

# Being & Belonging: Young People's Policy Proposals to promote migrant solidarity



These policy proposals were developed as part of the Erasmus+ funded 'Being and Belonging' youth project.  
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## Introduction.

With over 26 million refugees in Europe, based on UNHCR data<sup>1</sup>, and tens of millions of migrants<sup>2</sup>, there is a continued need for policies that improve migrant integration and inclusion. Throughout our Erasmus+ funded project, Being & Belonging, WONDER Foundation has sought out these solutions alongside our European partners in Latvia (KIB), Slovenia (Sursum), Spain (Canfranc) and Poland (Pontes). Being & Belonging is a youth solidarity project led by young people to engage our peers, decision-makers and influencers in discussions around migrant integration by posing two simple questions: Who am I to you? Who are you to me?

Current policies often place the burden of “integration” solely upon migrants. In doing so, these policies ignore the difficulties national populations face in areas with transient populations. This one-dimensionally outlines integration as the ability to function, as opposed to flourish, in a society. The diverse experiences of migrants and other populations affected by migration are not appropriately reflected.

The Being and Belonging project thus aims to address this problem by empowering young people affected by migration—which is most of us!—to successfully use their voices to affect change. We are dedicated to ensuring that young people’s voices in the issues that matter remain effective and bolstered— and we believe that this project is the cornerstone of this commitment. As such, young people worked over the course of this programme to share their ideas on how to make migrants feel more welcome in their communities through practical and actionable means. These were then refined into the three policy proposals which are outlined below, which suggest ideas for what actions could be taken at the European, National and Local levels to promote youth integration and sense of belonging. We believe these three proposals could be effectively applied in different European contexts and these documents can therefore be found in English, Latvian, Slovenian, Spanish and Polish, the languages of the countries that participated in this project.

## European-level Policy Proposal: Better Information for Migrants to Aid Swift Integration.

### Background.

“Evidence shows that migrants are disproportionately affected by unfavorable outcomes in terms of education, employment and access to basic services such as healthcare and decent housing.”<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, for newly arriving and settled migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, there is an inherent barrier with accessing valuable information and resources and, additionally, which languages these resources are available in. Research from Translators Without Borders (TWB) has shown that language barriers can have ‘life-changing consequences’, especially in migrant and refugee youth. When they do not receive important information in a language they can understand, it can “lead them to make high-risk choices, including dropping out of the formal reception system, out of ignorance of their rights and options...lack of access to objective information - because it is not provided, or not available in the right language, format or channel”.<sup>4</sup>

Compounding this issue further is the lack of information on official websites and documents that migrants and refugees can trust. This often results in many people resorting to informal digital information that might not be accurate — potentially making them more vulnerable.<sup>5</sup> Arriving to a new place without adequate knowledge of local and national governmental regulations, legal rights, how to access social services, and the like, positions migrants as ideal targets for criminals and fraud. Europol’s latest report details the precarious situation that refugees and migrants often find themselves in, putting them at risk of human trafficking and

<sup>1</sup> See [Mid-Year UNHCR Refugees Report](#)

<sup>2</sup> See [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Migration\\_and\\_migrant\\_population\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics)

<sup>3</sup> See [https://europa.eu/youth/get-involved/your-rights-and-inclusion/situation-migrants-and-refugees-europe\\_en](https://europa.eu/youth/get-involved/your-rights-and-inclusion/situation-migrants-and-refugees-europe_en)

<sup>4</sup> See <https://translatorswithoutborders.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Putting-language-on-the-map.pdf>, pg. 4

<sup>5</sup> See <https://translatorswithoutborders.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Putting-language-on-the-map.pdf>, pg. 11

sexual and labour exploitation.<sup>6</sup> These crimes, according to Europol often occur simultaneously, with smugglers and human traffickers engaging in broader criminal activity.

Moreover, the rise of informal digital information coincides with these crimes. “The leaders of the smuggling networks can orchestrate the criminal business remotely, capitalising on opportunities offered by the online environment and the digital solutions already omnipresent in the modus operandi of migrant smugglers. Free and popular digital solutions and platforms, such as social media and mobile applications, are frequently used for various purposes such as advertising, recruitment, communication, coordination, guidance, money transfer or monitoring law enforcement activities”.<sup>7</sup> This needs to be combatted with formal, accurate online information that can prevent misinformation being spread.

Therefore, we propose a policy at the European (regional) level for the creation of new websites with guidance and support resources for newly arriving migrants and refugees in key minority languages. This approach emphasizes the fact that the majority of migrants within European countries are, in fact, European citizens, and yet they also struggle to integrate. This would be a top-down approach from a regional perspective, but each local authority would provide the websites in the key languages being spoken within their communities. Such a policy could easily be transferrable amongst different cities, as the vital information required remains the same.

### Objectives of Policy.

The main objective of this European level policy would be to provide information in the most accessible format for migrants and refugees so that they can integrate and have all the information they need to re-establish their lives in their new environment.

The guidance on these websites should consist of legal and immigration information, health and safety, workers' rights, housing, education, social services and more. This is not an exhaustive list and could be tailored depending on different community's immediate and long-term needs.

The lack of support and advice create unnecessary challenges for migrants when navigating their daily lives. Having a universal resource, in appropriate languages, would remove unnecessary burdens. With migrants and refugees being able to access and be knowledgeable on vital information, it would also ultimately save local, national and regional governments time and resources.

The objectives of this policy are therefore wide-reaching and consist of:

- Providing accessible online resource guides in key community languages (and all EU languages)
- Preventing migrants from being victim of trafficking, fraud, and/or exploitation
- Connecting migrants to government and NGO provisions.

### Implementation.

Although there are organisations offering services and guidance specifically for certain communities we propose, as a model, the ‘Know Your Rights’ content produced by the [Migrants' Rights Network](#). We would seek to have this provided as a low-data website with one website throughout Europe e.g., Migratio.eu. This would make it accessible to people who haven't yet got a sim card in their new country (access through wifi or using the least possible data) and, like 911 or other universal numbers, they would be directed to their local page. It would be beneficial to have this on a larger scale with a wider reach to tackle some of the inherent challenges facing migrants and refugees. To implement this policy, there are several steps that would need to be taken by multiple stakeholders.

<sup>6</sup> See <https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/EMSC%206%20th%20Annual%20Report.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> See <https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/EMSC%206%20th%20Annual%20Report.pdf>, pg. 9

1. The European Commission would need to provide funding to each member state as this is a policy that facilitates migrants rights and free movement with the EU.
2. Each country would identify the key migrant groups needing information beyond the other member states.
3. In a similar way to 'Know your rights' they would curate simple, culturally appropriate, content for each key migrant group, addressing key issues and vulnerabilities that they have.

Whilst this appears to be expensive and could be met with protests from local anti-migration lobbies, this is a good use of funds. EU citizens migrating can often be at risk, often despite other countries relying on their labour. Countries encouraging or permitting migration have a duty of care towards migrants. Second, there are costs to migrants' failures to integrate which make this an economically sound investment.

## National-Level Policy Proposal: Inclusion of Migrant Children in Schools.

### Background.

"Schools have the potential to be real hubs of integration for children and their families. Increasing the participation of migrant children and children with a migrant background in ECEC while ensuring that such programmes are equipped to serve culturally and linguistically diverse children can have a strong positive effect on their future educational attainment, including in learning the host country language, and on the integration of their parents and families at large. A school environment that involves communities, support services and parents can be particularly beneficial for children with a migrant background. To achieve this, teachers need to be equipped with the necessary skills and resources to teach in multicultural and multilingual classrooms and to support children with a migrant background throughout their education. Fighting segregation in schools and fostering interactions between migrant and native children, is also crucial to making our education system more inclusive. By teaching democracy, citizenship and critical thinking skills, schools play an important role in preventing young people from being attracted to violent extremist ideologies, organisations and movements" *EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027*<sup>8</sup>

Access to education is important for effective migrant integration. With differing needs, including, but not limited to, language and psychosocial support, minority students are more likely to be excluded (expelled) from schools. Following publication of the Timpson Review of School Exclusion<sup>9</sup> in 2019, the British government acknowledged the findings, which exposed how practices of school exclusions are not distributed equally amongst students. EU research in 2016 also showed that first and second generation migrant children across the EU faced lower education outcomes<sup>10</sup>.

The academic and personal growth of migrant students within Europe are therefore affected by their socio-political and economic circumstances. These vulnerabilities are often left unaddressed, due to under-developed pastoral support<sup>11</sup> structures, within mainstream education. Thus, the needs of migrant students are not being met and they are being avoidably punished and disengaged from education.

School discipline should be understood as a mechanism that more broadly prepares students in becoming more effective and responsible citizens, as well as facilitating their personal and academic growth. However, punitive routes to discipline often fail to adequately consider or address factors "related to children and families' individual circumstances"<sup>12</sup> that impact their behaviour. This means that children from different

<sup>8</sup> See [https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/ec-reveals-its-new-eu-action-plan-integration-and-inclusion-2021-2027\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/ec-reveals-its-new-eu-action-plan-integration-and-inclusion-2021-2027_en)

<sup>9</sup> See [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/807862/Timpson\\_review.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/807862/Timpson_review.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Janta, Barbara and Emma Harte, Education of migrant children: Education policy responses for the inclusion of migrant children in Europe. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016. [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR1655.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1655.html).

<sup>11</sup> See definition of Pastoral Support: <https://www.bera.ac.uk/blog/pastoral-care-a-whole-school-approach-to-creating-the-ethos-of-wellbeing-that-culminates-in-better-engagement-and-improved-academic-achievement-of-learners>

<sup>12</sup> Timpson, E., 2019. Timpson review of school exclusion. Dandy Booksellers Limited.

cultural backgrounds or who have previously been at school in a different country may have different understandings of what behaviour is acceptable. Similarly, their parents or guardians may not understand the expectations or modes of punishment in their children's schools.

Recognising that migrant students have additional needs, early intervention strategies, and increased pastoral care must be integrated into schools' disciplinary practices to offer an approach in which all students are able to thrive.

Our policy proposal at the National level is consequently to provide information to support for schools, teachers, pastoral care leaders, parents, and students. Through accessibility of information and increased participation within disciplinary practices, this policy seeks to implement wider pastoral care structures to improve the educational experiences of migrant students and ensure that misunderstandings of what is normal, acceptable, or expected from each party leads to the exclusion or unfair targeting of migrant students.

### Objectives of Policy.

Through the provision of accessible information coordinated by national or regional governments, according to who is responsible for setting standards for education, all parties would be able to access information on the realities of education and cultural norms, and how best to work with other stakeholders in a child's education, to provide the best support for a child to thrive in school.

The key objectives of this policy are:

- To prevent children or parents being labelled as 'difficult', leading to children receiving unjust punishment or exclusion in different ways from the school community, negatively affecting their education.
- To facilitate access to information to all stakeholders (children, parents, teachers, pastoral support providers) on local norms in schools, and the norms in the places where the child or their parents may have been educated. This will allow mismatched expectations or contradictory norms to be identified and addressed.
- Demonstrating that respectful solutions that engage all stakeholders are possible through sharing examples of where this is happening.

### Implementation.

This policy would see the development of online content, co-produced with migrant parents, students and schools already seen as examples of excellence in migrant student integration:

- Online sharing of information on school norms (behavioural norms for teachers and students, normal modes of punishment and reward, expected parental involvement and how parents are communicated with) for each European country and key migrant communities in each country. *Key audience: Schools, teachers, pastoral leaders. Language: local languages.*
- Information on school norms, covering all aspects of student life and expectations, school journey, study options and expectations of parents. *Key audience: Parents/ Guardians and older students. Language: local languages in simple terms; languages of key migrant groups with 'read aloud' and other accessible options for those with limited education or other barriers to access.*
- Case study bank to develop examples of best practice to inspire and provoke conversation.

## Local-level Policy Proposal: City Farms for Integration.

### Background.

A key component of migrant integration is meaningful interaction between migrants and local host communities. Whilst not as overarching as regional or national policies, local initiatives are oftentimes where trust, understanding and mutual respect are formed on one-to-one or smaller, community basis. In the academic literature on migration, notable barriers to migrant integration, as we have noted in the above policy proposals, include, but are not limited to: language, discrimination, a lack of institutional integration (in education and employment) and intergenerational (in)equities. Although the literature focuses on the economic impacts of migration, migration is underpinned by social phenomena that either enables or disables the ability for integration within the host country's communities.

Due to the above-mentioned challenges faced by migrants and subsequent generations, migrants may form cluster communities, where the character of a community is dominated by a particular migrant sub-group. Theoretically, this can reinforce those barriers when migrant and local communities encounter each other. However, it is important to acknowledge the lived experiences of migrants in order to recognise the benefits to homogenous migrant communities. For example, research has found that female migrants felt more settled when living within an immigrant community, whilst engaging with local individuals in the host country.

Migrant networks are a significant form of social capital amongst migrants in the initial stages of settlement, especially where migrants face economic, cultural and legal barriers in the short term. In the long term, ethnic communities develop in the host country, including ethnic shops, businesses and restaurants, where migrants and local residents meet. This acts as a source of bridging social capital, leading to community attachment and social integration<sup>13</sup>. Kindler et al. (2015) believe that the assumption that social cohesion needs to be based on in-depth relations is false. The development of good quality ethnic networks, based on strong ties and mutual trust, that incorporate weak ties to wider social networks, appears to optimise the opportunities for chance encounters that lead to social integration between migrants and locals.

Therefore, we propose a holistic, local approach to migrant integration through an urban green space development initiative via an intercultural city farm. City farms are agricultural spaces in urban areas where individuals work with animals and plants to produce food. They are community-run gardens seeking to improve community relationships and offer an awareness of agriculture and farming to people who live in urbanised areas. The implementation of urban city farms will improve dialogue and foster a sense of belonging through community building activities that surpass language barriers. This policy aims to bring migrant-local relationship building into the public sphere, in order to grow and flourish naturally.

### Objectives of Policy.

The intercultural city farm is a migrant integration initiative that does not aim to redefine existing immigrant and local communities. Instead, it aims to enrich them through green urban development, bringing both migrants and local residents closer to the environment at a crucial time for both migration, food and environmental-related issues.

Placing an emphasis on kinesthetic and visual projects can capture the greatest number of both migrants and local residents, such as through art, gardening, maintenance, and urban development. This takes away the pressures of potential language and cultural barriers, whilst also promoting activities that provide both soft

<sup>13</sup> Kindler, M., Ratcheva, V. and Piechowska, M., 2015. Social networks, social capital and migrant integration at local level. European literature review. *Institute For Research Into Superdiversity*, 6.

and hard skills-building. This then increases educational and employability opportunities for migrants and locals who are involved in the project.

Through this policy, the intercultural city farm should adopt multiculturalism in all its service provision, activities, and visual and physical design that represent a variety of cultures. Ultimately, the intercultural city farms aim to achieve the following:

- Promote social cohesion in a public setting between migrants and local residents in the host country, through both volunteer and customer relationships.
- Promote community building through a combination of kinesthetic activities that surpass language barriers.
- Engaging with activities that can act as both an education and training opportunity.
- Developing knowledge of different cultures through multicultural city farm design, as well as through food, beverages, art, and customs.
- Bringing both migrants and local residents closer to food production, animal welfare and environmental preservation.
- Green urban development with the aim of integrating migrants into the community by including them in the community-building in the first place.
- Green urban development which aims to provide more equitable access to good quality amenities in migrant communities.

### Implementation.

The intercultural city farm is designed for provision at the local area within an urban space with large, diverse migrant and host community populations. For the early implementation of this policy, the local scale is more suitable for the development of intercultural city farms because urban centres are facing high levels of immigration. Simultaneously, there is a lack of meaningful initiatives to integrate migrants into local society. If we consider the needs of migrants as reflected in the literature, social cohesion can be developed effectively through non-intimate relationship building in public spaces.

The model of the intercultural city farm could be adopted in local communities internationally, as intercultural urban and city gardens have been used to successfully improve diverse local communities within urban areas across Europe, in keeping with and building on local norms, such as Wenlock Barn's [The Growing Kitchen](#) in London<sup>14</sup>, Community Gardens in Barcelona<sup>15</sup> or in Sopot, Poland<sup>16</sup>. However, intercultural city farms are less common, as they require larger plots of land, a greater number of stakeholders, and a greater range of service provision, such as animal care, gardening, maintenance, cleaning, shop provision, fundraising and administration. The greater range of services will capture a greater proportion of both migrant and local communities, as well as catering for both volunteers and customers. We need an intercultural city farm that specifically targets migrant integration through public community building.

In seeking to minimise the impact of language barriers using kinesthetic and visual activities, implementation should include the adoption of multilingualism in the city farm's onsite signs and menus, as well as volunteering applications and advertisements. This will enable migrants' greater accessibility to the intercultural city farm. In addition, the intercultural city farm should adopt the notion of interculturalism in its design, as its stakeholders should incorporate both migrants and local residents. For example, there should be certain cultural considerations that could be implemented in the intercultural city farm, such as a prayer space, and the provision of culturally/religiously appropriate food and beverages. Bringing both migrants and local residents closer to food and animals in urban spaces aims to reconnect the individual consumer with food, community and the environment, regardless of background.

<sup>14</sup> See <http://www.wenlockbarntmo.co.uk/community-projects/the-growing-kitchen/>

<sup>15</sup> See <https://thetreasurewithin.net/community-gardens-in-barcelona/>

<sup>16</sup> See <http://fundacjamy.com/in-english/projects-foundation-we-poland/community-gardens/>

## Conclusion.

It is important to improve migrant integration at all levels of community and government, which is why it is necessary to look at realistic opportunities for change at regional, national, as well as local levels. They all need to work together to empower and equip refugees and migrants with the necessary tools to not just survive, but to thrive in their new host communities.

To conclude, improving migrant integration for newly arriving and settled migrants needs to be pursued through multi-level, holistic approaches, which is why we have focused on these three governmental areas. Throughout the three policy proposals, there are key themes woven through each: accessibility of information, minimising language barriers, promoting community building and increasing community participation.

## About the project.

### Contact Us

We would love to discuss these ideas further with you, if you think you could help us to make them a reality. WONDER Foundation is acting as the focal point for this work, and wherever you are in the EU, please contact us in your own language and we will direct your email to the project partner who is best placed to respond.

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Interested in knowing more? Visit the [Being & Belonging](#) website to learn more!