

EUROPEAN WEEK OF REGIONS AND CITIES - SIDE EVENT

Wednesday, 12th October

Delegation of the Basque Country to the EU

“Regional and local measures to develop the potential of refugees”

Regional and local authorities have gathered in Brussels, on October 12th, to discuss impactful measures in order to fully integrate migrants and refugees in their society, thus developing their full potential. As outcome of the day, participants agreed that these practices need to be holistic, accessible and exchangeable.

The [Erasmus+ project TALENTS](#) is an example of cooperation and exchange of best practices: it aims at up-scaling and implementing “pilot” projects in the participating regions.

The partner institutions from Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Norway and Sweden are responsible for the political and strategic steering of education and integration on the regional and local level, they are experts in the field of validation and guidance, they offer language classes, development of intercultural competences and vocational training and do research on integration issues.

Specific objectives of the project are to analyse, build up, test and further develop European role models, guidelines and tools for guidance, training and company cooperation to support the access of adult immigrants and refugees to the labour market by:

- a. analysing existing regional guidance settings and training curricula (including intensive language trainings combined with professional language, professional skills and company cooperations). The heart and driving force of the project is the “[Hotel Talents](#)” project of the City of Gothenburg.
- b. testing these training concepts in different regions and countries and in different economic sectors, mainly sectors with a lack of qualified workers, e.g. hotelery and gastronomy, health sector etc.
- c. scientifically following up the project and do research e.g. on how such guidance, training concepts can be adapted to needs of different groups of immigrants (high-qualified, low-qualified, persons with traumas etc.), to legal backgrounds and to financing systems
- d. amending the pilot concepts and defining flexible role models for different target groups, sectors, legal backgrounds and financing systems
- e. developing European guidelines and tools which allow to introduce flexible guidance and training curricula in different EU countries
- f. developing modules that can be used independently from full integration concepts

(tools for validation and guidance, curricula for language training, professional skills training etc.)

- g. developing teacher trainings to support the transfer of concepts

The **TALENTS project will officially start in November 2016** and for three years will see the implementation of pilot actions in the members regions. Those actions are tailored according to the needs of each and every society of arrival of the refugees, but are all based on the revolutionary experience of the “Hotel Talents” in Gothenburg. As specified during the conference, **EARLALL invites all interested regions and local authorities to contact the Secretariat in Brussels for further engagement in and information on pilot projects.**

The diversification and transferability of pilot projects constitutes in fact one of the main features of TALENTS. The overall aim is to put migrants to work, teaching the basics (from language to work tools) and starting a career; for this reasons TALENTS includes institutions involved in integration, counsellors involved in the validation of competences, teachers, social workers, persons working in labour market partners institutions, representatives of civil society and businesses.

*Here are some of the **main messages** addressed in the conference.*

The introductory panel saw the presentations of some best practices in integration from Earlall members: Region Västra Götaland, Baden Württemberg, City of Gothenburg and City of Stuttgart. Political representatives had an exchange of views with Mr Laurent Aujean, from DG HOME Migration and Integration.

During the event, many comments from the audience asked for a European « hub » on integration of migrants, in societies and job markets. Mr Aujean, from the EU Commission, pointed out that such a framework already exists.

In fact, regarding the integration of third-country nationals in EU Member States, the main EU portal with up-to-date information is the [European website on Integration \(EWSI\)](#). It provides information on:

- a. action at EU level in all policy areas relevant to integration,
- b. country-specific data (for instance responsible authorities and indicators),
- c. integration practices (that have been evaluated and) considered as good,
- d. access to EU funding (for instance to AMIF or ESF funded opportunities, as well as a library with news, documents and relevant events.
- e. This website is, since several years, a key tool for actors involved in integration in EU Member States and the Commission has been revamped its look and content since this Summer (2016) to make it even more practical.

Many have noticed how little information is available for migrants about life in Europe, and most of all on all the procedures necessary to obtain a visa. However, in addition to the European website on Integration, it should also be pointed out that the Commission hosts the [Immigration Portal](#) which contains information for third-country nationals willing to live or work in the EU, for instance what to do before leaving (e.g. the procedures to obtain a visa or a residence permit), how to avoid falling into irregular forms of migration and/or employment, who are the responsible authorities and who to contact if more advice is needed.

The second panel focused on the role of civil society to release migrants' potential. Participants learned from projects undertaken in specific sectors of learning, especially languages and business literacy. Speakers learned upon the vast array of different initiatives undertaken across Europe to teach migrants and refugees the local and national languages and thus have easier access to the market; but also parallel cultural activities. Ms Blanca Brenosa Saez de Ibarra, from DG HOME Migration and Protection at the European Commission, shared her vision and experience.

Mr Adnan Abdul Ghani, founder of the initiative [Support Group](#) in Restad refugee camp in Västra Götaland, gave an inspiring speech on the refugees' perspective. He explained that what they really need is not compassion or victimisation, but rather a comprehensive access to all services the destination country can offer.



Earlall @EarlallEU · Oct 12
"We need to switch from 'victimisation' to empowering. Teach us how to buy a bus ticket, how to use your bank cards."
#EUWRC
#TALENTS



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Earlall @EarlallEU · Oct 12
"There are no welcoming programmes for refugees in Europe. It's as if we still lived in our country."
Adnan, Syrian refugee
#EUWRC
#TALENTS



← ↻ 1 ❤️ || ⋮



- City of Gothenburg – [Mr Jan Elftorp](#), Director Labour Market & Adult Educ. Department
- City of Stuttgart – [Mr Gari Pavkovic](#), Head of Department for Integration
- European Commission – [Mr Laurent Aujean](#), DG HOME Migration and Integration
Panel debate featuring Q&A with the audience

11.30-12.15 *Light lunch*

12.15-14.00 **Building on civil society to release migrants' potential**

- Support Group: integration led by refugees – [Mr Adnan Abdul Ghani](#), Founder of the initiative in Restad refugee camp, Västra Götaland, Sweden
- DoubleCup: integration initiated by business – [Mr Dick Eriksson](#), Director Business Relations, City of Trollhättand, Västra Götaland
- Volunteers in language and literacy education for adult migrants – [Ms Eline Dragt](#), “Het begint met taal”, Utrecht/ The Netherlands
- Time to build bridges – [Mr David Lopez](#), President of the Lifelong Learning Platform
- Opportunities at EU level – [Ms Brenosa Saez de Ibarra](#), Policy Officer, DG HOME Migration and Protection, Asylum

Panel debate featuring Q&A with the audience

14.00-14.15 *Coffee break*

14.15-16.00 **Case studies and future challenges**

- Education Campus for refugees – [Mr Rolf Ackermann](#), Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports Baden-Württemberg
- Integral Integration Approach at vhs Stuttgart – [Dr. Franziska Diller](#), Project and Education Manager for Urban Districts & [Ms Renata Delic](#), Head of Unit German as a Foreign Language and Integration, [Volkshochschule Stuttgart](#)

Think forward: next steps

16.30-17.00 **Concluding remarks by Michel Lefranc**

