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The Urban Lab of Europe !

The MI-FRIENDLY project Journal N° 1

Project led by the city of Coventry



**INTEGRATION OF
MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES**



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Hauts-de-France

The MI-FRIENDLY project

Many cultures have strong traditions of welcoming a new guest or visitor, invited or not. Coventry, together with Wolverhampton and Birmingham have decided to define a multicity strategy and set of actions for this West Midlands area, in terms of welcoming and making these cities friendly for everyone. For all those stakeholders and persons involved, this friendliness is translated into a strong **passion** about the relations built with the migrants and refugees. The diversity of the three cities is well known in England, the U.K. and in Europe, as their industrial development was conditioned by the workforce which always arrived from somewhere else.

Key concepts: friendliness, passion, openness

MiFRIENDLYCITIES, is not a miss-spelt title, as some would imply, but suggests a foothold in the idea, that “My” city friendliness to “Migrants” is a common value, whilst at the same time suggesting that the “Migrant” and the “My” can become “Mi” or rather “MiFriendly”, insisting on the play on words, to invite/confuse and muddle the reader, into involving her/himself into the question of belonging locally and being proud of it.



the MiFriendlyCities Launch Event in Coventry Cathedral

The main challenge of the whole project is orientated towards the well-being of the communities in the West Midlands, to which many persons have arrived on diverse trajectories. Some have come of their own action, as students or as economic migrants, seeking to build a new life in the UK. Others have come from other parts of the UK. Of course, we must never forget that some have survived months of travel from South Sudan, with dangerous days in a boat across the Mediterranean Sea, or years of hiding from authorities in the UK, as someone panic stricken about the eventuality of deportation. However, the main scope is to work on the quality of living together in the area.

This project, concentrates on the question of how to build a common life in Coventry, Wolverhampton and Birmingham, how to participate in the local community, how to find or create employment, how to look after oneself from the security, health and legal side: in other words, how to increase the overall wellbeing of residents of the three cities.

MiFRIENDLYCITIES approaches the persons called “migrants” and “refugees” not as problems, but as assets for the West Midlands and this constitutes a fundamental innovation. The common responsibility of the three cities, working with and through their very strong NGO’s, social economy structures and others, is to increase the empowerment of all the stakeholders, to find, identify and share the strength of working together, so that being a citizen/resident, conscious of one’s rights and obligations, will be a norm for all. *In fine*, meaning, that all become active citizens of this highly resourceful area¹.

¹ The origins of the project: <https://youtu.be/QVOvZ3hrGHY>

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1. Executive Summary

The Migration Friendly Cities (full title) project aims to reinforce and build a more integrated society in Coventry and the West Midlands. Wolverhampton and Birmingham are partners

in the project. This has increased its originality and its innovativeness, as all three cities face, in different ways, the same challenges.



Whittle Arch, a symbol of uniting bridges

This strengthening of the social fabric is planned through 9 different work packages which will be worked through by 11 partners in order to improve and facilitate the participation of refugees and migrants to become fully fledged citizens active in the civic, economic and social fabric of the 3 cities. MiFRIENDLYCITIES was launched in the truly symbolic Coventry Cathedral on 5th June 2018. In October the Wolverhampton launch took place with the participation of the leader of the council Cllr. Lawrence, who underlined that Wolverhampton always counted on people coming from elsewhere to work and co-create the city.

The project stands firm on its perspective that migrants and refugees come with their added value, and as soon as they arrive, become an asset to the territory, meaning that they enrich it culturally, socially, economically and from the diversity point of view.

The key is to maintain a strong element of listening and involvement of all those concerned; the new arrivals, and the rest of the local communities in the role of hosts.



Project launch in Wolverhampton: workshop on MiFRIENDLYCITIES

The authors of the project fully appreciate, that attitudes to these groups are often negative and will be trying, through different branches of the project to strengthen the solidarity which could and should be shared by all the citizens of the area. This will be done, through an efficient system of communication, which will rely on strong, emotion driven stories being told about the successes in such areas as:

Jobs:

“We want to create a network of ‘Migration Friendly Employers’ whose common goal will be to strengthen the workforce of the West Midlands, creating an infrastructure which opens

up opportunities, offers ongoing support and increases contact between communities in the workplace”.

Skills:

“The West Midlands aspires to become the centre for advanced manufacturing in Europe. We will nurture the skills to make this happen, and have put together an innovative training programme that will benefit all communities”.

Citizens & Voices:

“Knowing about your civic, political and legal rights is a cornerstone for active citizenship, so in keeping with the MiFriendly approach, we

want refugees and migrants to feel confident in accessing these rights, represent themselves and feel that they are fully-fledged citizens.”

Start-ups and Innovative Ideas:

“Unlocking skills and ideas from within West Midlands’ communities can benefit everyone. Supporting local and refugee and migrant entrepreneurs has the potential to expand job opportunities and strengthen the economy, and social challenges can be met by nurturing and, funding creative grassroots projects.”

The project is at present (October 2018 at the time of the 1st expert visit) fully in place and has overcome the initial very active phase of organising itself, employing appropriate staff and getting to know the project conditions, aims and ways of working from the inside. As is well known, the first challenge of any project, is to get the partners to know and trust one another, to learn their mutual capacities and limits and to be able to function in a complementary fashion, linked by the overarching goals of the project. These goals are composed of the following elements:

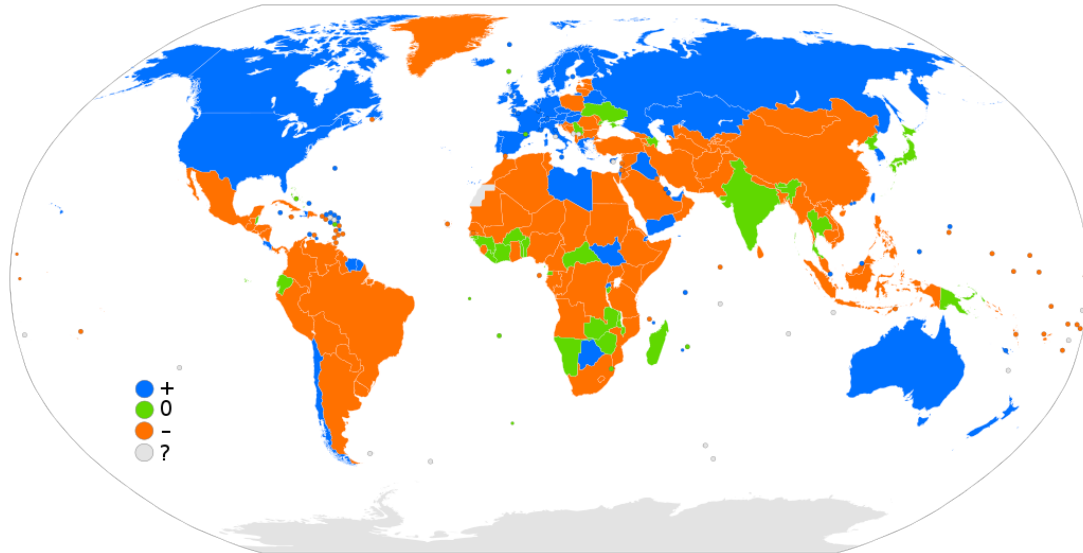
- that the contribution of refugees and migrants to the city’s civic, economic and social fabric is facilitated and recognised,
- that refugees and migrants are empowered to access their rights and feel fully-fledged citizens,
- that hostility and prejudice towards refugees and migrants is minimised and
- solidarity between migrant and non-migrant groups is built upon.

The partnership, being so wide and focused on an area of 3 cities, constitutes an innovation in itself: it faces a maturing process at the present time, which will allow it to produce the good results planned and to communicate on them. Some of the themes of the work packages are evolving positively: for example, the pilot version of the FabLab course for refugees and migrants – which was tied in with a 10-week programme delivered by other services in the city – has led the organisers to adapt it to the needs of the participants, and other actions are in the middle of actualising their way of working, on that basis, so as to remain sensitive to the present needs of the participants.

Coventry University, which is responsible for the monitoring and evaluation, has already produced first results about how the partners are living through the initial stages of the project and how employers are approaching the question of employment of migrants and refugees, especially from non-EU countries. At the same time, through a rare collaboration of a university and city, both in Coventry are working together on practical tools, such as social enterprises to accelerate the integration journeys.

**Coventry and Coventry University
working together to create social
enterprises.**

2. Migration – the big picture



The main migratory movements in the world

In its report on migration trends of 2017¹ the OCDE concludes that:

„Migration is not a zero sum game and if well managed and seen as a long-term investment yields potential benefits for origin, transit and destination countries as well as for the migrants themselves“.

Yet even though the UK Migration Advisory Committee has clearly indicated that the economic impact of migration is very largely positive, Heather Rolfe² states in her recent article³ that people’s opinions about migration do not allow research data to be considered, as personal stories and experiences appear to

dominate and are accepted as more trustworthy. This type of “belief” stands alone as one of the major challenges for the MiFRIENDLYCITIES partnership concerning the opinion of the public and how to combat it.

The aim of these next few paragraphs is to present some statistical information on migration trends in the world, in the EU and in the West Midlands, in order to prepare the ground for the communication effort that needs to be made, to make sure that all can access stories and information about the added value of each migrant/refugee.

Compiled information⁴ on migration flows shows that the United States are the main immigration country with about 2,5 million permanent or temporary residents in 2015. Next comes

¹ <https://www.oecd.org/g20/topics/employment-and-social-policy/G20-OECD-migration.pdf>

² National Institute of Economic and Social Research

³ <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/why-perceptions-of-immigration-are-resistant-to-facts/>

⁴ Information based on <https://www.oecd.org/g20/topics/employment-and-social-policy/G20-OECD-migration.pdf>

Germany (2 million) and then Saudi Arabia (1,5 million). Only further down the line can be found Australia with 769 000 migrants and the UK with 550 000 in 2015. To compare the US with the EU globally, they host 54 million and 47 million migrants respectively, which constitutes 11% and 14% of their populations respectively. These population movements are the biggest since World War II, but it should be remembered, that Turkey alone hosts around 3 million Syrians, due to the Syrian war, while much smaller countries

such as Lebanon and Jordan host more than 1 million and 660 000 Syrians respectively.

It is also important to note, that 72% of all international migrants are of a working age (are between the age of 20 and 64) and that two thirds of all migrants live in only 20 countries. Here it is the United States which hosts the most (19%) while Germany and the Russian Federation host about 12 million each, followed by Saudi Arabia (10 million) and the UK (nearly 9 million).

2.1 The West Midlands

It is very interesting to note that the West Midlands area has the youngest population in Europe (40% of Birmingham residents are under 25). Concerning the migration flows, the region received a net inflow of 29 000 international migrants in 2016 (India, Pakistan, Ireland, Jamaica are the most significant non-UK-born populations), while 285,000 EU nationals from Poland, Romania, Bulgaria also arrived in 2016 (between 2007-2013, the region witnessed a 30% increase in short-term migration). In 2015: 5,031 asylum seekers came to the region (1775 in Birmingham, 689 in Wolverhampton,

551 in Coventry), while in the period 2015-2017: 473 resettled Syrian refugees were accepted⁵.

Just as a reminder: today 7 thousand Hondurans are still marching through Mexico to get to the US where their welcome is far from certain. Thousands of Rohingya refugees are fleeing Myanmar, where they are still persecuted.

⁵ Coventry University: Dr Katharine Jones and Dr Catherine Harris, <https://www.coventry.ac.uk/research/areas-of-research/trust-peace-social-relations/>

2.2 The 3 pillar approach

These statistics do not answer the question of how to convince a large part of the population that migration makes a significant contribution to the development of the country.

“The strong view in many of these communities is that they have been abandoned and left to rot by the political establishment in preference to addressing the needs and wishes of new arrivals in the cities,”⁶

However, as underlines the OECD, good practice examples of integrating migrant workers are often based on a 3-pillar approach:

- (i) the effective evaluation, activation and development of migrants’ and refugees’ skills;
- (ii) prevention of the exploitation of migrant workers and of discriminatory behaviours;
- (iii) strengthening cooperation with social partners, civil society and dialogue between receiving and sending countries⁷.

MiFRIENDLYCITIES has taken on this triple challenge which requires innovation, new forms of partnership management and “making sure that the successes really matter”⁸ through extraordinary communication techniques, which should be based on skill-full narratives, positioned on a “next door neighbour” affinity level.

Making sure successes matter by “next door neighbour” communication.

⁶ Nick Lowles, the chief executive of Hope Not Hate

⁷ <https://www.oecd.org/g20/topics/employment-and-social-policy/G20-OECD-migration.pdf>

⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/mazzucato_report_2018.pdf

3. The MiFRIENDLYCITIES concept

“AMIFRIENDLYCITY is one in which through the activities proposed in this bid - a mixture of new and scaling up of existing innovative practice - and the unique partnership between consortium members who, in addition to the urban authorities, also include civil society, a leading private sector organisation, a community interest company and a university, we seek to achieve MIFRIENDLYCITY status for Birmingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton within the wider West Midlands region”⁹.

The maturity of the above project summary shows that the three local authorities have fully taken on board the challenges concerning creating purpose-built policies which will improve

the capacity of all inhabitants to live together. Implicitly they have accepted Schopenhauer’s 3 stages of a new ,truth’: at first it is ridiculed, then it is violently opposed. Finally, it is accepted as being self-evident!

The Urban Innovative Action programme¹⁰ launched by the EU, intends to show, through serious financial contributions, that certain cities are capable of innovative actions, to secure further development in exemplary ways. In this case, Coventry and its partners are one of 3 migrant projects chosen out of 41 candidates, which shows how the project is recognised at the European level, how its results are very much awaited and how the actions undertaken have to be innovative and show their efficiency, in order to be taken on board by other European cities.

3.1 The multiple partnership approach

The MiFRIENDLYCITIES concept is based on a multiple partnership approach, which is strongly positioned between the 3 cities and depends on the capacity to work together of all the partners. See key concepts expressed by some of the partner representatives¹¹. Compared with

other UIA projects, MiFRIENDLYCITIES has a lot of partners. This is necessary and justified by the subject matter in hand: migrants and refugees as assets to the local society, cannot be treated in a centralised way by only a few stakeholders. As has shown OECD work on partnerships¹²;

⁹ Project summary of MiFRIENDLY CITIES Application Form

¹⁰ <https://www.uia-initiative.eu/en/news-events/introducing-3-new-projects-integration-migrants-and-refugees>

¹¹ See video: <https://youtu.be/DIs2X1bZKe4>

¹² www.oecd.org/cfe/leed/forum/partnerships

Conditions:

Comments:

Partners have to share the same values and interests.

This is either a prerequisite or it has to be worked through in a conscious and collective fashion.

Partners have to share risks, responsibilities, accountability or benefits

A successful partnership will have identified and compensated the differences which appear in all these subjects in a partnership.

Partners should have equal influence on the decision-making processes.

A smaller partner should be able to influence the decision making as much as a major one.
No one partner should be able to dominate the rest of the partnership.

All partners should be clear and transparent as to their motivations and expectations.

Hidden motivations can seriously prejudice the efficiency of a partnership.

Partners need to be able to work on conflicts and identify issues to be resolved.

Further training and competences could be needed to support the maturation of each partner.

Partners have to be chosen wisely.

Allowing a partner to exit is just as important as to be able to accept a new partner, whose actions may be particularly relevant to the project.

The 11 partners of the project are conscious of the opportunity that the project gives them, not only to develop and widen the scope of their individual actions, but most of all to identify the spaces between the stakeholders, which in a complementary fashion can be filled by others or new stakeholders. This process is already functioning; the partnership is becoming stronger and more powerful due to the way in which partners are working on each other's areas, making the coherence of the pathway of the final beneficiary – the migrant or the refugee – the only way to measure the efficiency of the partnership. For example, in the 10-week course proposed following the FabLab pilot course, several partners have understood, that they have to collaborate for the good of the beneficiary, rather than remaining, as was planned, in a more silos type of posture, where everyone does solely what covers the planned role in the project.



A special place in a shopping mall



A meeting table made by participants

3.2 The voices of the participants

The other vital quality of the MiFRIENDLYCITIES project is the space which is given to the voices, skills and passion of refugees and migrants themselves across the region. The original think tank, and the presently employed professionals have confirmed, that the ambitions of the project will not be reached without the active participation of the final beneficiaries. Therefore, their voice will be heard through the communication tools put into place, but as migrants and refugees are the assets for the region, this will have to be done through a „win-win” filter, showing how the input of the more recently arrived persons has strengthened the local economy, has reinforced public services and contributed to the general well-being of the West Midlands region. Solutions proposed within the scope of the project include:

1. New **job opportunities/accredited training** and upskilling employers for better engagement with refugees and migrants,
2. **Health champions** trained to deliver public health messages and raising awareness in the population to reduce unwanted demand,
3. Mentoring, financing and supporting **social enterprises and grassroots social innovation projects** to tackle challenges identified in this proposal,
4. Activities supporting **active citizenship and rights**, including training refugees and migrants as Citizen Journalists and Citizen Social Scientists to evaluate success of the project.

The asset journey: Health Champions, Citizen Journalists, Citizen Social Scientists

Each one of these solutions corresponds to challenges which have been identified:

1. **Employers** are not so keen to employ migrants and refugees, especially those from non-EU countries as they are simply not sure about the legal situation they put themselves into (only 4,9% of employers admit to employing migrants & refugees)¹³. The initial analysis of the reality of employers indicates that around 1 million persons from EU countries and who are highly qualified could be leaving the UK due to Brexit. This obliges employers to look elsewhere for employees. The study shows that they do not know the competences and skills of non-EU arrivals. Interserve leads on the integration of employers¹⁴. On the other hand, the competences and qualities of migrants could also be enhanced by the project, not to talk about the obligation of improving their English.
2. **The health situation** of new arrivals is often critical, as due to the fragility of their situations it is often not high on their priority list. The project intends to change this, as good well shared knowledge in this area will economise much more expensive health services in the future and for the migrants and refugees, will put them into a more

¹³ Coventry University: Dr Katharine Jones and Dr Catherine Harris, <https://www.coventry.ac.uk/research/areas-of-research/trust-peace-social-relations/>

¹⁴ See video here: <https://youtu.be/kcy3XzQnD40>



Sunairah Miraj and Peter Barnett, the management team of the project, enjoying an „Arabian Bite“

knowledgeable role. This will be attained by training “Health Champions”, persons coming from the communities and being capable of indicating the right pathways for particular health challenges that different communities and individuals face. RMC tells you more¹⁵.

3. Social enterprises (SE) are very interesting tools, rooted in local communities, which can be run by local inhabitants, where they can employ other residents; for some employees, they can be stepping stones into the free job market. SE’s can also produce goods and services specifically for the local communities, or even meeting places, where members of different communities can mix, as does Arabian Bites in Coventry¹⁶. These types of companies are also vital from the sustainability point of view, as there is scope for them to remain in existence and develop even after the end of the UIA financing.

4. Active citizenship and rights: integration into a new country cannot come about without knowing your rights and obligations. The MiFRIENDLYCITIES project underlines this question strongly and puts the logic into an original innovatory form, by putting into place ‘citizens journalists’ and ‘citizen social scientists’ who will, it is hoped, open up the local communities in a very innovative way to the complicated aspects of communication/information, as well as the knowledge about how migrants and refugees are coping and getting into society. These two actions, together with the Health Champions will become the cutting edge of the MiFRIENDLYCITIES project and should be maintained in a sustainable way, in the future.

¹⁵ See video <https://youtu.be/1Mv14qaY0pA>

¹⁶ <https://www.stfranciscoventry.com/arabian-bites>

3.3 The MiFRIENDLYCITIES Partners

This first journal must set the scene for what is to come in MiFRIENDLYCITIES. As the partnership itself is so innovative and important in order to achieve results, the presentation of those implicated is more extensive than just a list. In forthcoming Journals, it will be the people involved, who will be more visible, both from the partnership side, as from the final beneficiary side.

Coventry (CCC) is known worldwide as a City of Peace & Reconciliation & has recently been commended for “leading the way in welcoming refugees into the city”. Building on this Coventry holds City of Sanctuary status¹⁷, hosts the Global Peace Forum (RISING)¹⁸ & International Peace Prize in its Cathedral each year. As local authorities scramble to plan for new Syrian refugees –20,000 by 2020– Coventry offers a model of resettlement for other councils (The Guardian Newspaper, Tuesday 13 October 2015). Coventry is the Main Local Authority and

accountable body on the project, leading the implementation whilst also contributing towards the delivery of activities, and has a very dedicated and passionate team, which among other things has to fulfil all the management requirements in respect of the financing authority.

The City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC) is registered as a City of Sanctuary, working to encourage and support local communities, businesses, and statutory, voluntary, community and faith organisations in welcoming and assisting asylum-seekers and refugees. CWC will support all activities within the city, and will contribute to the overarching MiFRIENDLYCITIES Action Plan. In particular, Wolverhampton is already developing a social enterprise ‘pop-up furniture factory’, which will support home makeovers in the city and, along with the Coventry pop-up, the making of up to 500 pieces of upcycled furniture made by refugees and migrants and distributed to those most in need in each city.



A workshop ready to produce for the local community

¹⁷ <https://cityofsanctuary.org/>

¹⁸ <https://rising.org/>



An extraordinary University department

Birmingham City Council (BCC) is the largest local authority in Europe with the youngest population. The city's primary involvement in the MiFriendly Cities project is through the active citizenship and employment initiatives. Birmingham will deliver employment sessions, will contribute to careers guidance and will deliver a Share my Language model for voluntary and informal English language practice for migrants and refugees, and will support the 100 home makeovers team by identifying individuals for home makeovers as well as providing support in DIY training in BCC's own fabrication facility. Having received UIA funding to address urban poverty in 2017 BCC will also provide advice to CCC in the area of project management to support with knowledge transfer on ERDF UIA policies and procedures.

Coventry University (CU) will be responsible for monitoring and evaluation, but also specifically training the Citizen Social Scientists who will work with partners and the UIA expert to evaluate the programme and input into the development of the framework for MiFRIENDLYCITIES to be transferred and taken up by other cities beyond the project. CU will support the development of publications and the digital fabrication courses in the city's FabLab (in partnership with CCC), providing training and accreditation to 300 migrants and refugees. Furthermore, CU will support the recruitment of retired skilled volunteers through the Age Friendly City programme and will deliver the DIY courses.

Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre (CRMC)

covers the Coventry area, giving general advice on asylum and immigration issues, outreaching to local communities, and giving advice to refugees, migrants and asylum seekers in their own communities through the Community Partnership Unit. In addition, CRMC works in the area of specific housing issues, and proposes advice and help with employment issues, education, skills, and training.

In the area of safeguarding, CRMC proposes care of vulnerable children and adults and help with destitution. Volunteering is proposed as a route to work. CRMC will support recruiting beneficiaries to several programmes and will receive investment to re-furbish their existing premises into a new community hub, and will employ 2 employment brokers to skills-match migrants with employers.

Central England Law Centre (CELC) has supported the identification of the main barriers its refugee and migrant clients face and through the project access its Solicitors representing areas of Community Care, Discrimination, Employment, Family, Housing, Immigration and Asylum, Money and Debt, Public Law, and Welfare Benefits.

Their legal aid framework has been developed into a series of 'Know Your Rights' initiatives, offering one-to-one advice in the areas of housing, employment, healthcare and benefits in the form of legal 'health checks' and as free downloadable materials in multiple languages.

A key action of rights to minors is also led, working directly with schools and youth organisations to identify undocumented young migrants in order to facilitate their integration into the higher educational system¹⁹.

The Refugee and Migrant Centre (RMC)

provides a dedicated service to asylum seekers, refugees and vulnerable migrants living in the Black Country and Birmingham and was set up in 1999 by volunteers who were themselves refugees. RMC has beneficiaries from over 120 different countries. The RMC Staff and volunteer team is skilled, diverse and culturally competent in assisting clients with sensitivity and respect. RMC will lead on the training of 60 health champions and will support recruitment of beneficiaries from their client group onto activities throughout the work programme and will employ an employment brokers in their premises in Birmingham and Wolverhampton to skills-match migrants with employers.

MigrationWork (MW) is a not-for-profit consultancy set up to help communities, practitioners and policy-makers to respond to migration, in ways that ensure both migrants and 'host' communities can benefit from this process and move towards integration. The team brings some exceptional strengths to this task, including specialists, with in-depth knowledge of the migration process, its policy context and its practical challenges. MigrationWork's experts will find the most exciting social innovation projects around Europe, use them to inspire similar migrant-led grassroots initiatives that will benefit the West Midlands and will fund and support their development. MigrationWork will lead the communication work package and will also play a significant role in knowledge transfer. These activities align well with the organisation's track record in producing policy briefing papers on migration, accompanied by infographics and other innovative visual and digital means of communication. MigrationWork has facilitated knowledge exchange for a number of Eurocities

¹⁹ See video here: https://youtu.be/-bOs-4OC_5U

projects and will support transfer of knowledge to this and other European networks.

Coventry University Social Enterprises CIC (CUSE) was set up in 2013 by Coventry University as the first Social Enterprise (SE) created by a University to support the creation and development of social enterprises by University staff and students and to support the growth of a wider social economy. The CUSE mission is to help people and communities realise their entrepreneurial potential. CUSE builds capacity of social entrepreneurs from diverse backgrounds and supports disadvantaged communities. In the project, CUSE supports participants to develop social enterprises through tailored training, workshops and master-classes to accompany them through all aspects of setting up and running a business, including development of business plans, finance, marketing etc. CUSE holds the Social Enterprise mark and led Coventry Social Enterprise City status award.

Interserve are a leader in innovative and sustainable outcomes for clients, employees and the communities in which they work. As a major employer Interserve has offices across the whole of the West Midlands offering construction, equipment services, facilities management and frontline public services. Headquartered in the UK and FTSE listed, the company has a gross revenue of £3.6 billion and a workforce of circa 80,000 people worldwide. The Human Resources department will lead on MiFRIENDLYCITIES which will put into place the employment work package. Interserve employs a full-time project manager charged with setting up a business leaders forum, to sit under the West Midlands Combined Authority. This forum will be tasked with providing briefings to regional employers in order to integrate migrants and refugees into employment sooner. Interserve are also a key

component of all work packages, providing an employer's perspective. The company provides 2 additional days leave to staff in order to volunteer. Interserve have offered to provide volunteer employees and retired employees into other project activities, to provide a range of support such as mentoring, advice to the investment activities in construction and materials and support to train participants.

Migrant Voice West Midlands regional hub (MV), based in Birmingham will support the development of MiFRIENDLYCITIES. Migrant Voice is a migrant-led organisation set up to develop the skills, capacity and confidence of members of migrant communities, including asylum seekers and refugees, to develop their own strategies to strengthen their voice and representation in the media and at a policy making level. MV will support all of the activities in the Communication work package, by providing training and capacity building of citizen journalists: including sessions on photography, basic film-making skills, writing articles, social media, effective messaging, interview techniques, and pitching stories to journalists and media outlets.

MV have extensive experience of working with asylum seekers, refugees and migrants, including producing the Migrant Voice newspaper: a free newspaper which addresses the British public directly. Each year 100,000 copies are distributed to members of the public and policy makers in London, Birmingham, Glasgow and other cities across the UK. MV members have made their voices heard on Channel 4, BBC Radio West Midlands and the Daily Record in Scotland, among others and we run an annual conference. Migrant Voice is a member of the European Anti-Poverty Network, the largest European network of national, regional and local networks active in the fight against poverty and social exclusion.

4. Win-win through passion!

The concept which symbolises the experts visit in October 2018 is undoubtedly “**PASSION**”. The teams met and interviewed are without exception passionate about their work. Be they civil servants, frontline workers, management, politicians, NGO activists, university lecturers or researchers, business representatives or

even participants; the communicated passion is absolutely incredible. One could almost wonder, where it comes from, and how, all these structures, which are employing new staff for the project, are transmitting this passion so intensely to their collaborators. Undoubtedly this is one of the criteria of success!

4.1 Challenges which are ahead

Passion will no doubt work miracles, yet other challenges have to be taken very seriously at this stage in the project’s life:

- **Communication:** as has been described, statistics and research do not seem to have their place in the minds of persons who believe that migrants and/or refugees are the source of all difficulties. The communication aspect has to therefore go through the process of narration, with good qualitative material, which could be appropriated “from neighbour to neighbour”. At this level memory interviews, done between neighbours could perhaps be a partial solution, as they have a strong mobilisation aspect and are inclusive – everyone can do it and the result is exactly a feeling of belonging, and an increased capacity to share, as things really get said.
- **Other groups:** if communication to “neighbours” constitutes a vital key to the well-being of all in the West Midlands, other groups, such as the business community, civic activists, political decision makers, research institutions etc. also need to be addressed. As a general rule communication which is not aimed at a particular group has very little effect.

- **Partnership:** the efficiency of a well-functioning partnership is vital at this stage of the projects life, when first results have to be obtained. This is dependent on checking if the common values are really there, and adhered to, on whether the true aims of the project: “migrant = asset” are respected. That all the partners draw the appropriate conclusions in their everyday work, and that the partnership cannot be slowed down by the lack of efficiency of 1 partner: appropriate consequences have to be drawn.
- **From a theory of change to improvements:** common values, as seen above should lead to the establishment of a common theory of change, so that the whole partnership realises what this means and how it functions. On that basis all the work done on monitoring and evaluation can be appropriately digested and can really help to improve the scope and efficiency of the project as a whole, and of each action in particular.

Theory of Change is essentially a comprehensive description and illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context. It is focused in particular on mapping out or “filling in” what has been

described as the “missing middle” between what a program or change initiative does (its activities or interventions) and how these lead to desired goals being achieved. It does this by first identifying the desired long-term goals and

then works back from these to identify all the conditions (outcomes) that must be in place (and how these related to one another causally) for the goals to occur. These are all mapped out in an Outcomes Framework.²⁰

4.2 Risks which have to be considered

- **Politics and Brexit:** the projects integration into the local geography and the West Midlands political reality is strong. However, the rather uncertain reality of the UK procedures to leave the EU create an atmosphere of instability. This feeling is reinforced by the fact that the subject matter of the project concerns migration, one of the key elements of the Brexit situation.
- **Internal communication:** as with any team individuals, representing their institutions, create the team. The risk here is that individuals may change jobs, have babies, retire etc, so the project has to guarantee the good transfer of operational information in such a way as to not suffer too much if someone is no longer there.

This may require a little planning and analysis of what information can be transferred, on pairing individuals, so that each of them possesses a maximum of information and organising events, which allow the informal transfer of information.

- **External communication:** many partners are working on this question. The coordination of the communication theme appears central to the success of the project and the change of the mind-set of the whole population, as has been discussed above. It would appear necessary to consecrate a lot of time and investment to ensure that this aspect of the projects life really stands out as exemplary.

4.3 Actions: YES. Sustainable actions: YESx3!

Sustainability of actions: this also constitutes a risk factor in the project, as some parts of the activities may not be able to be financed at the end of the UIA projects time-line. This implies that at the point in time when all the actions have started, the partnership has to start to reflect on which actions are, or will be sustainable, based on what type of financial means. Here social enterprises and community led actions come to the forefront as leading the sustainability vector. But maybe the project as a whole will discover

other forms of sustainability from crowdfunding, to local authority support for crowdfunding, public procurement, pension funds and private investors who are looking for good solid actions to support etc. Perhaps a particular form of regular workshops on this theme could help elucidate what direction to choose and whether some parts of the project will have to be closed down due to the impossibility of obtaining sustainable funding.

²⁰ Centre for Theory of Change: <https://www.theoryofchange.org/what-is-theory-of-change/>

5. Learning points

5.1 Innovatory content

The holistic positioning of the MiFRIENDLYCITIES project is undoubtedly its major strength. Where often so-called soft policies are aimed at repairing the social tissue, this exceptional partnership defines its role as a broker of good sense: how to assist each person to become an asset to the local and city communities, through diverse approaches, which correspond to the situation every person and family find themselves in. The partnership is therefore engaged in a purposeful progression, where successes can be measured, shown and convince others that the effort is worth making.

5.2 Innovatory processes

The **co-construction** of the project with so many partners, including three large local authorities, shows a very innovative approach to a complex subject. This was a long process, which included the city of Coventry taking the full lead at a certain point.

The **distribution of responsibilities** within the project also show that the visibility and communication of what is done in the project is very important. Experienced institutions are collectively responsible for this approach, which should guarantee a very high level of success.

For each partner institution this implies working constantly on two levels:

1. On the aims and actions of particular work packages,
2. On the holistic progression that the whole project carries: migrant = asset.

The vision of how to accomplish these two tasks may appear, at times, divergent. The partnership and its innovational capacity should be able to overcome these difficulties through the team work already present, but which has to be taken even further.

The capacity to adapt to evolving situations will become one of the strong points of the project.

The **cross institutional participation** of several partners in one action and its adaptation to the needs of the final beneficiaries shows that the partners are ready and capable of improvising ways of gaining more efficiency and success. This is also innovatory. This potential has to be maintained as in other actions the partners are already thinking about adapting the same process of change to a different reality.

TABLE 1: MAPPING MiFRIENDLYCITIES AGAINST THE ESTABLISHED UIA CHALLENGES

Challenge	Level	Observations
1. Leadership for implementation	Medium to Low	At the present moment there appears to be a lot of political turmoil in the UK at large and in the 3 partner cities in particular. However, the analysis goes towards Low, as Coventry, Wolverhampton and Birmingham appear to have developed a very positive pro-active attitude to the migration question.
2. Public procurement	Low	Most of the buying power lies with the partners of the project, so the risk of difficulties at the level of public procurement is analysed at Low. The city of Coventry, as the project manager is only a 3 rd party to these activities.
3. Integrated cross-departmental working	Low	Collaboration between departments in the lead local authority is at a good level in terms of functioning. However, progress could be made in terms of stronger buy in into the questions and challenges of migration.
4. Adopting a participative approach	Low	Participatory methods and techniques constitute the nucleus of the project itself, so all the work done through steering groups, working groups and the capacity the partners have shown to adapt the invented programmes to the needs of the beneficiaries (changes in the 10-week training programme) indicate that the participation vector can only become stronger.
5. Monitoring and evaluation	Medium	Coventry University, who was the instigator of the project at the very beginning has some very solid experience and know-how. The City firmly believes that it will deliver. The only remaining question is whether the evaluation will be able to help improve the project WP during the existing timeline.
6. Financial Sustainability	Low	In the current austerity climate, it would appear that the financial capacity of the project and its partners is sufficient. However, in the medium to long run this may become Medium or High, due to unknowns in the national policy and Brexit.
7. Communicating with target beneficiaries	Medium	One of the challenges of the whole project is the question of communication – agreeing on the fundamental principles of the project, carrying the same simple message and developing tools to communicate to the various stakeholders: residents, partners and decision makers. Additionally, there is a challenge on communication at the level of the West Midlands Combined Authority, which should be done in partnership with the West Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership.
8. Upscaling	Medium	The project has just taken off and the management team will have to confront the question of up-scaling in the very near future. For the moment it is not an element of intense concern.

5.3 Progress made from Day 1

5.3.1 Functioning of the partnership

The progressive start-up of the project has come to fruition, through the employment of all the needed staff and their induction into the projects methodology and thinking. This was lived through as a long process, but as is well known, if the preparatory stage of a project is not carefully

prepared and executed, this may endanger later developments. Obviously there remains a lot to do, considering, that where the lead partner took on additional responsibilities, these now must reside with each and every partner.

5.3.2 Putting into place of the first pilot actions

The first pilot actions have already taken place and have shown that what was planned does not necessarily correspond exactly to the needs of the beneficiaries. The project partners have been very supple in their approach and have contributed to changes, which may be minor and concern timing of interventions, or additional support. This has

made the pilot actions particularly successful, as they have positive results for the beneficiaries and have moulded several partners into having very strong and exceptional relations. This form of innovative experimentation will be carried forward into other areas of the project, and will be described in more detail at a later stage.

5.3.3 Harnessing existing potential of partners and developing them

The project was obviously built on the existing competences of the identified partners. However, the first actions have shown, that the partners are capable of developing their actions further and benefit from the UIA financing to become more robust in what they do. This is especially

the case in the participative approaches, which are being built around Health Champions, Citizen Journalists and Citizen Social Scientists, which directly implicate residents from the migrant and refugee groups into being active in their communities and with surrounding neighbours.

5.3.4 Monitoring and evaluation

All Urban Innovative Actions have to be capable of showing the impact that the project is making, as these are experimental and innovative actions, which should be made transferable to other cities facing similar challenges. Coventry University has prepared very advanced tools to produce the monitoring and evaluation elements, which should allow the partners to see the impact of their actions. This process is just starting,

but already the situation with employers has been initiated and the needs which they have stimulate the project to work in the direction of more information and training. What appears as the most important is that the planned time scale of the impacts corresponds to what the project partners can do to improve their actions during the operational phase of the project.

5.4 MiFRIENDLYCITIES added value so far

The project addresses a highly volatile subject; migrants and refugees, from the angle of their added value, as assets to the local communities, the local economy etc. Statistics show that the vast majority of these displaced persons want to work to earn their living. Many cities in Europe are confronted with the same challenges, which come to a focal point about how do we live together? These approaches have been worked upon through the Eurocities network, where for example Ghent and Barcelona have mentored Gdansk, a northern Polish city in its handbook on migrants²¹ also published in English.

„We want to give immigrants a chance for a dignified and normal life here. We want to fight exclusion... I am convinced that the solutions developed within the Immigrant Integration Model in the area of education, health, housing, social assistance, employment, culture, local communities, violence, and discrimination will

help us act more effectively and create a friendly and safe Gdansk for all, both the municipal institutions and local communities where the residents and immigrants meet”. *Paweł Adamowicz, mayor of Gdansk*²²

However, the position of the West Midlands partnership is original, not only because it joins the efforts of three large cities, but because it is attempting to really work through the steps of integration in a very practical way. The legacy of the project is crucial to the West Midlands (See more from Liz Gaulton, Director of Health & Wellbeing, Coventry City Council on the project’s legacy)²³. The implication of the beneficiaries into the active part of the project constitutes a real advance as it does not make them the aim, but the means to achieve integration. The communication value of this type of approach may well constitute the biggest added value of the project in the future.

5.5 Next steps

The aim of this first Journal is to present a condensed version of the project, so that readers can gain a first impression of what is being done. In the spring of 2019 a second Journal will be produced, where more attention will be paid not only to some specific partners, but also to the

beneficiaries. A specific look at the processes of change may be included.

The innovative actions in which the beneficiaries become the actors of the project will of course be highlighted, in each of the following Journals.

²¹ http://www.wup.gdansk.pl/g2/2017_03/2a4585b2e4931df8ecf7e518cdbe3cfc.pdf

²² The mayor of Gdansk was murdered on the stage of a charity concert on the 13 January 2019.

²³ See video here: <https://youtu.be/dtC9axyKuUE>

Urban Innovative Actions (UIA) is an Initiative of the European Union that provides urban areas throughout Europe with resources to test new and unproven solutions to address urban challenges. Based on article 8 of ERDF, the Initiative has a total ERDF budget of EUR 372 million for 2014-2020.

UIA projects will produce a wealth of knowledge stemming from the implementation of the innovative solutions for sustainable urban development that are of interest for city practitioners and stakeholders across the EU. This journal is a paper written by a UIA Expert that captures and disseminates the lessons learnt from the project implementation and the good practices identified. The journals will be structured around the main challenges of implementation identified and faced at local level by UIA projects. They will be published on a regular basis on the UIA website.



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