporate 'social return' ad hoc.
- As part of CSR, as soon as contractors are awarded the contract, they must contact the social return bureau within seven days to discuss how they plan to implement 'social return'. This process is documented and included in the contract between the municipality and the contractor.

- During the implementation period, the bureau assists contractors by identifying potential obstacles. The bureau monitors activities via an online platform where contractors report their efforts and costs. This support helps contractors avoid failing to meet 'social return' obligations, which could result in financial penalties.
- Once the assignment is completed, the social return bureau evaluates whether the 'social return' obligation has been met as expected and with what impact or social added value. This is a chance for them to gather feedback and incorporate the lessons learned in future procurements.

Amsterdam has created a guide to social contracting to ensure the accessibility of these opportunities for vulnerable residents.

Promoting equality and diversity amongst contractors

Cities have implemented procurement policies to foster diversity, inclusion and equity among their contractors, leveraging their role as major buyers to achieve social benefits.

Since 2016, **Toronto** has been driving inclusive economic growth in the city by providing increasing access to municipal procurement for people experiencing economic disadvantage, discrimination or barriers to equal opportunities. Toronto's programme provides equal access to its procurement processes to a diverse range of suppliers, ensuring aboriginal people, racial minorities and newcomers have equitable access to such opportunities. As of 2023, the city has awarded 78 projects that include social procurement requirements.

As a part of **Amsterdam's** 'social return' policy (see text box 5), which fosters a more inclusive labour market, the city creates employment and training opportunities, ensuring work experience placements and internships for people facing barriers to employment and vulnerable residents. Similarly, **Manchester** is committed to reducing poverty and promoting social justice through economic development plans to uplift marginalised communities. **Bilbao** has developed its policies towards inclusive economic growth. Through its 'Responsible Public Procurement' instrument, Bilbao incorporates social clauses that ensure the diversification of suppliers.

In **Stockholm**, the city's overarching programme mandates ethical considerations, fair employment conditions and inclusive labour market measures. The employment contract terms include social clauses that protect vulnerable workers from 'social dumping' (the practice of employers using cheaper labour to save money and increase profits), while ensuring more people have the chance to access the labour market.

Cities are increasingly becoming global actors. Some of them are engaged in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) while linking sustainability, fair working conditions, equitable trade relationships, and social and environmental standards. Sustainability has an important social dimension, for which cities act as advocates.

Dusseldorf is one of them. By 2030, the city aims to procure as many products as possible that meet sustainability criteria. Dusseldorf's sustainable products are becoming a new standard in procurement and the city's standards take into account the products themselves as well as their manufacture and provision. The municipal budget for 2025 will be converted to a 'sustainability budget'.

Dortmund is also committed to meeting sustainability standards, with a focus on social responsibility and global justice. The city's procurement regulations require that social and ecological impact are considered when making purchases. This includes promoting contractors that employ long-term unemployed people, workshops for people with disabilities, and inclusive companies that promote equality. Dortmund's public procurement principles include specific requirements such as competition, transparency, the requirement to consider



the interests of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and equal treatment. This approach ensures diversity among contractors as it ensures SMEs always have the chance to participate and can be awarded contracts.

Building on the values and objectives of the SDGs, some cities are aligned with the principles of fair trade, which promotes economic, social and environmental integration while ensuring equity and decent work conditions for everyone. **Leipzig** has been a 'Fair Trade Town' since 2011, while **Madrid** includes fair trade as a clause in its public contracts. Likewise, **Bilbao** prioritises ethical values by integrating social responsibility criteria into its contracts, including the supply or use of fair trade products. Taking action in this regard, **Dortmund** joined the 'Charta Faire Metropole Ruhr 2030' in December 2022. This commitment signifies the city's dedication to promoting sustainable procurement and fair trade. Notably, this includes raising awareness on this topic, especially among young people, and youths with migrant and refugee backgrounds.



Fostering the development of a diverse supplier base

To ensure diversity among suppliers, cities invest considerable efforts into developing specific criteria to build their supplier base. Every month, **Toronto's** 'Social Procurement Programme' compiles a list of certified diverse suppliers. These are defined as businesses that are predominantly owned, managed and controlled by a majority of individuals from equity-seeking communities.¹⁹ Toronto has taken steps to ensure diverse suppliers can access competitive procurement opportunities. For this purpose, the city requires its staff to invite at least one of the suppliers included in the list to submit quotations as part of a three-quotation process. Thanks to these instruments, between 2022 and 2023, Toronto awarded over C\$2.6 million in contracts to certified diverse suppliers.

Cities are increasingly intertwining their efforts to foster a diverse supplier base with robust measures against racism, ensuring that their procurement practices promote equality and inclusion. For instance, thanks to **Oslo's** 'Words Matter' action plan, the municipality will mandate that businesses and other partners adhere to non-discriminatory practices. Similarly, **Paris** is committed to a socially responsible purchasing policy, using procurement and tendering as tools to combat discrimination and inequalities.

Building on the commitment to combat discrimination and foster inclusion through procurement, cities are also implementing innovative projects to achieve these goals.

A prime example is **Vantaa**. The city's work to promote a diverse supplier base has been enhanced through the SMILE project, which is funded under a wider agreement between the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB) and the EU. This project includes a focus on employment, which has connected migrant-led NGOs with municipal employment services. Together, they have developed, implemented and evaluated a pilot procurement model for job coaching for migrants and their families. Given the great impact of the initiative, Vantaa's innovative partnership model now involves migrant-led NGOs to deliver employment services for migrants. To ensure the sustainability of this initiative, part of the 2025 municipal budget aims to cover a job coaching procurement model for the employment and integration services.

As cities and their leadership increasingly partake in global governance, their role as buyers of goods and services gains greater significance. Their growing alignment with the SDGs and commitment to equality in public procurement and policy measures highlight cities' efforts to combat social exclusion and discrimination. In the past two reporting years, cities have made significant strides towards fostering inclusivity and celebrating diversity. Despite these advancements, many cities face challenges due to the lack of continuous funding, which hampers their ability to sustain these efforts. Acting as accountable contractors, cities are pivotal in shaping equitable and inclusive economies. By embedding diversity and social value into their procurement policies, cities promote fair business practices, support vulnerable groups and address systemic inequalities. This leadership fosters more inclusive societies, ensuring that the benefits of economic activities are widely shared, and underscoring cities' role as catalysts for social innovation.

¹⁹ An equity-seeking community comprises groups facing discrimination or barriers to equal opportunity, including women, persons with disabilities, newcomers, LGBTQIA+ individuals, visible minorities/ racialised people, and other historically underrepresented groups.

Conclusion

Cities continue to be key stakeholders in the integration of migrants and refugees at the local level, steering policies for open and inclusive societies, making their services accessible, and driving inclusion in their roles as employers and contractors of people with a migrant background. Within this ecosystem, the last Integrating Cities Report, published in autumn 2022, pondered the Covid-19 pandemic's impact on public health and the socio-economic prospects of local societies. With respect to the war in Ukraine and the arrival of considerable numbers of refugees fleeing the country, the last report stated: "The impact on social services at the local level will be felt for years to come, and cities urgently need additional financial support to cope with these developments."

Two years later, these words ring loud and clear. With more than 6 million refugees from Ukraine settled in Europe, cities once more face a considerable challenge. Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, local authorities have invested enormous financial resources and human energy to ensure that Ukrainians have not just found facilities to shelter, but new places to call home. This effort, which would not have been possible without the commitment of citizens, diaspora, migrant-led and non-governmental organisations, has changed cities in a multitude of complex ways.

At the same time, cities have repeated countless times their call for non-discriminatory, equal access to rights and protection for all refugees in Europe, aiming to ensure that all refugees, regardless of their origins and identity, no matter the colour of their skin, their gender, sexual orientation or religion, are receiving the same right to protection.²⁰

Going forward, this message will be confronted with a changing landscape of asylum, migration and border management policies brought about by the EU's New Pact on Migration and Asylum and ongoing global developments. This will have a clear impact on integration prospects and outcomes at the local level, which cities will have to face as main integration stakeholders. Cities, therefore, continue to call for a strong European Union based on the values of humanity and inclusion and where diverse societies can prosper in dignity.

²⁰ Eurocities (2022), "Caring Cities: Acting in solidarity with all refugees". Available at: https://eurocities.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Eurocities-Statement-on-Caring-cities-and-solidarity-with-all-refugees_final.pdf

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