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## VALUES PROJECT - CONCEPT NOTE

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More than ever in the context of the current refugee situation, European city leaders and decision makers need pragmatic, relevant and practical advice to address migrant integration challenges and develop effective migrant integration strategies to help reap the potential of immigration.

The **VALUES** (*Volunteering Activities to Leverage Urban and European Social integration of migrants*) project will help to share the crucial lessons learned in this process at local level, and replicate good and proven practices in cities willing to build their capacity on this topic. It will also endeavour to build the capacity of volunteer groups through contacts and exchanges with similar actors across Europe. It responds to the second priority of the AMIF call for proposal (**Community building at local level for integration including through volunteering activities**) from the angle of local authorities.

**VALUES** will be a continuation of the [ImpleMentoring project](#) and of the [CITIES GROW project](#). It will be built on the experience gathered using the mentoring methodology which these projects successfully developed, tested and improved. It will, however, introduce a new way of working with additional methodological elements. The first one is gathering cities around “**communities of practice**”, so that they can exchange, learn and implement changes together through a series of mentoring visits. The second new element is a scheme of city staff and volunteer exchanges aiming to improve the coordination and build capacity between cities and local volunteer networks for the integration of migrants and refugees.

The civil society response across Europe has been large-scale and reactive since the start of the so defined ‘refugee crisis’ in September 2015. When pictures were published in the European media of residents welcoming refugees in Munich and Vienna, many city authorities were contacted by volunteers keen to help. Volunteers have donated material goods such as clothes, toys and food, provided shelter and language courses, and offered help with medical appointments and administrative procedures. On the other hand, volunteering has played a role in enhancing the integration of third-country nationals, migrants or refugees, in the hosting society. Volunteering help the individual to connect with the locals and integrate into the hosting community by contributing in social activities with their engagement.

Over the course of the last two years, many cities have learned to work with volunteers and have built effective strategies to tap into this energy to foster better integration of newcomers and complement city governments’ activities. Evidence from EURO CITIES’ 2017 report on labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers<sup>1</sup> has shown that volunteering plays an important role in developing skills, supporting job-searching and vocational orientation. Volunteer and civil society organisations are key stakeholders for cities in welfare service provision helping to tackle changes and to provide better tailored service to residents. More generally, civil society is important for cities to invest on their ‘social capital’. There is a need to progress in this field: experience of cities in using organising/ coordinating volunteers is limited. Also, increasing the capacity of cities to make use of volunteering activities in migrant integration helps building cohesive communities, fostering city life and keeping a healthy and strong democracy.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Available at: [http://nws.eurocities.eu/MediaShell/media/Labour\\_market\\_integration\\_of\\_refugees\\_and\\_asylum\\_seekers.pdf](http://nws.eurocities.eu/MediaShell/media/Labour_market_integration_of_refugees_and_asylum_seekers.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> See the comparative analysis: Voluntary and citizens’ initiatives before and after 2015: <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/intdossier/comparative-analysis-voluntary-and-citizens-initiatives-before-and-after-2015>



The **VALUES** project will be coordinated by EURO CITIES with the support of **MigrationWork** and the **European Volunteer Centre (CEV)**, and will involve the active participation of 16 major cities in Europe: Amsterdam, Bristol, Brno, Cesena, Dusseldorf, Madrid, Nuremberg, Oslo, Ostend, Riga, Sheffield, Terrassa, Thessaloniki, Toulouse, Turin and Zurich.

The project is expected to start in February 2019 and will last two years.

VALUES addresses the need to exchange know-how, expertise and good practices between cities and volunteer networks at transnational level on how to best transfer and **implement concrete local actions** to successfully integrate third country nationals and beneficiaries of international protection in European cities.

**VALUES** will also contribute to address implementation gaps of the EURO CITIES [Integrating Cities Charter](#) commitments by providing **catered advice and peer-support to cities**. It will mostly cover the role of cities as Service Providers, as detailed in the Integrating Cities Charter:

*As service providers we will:*



Support equal access for migrants to services to which they are entitled, particularly access to language learning, housing, employment, health, social care and education;

Ensure that migrants' needs are understood and met by service providers.

VALUES will aim at developing **4 new mentoring schemes** on the following themes:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>A. Community building in cities to foster a welcoming culture</b></li><li><b>B. Innovative voluntary activities in integration: engaging migrants and refugees in volunteering activities for integration</b></li><li><b>C. Cities and volunteer cooperation in migrant integration at neighbourhood (or “community”) level</b></li><li><b>D. Mobilising volunteers to engaging young migrant population in community life</b></li></ul> |
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The key objective of the project is to ensure **transferability of results and long-term policy and practice impact in cities through city-to-city mentoring**. We see the mentoring visits run by each community of practice as a **catalyst for change** and as a **unique opportunity** for cities to benefit from expertise, targeted advice and recommendations by peers. Each mentoring visit will be connected to the volunteer exchange scheme among cities: the visit will help setting up and improving the scheme, whilst the findings from the exchanges will feed into the work of the cities during the visits and complement the benchmarks.