

Newsletter



europaean regional and
local authorities on asylum
and immigration

ERLAI responds on proposed asylum and immigration funds

The ERLAI network is contributing to the debate on the next generation of EU funds on asylum and immigration.

In April 2005, the European Commission launched proposals for funding under the next EU budget on:

- the integration of legal migrants
- the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees
- the return of failed asylum seekers and irregular migrants

To contribute to the debate, the ERLAI Network decided to carry out a survey of local and regional stakeholders to examine where funding is currently lacking at local and regional level. A questionnaire was developed and sent to ERLAI members and other local and regional representations in Brussels for distribution in their regions and localities.

30 responses were received from Italy, the UK, Germany, Spain, Austria, Finland and Sweden. These came from

a range of sectors: primarily local authorities, but also NGOs, charities and research institutions.

The results were presented to the Commission at last year's ERLAI practitioners' conference on EU policy and networking. We are currently working on a written report of our findings.

Key findings on current service provision include:

- asylum seekers, refugees, legal and irregular migrants are, in many countries, receiving services delivered at the local level, especially by the local and regional authorities;
- for services required by law, local budgets are often used as much as central-government ones;
- for additional services not required by law, central government finance appears less implicated than local finance and many local organisations look to further supplement resources with EU finance;
- even where services are required by law, the finance

available is rarely seen as sufficient to meet requirements.

Respondents put forward numerous proposals for where future EU funding could be directed, thus demonstrating the value attached to European funding in this area and the need to resource it sufficiently.

Whereas, at a national level, responses mainly highlighted resourcing specific services to meet particular needs, responses for the use transnational funding level took a bigger picture view with comparative studies and monitoring of standards, innovative pilot projects and exchanges of best practice all featuring prominently. A number of responses also suggested such actions should include partnership work with regions of origin where appropriate.

For a copy of the report, please contact ERLAI.

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Upcoming immigrant-integration conference in Brussels; two events in Germany

ERLAI is a co-organiser of an upcoming conference entitled "Local authorities for integration of immigrants" at the Committee of the Regions in Brussels on 22 February. There are also two integration-related events taking place in Germany in March.

ERLAI, Partenalia (European network of intermediate public administrations for territo-

rial cooperation) and Sigma (European Network of Intermediate Authorities for Culture and Proximity) are the co-sponsors and will also give presentations at the event. Other presentations include:

- the European Commission on INTI, the EU's fund for integration of third-country nationals;
- a roundtable on the role of local authorities in the integration process, with speak-

ers from the Committee of the Regions, Barcelona, Berlin and others.

An event on "Execution of integration concepts - German-French exchange of experiences" will take place on 14-18 March in Genshagen (Schloß) near Berlin. Contact: Berlin-Brandenburgisches Institute for German-French Cooperation in Europe, [institut@stiftung-](mailto:institut@stiftung-genshagen.de)

genshagen.de

An event entitled "Migration, integration and health - Intercultural health network" will take place on 15-16 March in Berlin; this will look at local intercultural practices in the health arena. Contact: Borough Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, gespl@ba-fk.verwalt-berlin.de

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Berlin agrees integration policy

In August 2005, the Berlin Senate adopted a new integration policy which is at present being discussed in a number of parliamentary and public sessions.

In 2005 a debate began in Germany on major reforms in the country's integration policy. Whereas the focus was laid largely on language courses that should help integrate new immigrants on the national level, a more fundamental approach was taken up on the communal and regional level.

The new programme addresses the inclusion of migrants and refugees with diverse residence status. It calls for a welcoming attitude towards new migrants and for the acceptance of cultural diversity as both a basic principle and an asset for the German capital city. Here, the concept of intercultural orientation is introduced which calls for the inclusion of migrants as clientele of



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any government action and education. public services.

Most importantly, the programme encompasses the activities of all major departments in the City-State's administration. Consequently, it includes social, economic and urban development as well as legal and culture policies. Strong emphasis is laid on the inclusion of migrants into the labour market as well as education, ranging from pre-school to vocational

Moreover, the programme underscores the Senate's basic position towards equal opportunities, rejecting any discrimination of migrants and calling for an inter-religious dialogue with Muslims. At the same time the Senate rejects all forms of political extremism, including anti-Semitism, supremacy and political Islam.

Within the Berlin Senate's

administration, the implementation of the policy is directed and moderated by the Commissioner of the Senate for Integration and Migration. At present, a set of measures is being discussed and eventually agreed upon with other departments.

Given that a large share of Berlin's population (approx. 13.5 %) does not hold a German passport, participation of the migrants' organisations are represented in the Council for Integration and Migration, a consultative body set up by the Senate in 2003. The Senate's integration policy is being discussed in that body. Also representatives of migrants' organisations are being consulted by parliamentary bodies on the subject.

The report (in German) can be downloaded from: www.berlin.de/sengsv/auslb/publikationen/beitraege.html

North London ERF project

The London Borough of Haringay recently completed the "Brighter Futures, Better Lives" project, which was part-funded by the European Refugee Fund.

Refugees experience many barriers in accessing the labour market and these contribute to their social exclusion and significantly higher unemployment rates. Barriers include poor English language skills, basic skills (literacy, numeracy, ICT), a lack of work experience and information on opportunities in education, training, and employment.

The project managed by the London Borough of Haringay was delivered by 5E Ltd and



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the North London Partnership Consortium (NLPC). 5E provided vocational ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) and basic ICT as well as support with

interview skills and c.v. preparation. NLPC in addition to securing volunteer placements also organised an open day to promote volunteering. It also produced a

guide for volunteers and a guide for host organisations which aims to ensure that the experience for both parties is meaningful and of mutual benefit.

Some of the lessons learnt include the need to:

- undertake locally based research into refugee communities' educational background and vocational training needs;
- provide sufficient resources to deliver vocational ESOL and a volunteer/work experience programme;
- develop links with local employers and connect their needs to the education and training content of such proposals.

Stockholm mental-health project



Stockholm County Council recently completed a project financed by the European Refugee Fund that assessed a model for screening the mental health of newly-arrived asylum seekers.

In a one-year project (November 2004 – October 2005) co-financed by the European Refugee Fund and Stockholm County Council, the research question raised was: is it possible to use a short computerized screening instrument as a complementary method to general health screening to identify the presence of somatic and mental ill health among recently arrived asylum seekers? The primary aim was the early detection

of mental health-related needs and psychosocial vulnerability factors among adult asylum seekers who needed a follow up in an acute psychosocial model with evaluation. The inclusion criteria were adults who had arrived in Sweden less than four months before. A nurse interviewed the asylum seeker, with an interpreter available, after an informed consent procedure. When the asylum seeker confirmed at least a trauma, he or she was invited to be followed up by a psychologist for three sessions.

The results of the project were that 55 of 75 asylum seekers were interviewed, 18 women and 37 men. The average age was 31 years old

and they came from 28 countries. The four most common issues were worries about their family (85,5%), experience of trauma before arrival (78,2%), depressed feelings (70,9%) and having difficulties to cope with life events (67,3%). Women had a tendency to be more depressed than men. Those with trauma scored significantly higher on feeling depressed, sleeping problems and concentration problems. One third (36,4%, 20 in total; 13 men and 7 women) were referred to an acute care follow up by psychologist. Half of these were assessed as having depression and all of them had trauma before arrival.

In conclusion, the project

demonstrated positive experiences regarding systematizing an acute psychosocial model including assessment and follow up. It is significant to be clear about the purpose of the screening. In order to do this, we need resources such as facilitating social network, collaboration with local Migration Board and professional interpreters.

Lastly, we are now looking for similar practices around Europe in order to share experiences and learn more on this subject.

S. Ekblad et al. For more information contact: Solvig.Ekblad@ipm.ki.se

New opportunities for immigrant women in Valencia

The public enterprise of the County Council of Valencia, IMELSA, is running the "Don@m oportunitats" project under the EU Equal programme. The project consortium also includes the Fundación Comunidad Valenciana-Región Europea and seven other partners.

Don@m draws up a strategy to detect and study the most urgent problems for immigrant women in the participating regions in order to create tools for social and labour inclusion, education and promotion of equal opportunities.



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The project focuses on women and family reunification possibilities, considering the risks of social exclusion, racism and xenophobia. It also looks at human and social resources and education in relation to employment.

Among other actions, "Don@m oportunitats" stresses the importance of intercultural mediation training for employment and social affairs experts, focusing on the gender perspective

and how to bring about opportunities.

On the other hand, the immigrant population requires cultural resources to overcome social barriers. Thus, the project will stimulate

education in the destination country's language and culture, knowledge of the socioeconomic structure in the region, training in personal and labour skills for integration.

One of the fundamental pillars for the project's success is transnationality, developed through co-operation agreements with other European development associations. The objective is to establish a common transnational project, in parallel with the rest of activities carried out by development associations in each one of the national territories.

The project will run for three years.

Network partners



The full partnership is as follows: **Germany:** Berlin, Hessen, Lower Saxony. **Greece:** Drama-Kavala-Xanthi, Preveza, Rodopi-Evros, Thermaikos. **Italy:** Emilia-Romagna (*lead partner*), Sicily. **Spain:** Andalusia, Castilla La Mancha, Comunidad Valenciana, Extremadura, Murcia. **Sweden:** East Sweden (Östergötland), Mid-Sweden, Stockholm. **United Kingdom:** Association of London Government, East of England, Greater London Authority, Greater Manchester, Kent, Merseyside, Scottish Executive, Yorkshire and Humberside

Below are profiles of some ERLAI members. Other regions' profiles feature in other *ERLAI Newsletter* issues.



- Emilia-Romagna is situated in the North of Italy. It has 4,200,000 inhabitants over 22.140 km². About 7% of the population is non-EU citizens, of which 45% are women and 20 % minors. 30% are from Eastern Europe (Albania, Romania); 26% from North Africa (Morocco, Tunisia); 11% from Sub-Saharan Africa (Senegal); and 5% from South America.

They are mostly involved in agriculture, construction, housework and domestic assistance.

- In March 2004, the regional government adopted a new law on the social integration of third country citizens (including asylum seekers and refugees), concerning language courses and cultural mediators, housing and health policies, intercultural communication activities, access to public services and information campaigns. The Government has also promoted 2 regional networks on asylum and intercultural centers.

- Regione Emilia-Romagna EU Liaison Office, Chiara Rossetti, chiara.rossetti@optinet.be ER law on social integration of migrants (IT-EN) http://www.regione.emilia-romagna.it/autonomie/collana_riformeperidiritto/leggi4.htm



- Yorkshire and Humber (Y&H), a region of almost five million people in northern England, has a long and proud history of immigration. Nationalities include Pakistanis, Indians, Poles and Ukrainians. More recently, there have been arrivals from Kosovo, Somalia and Iraq. Currently, Y&H receives the highest number of dispersed asylum seekers from London and the South East of England. At any one time, it is estimated that 10.000-11.000 asylum seekers are housed in Y&H and that between 4.000-7.000 annually could decide to settle following a positive decision.

- To better integrate these new arrivals a Regional Integration Strategy for Asylum Seekers and Refugees has been developed by key regional and local stakeholders, which recognises the benefits in welcoming new refugees and to create fair and equal access for them to services and opportunities within the region.

Yorkshire and Humber European Office, Benito Giordano, benito@yorkshire.be



- Catalonia is situated in the North-East of Spain, 31.894.2 sq kms, with 6,813,000 inhabitants (2004). About 11,5% are migrants (806.062). The main regions and countries of origin are: Latin America (38%)- Ecuador, Colombia, Argentina; North Africa (28%)- basically from Morocco (first foreign migrants to Catalonia); Asia (9%)- China, Pakistan, India, Philippines; Sub Saharan Africa

(5%)- Senegal; Eastern Europe- Romania, Ukraine and Russia. The migrant population works mostly in construction, services, housework and domestic assistance.

- Delegation of the Catalan Government in Brussels, Anna Montaner, anna.montaner@infoeuropa.org



- The East of England is a diverse region that is home to over 5.4 million people. It consists of medium-sized urban areas, many near to London, mixed with market towns and smaller rural settlements. Around 43% of the population lives in rural local authority areas. While the overall black and ethnic minority population is relatively small, it is concentrated in particular areas, for example 28% of the population of the town of Luton.

Over recent years there has been a steady increase in the number of migrant workers moving into the region, it is estimated that there could be around 50-80,000 migrant workers out of 2.8

million economically active people.

- "Migrant Workers in the East of England" is a major study undertaken by the East of England Development Agency (EEDA) in 2005. It suggested that 50,000 new migrants would contribute around £360 million a year in revenue. Migrants are working principally in agriculture, construction, health provision, food processing, hotels and catering, cleaning, and manufacturing.

- East of England European Partnership, Amy Williams awilliams@eastofengland.be; Jackie Eveleigh jev-eleigh@eastofengland.be; www.eastofengland.be

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