

# CEB-OECD CONFERENCE ON THE LOCAL INTEGRATION OF REFUGEES

## CONCLUDING REMARKS – DOROTHÉE ALLAIN-DUPRE

27 February 2023

*Please note that only spoken words prevail*

It is my pleasure to conclude this CEB - OECD conference on the local integration of refugees.

- Thank all panellists for sharing very interesting insights throughout the day
- And thank you to all participants – in the room and online – we were about 30 in the room but had 80 online earlier today
- As we close this event, I think it is clear to all of us here that local integration of refugees is a **multifaceted process** that requires the cooperation of all stakeholders national, regional and local governments, NGOs, private actors, development banks and financial institutions – and of course the refugees themselves.
- Our focus today was mainly on the local integration of refugees from Ukraine but of course, refugee support is not only needed in the most recent crisis and not limited to refugees from Ukraine, but must extend to refugees from any country of origin, and there are many good practices that we can learn from the integration of Ukrainian refugees.
- So many interesting ideas have been shared, I won't try to summarise everything but I would like to briefly mention **8 main take aways** in my concluding remarks:
  - 1) First, **evidence and data are fundamental on this topic**, to stick to objective facts. This is in the DNA of the OECD to provide such facts, and we began with presentations providing sound evidence on the geographical dispersion of refugees across and within countries, their integration outcomes and needs, in terms of housing, health, education and jobs. It is crucial to provide a sound narrative on this essential question, and in light of the increasing politicisation of integration policy-making – as was repeatedly mentioned today.
  - 2) Second, we highlighted that in all OECD countries, whatever the institutional context, the policies for migrant integration are managed by **multiple layers of government and cut across multiple sectors** – from housing and employment to education and health/welfare. But a **lack of coordination across these different layers** affects the delivery of critical public services to migrants. Be it for the short term or the longer term, there is a **multi-sector** and **multi-level governance** imperative in the management of this refugee crisis, as local, regional and national governments need to work together to find appropriate responses.

It was widely recognised in the discussion that the coordination of actors in response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis has been extensive and that the political response has been strong. But the discussion also highlighted the challenges in extending these good practices to the integration of all refugees, and not just the ones coming from Ukraine. many participants mentioned the fact that the Ukrainian refugee crisis could help change the narrative locally & globally around refugees and migrants.

- 3) Third, we highlighted the **need for place-based approaches** ensure the integration of refugees, taking into account different local situations, given that they different significantly within countries. One-size fits all approaches cannot work – when for example 15% of Ukrainian refugees in Poland are concentrated in 1 city like Warsaw. The specific metropolitan challenges need to be taken into account, as we heard with Amsterdam and Prague, but the specific challenges of small and medium-size cities also need to be well understood, and here the focus on perceptions is particularly important.
- 4) Fourth, and linked to the previous one: a key challenge that all OECD countries face, is the need to ensure a **more geographically balanced contribution of migrants to regional development**. Less than 1 in 5 countries which responded to the OECD-CoR survey have incentives to move to small and medium size cities. Some countries have been more successful than others in that respect. Whether a country is successful, or not, depends largely on having the right policies in place, and the **right coordination mechanisms across levels of government**.
- 5) Fifth, we highlighted the **critical role that NGOs play in supporting refugees**, both in terms of providing direct assistance and creating opportunities for employment and social interaction. This is notably true in rural areas where refugees must cope with structural weaknesses such as a lack of public transport. We heard inspiring examples from SINGA. We also heard inspiring examples from Prague and Amsterdam on the links between municipalities and civil society organisations
- 6) Sixth, we discussed the **financing needs for effective local integration**, with a focus on responding to the needs of new refugees from Ukraine. Several speakers highlighted that SNGs need financial & admin support to make the most of existing funding sources, given the lack of capacities in the municipalities to deal with the complex administrative processes, notably for smaller municipalities – but not only, as mentioned in the last panel. Speakers shared their experiences, good practices, and challenges, notably in relation to European funds. Good practices like one-stop shop for services for refugees integration provide considerable benefits. We also focused on the benefits of better coordination among businesses and **local authorities**.
- 7) **Seventh** we insisted upon the benefits of the **“dual intent” approach** –. The dual intent is making sure that the skills of displaced Ukrainians continue to be built,

focusing on the integration, while at the same time not hampering a return to Ukraine once the situation allows for that.

- 8) And **last but not least, we shared throughout the day inspiring examples of successful integration initiatives from different parts of the world throughout the day, which** are essential for regions, cities, governments to continue improve their integration policies.

As we all know, **mass migration is a never-ending phenomenon** for which national and subnational governments need to prepare for, especially as we face the prospect of over a billion people displaced by 2050 due to climate change.

The Vice Governor of CEB Johannes Boehmer has reminded in his introduction that the **number of people forced to flee their homes and find shelter either within their own country or across international borders has almost doubled** from 51 million people in 2013 to more than 100 million people in 2022.

Most recently, the devastating earthquake in **central and southern Türkiye and northern Syria** provides yet another unfortunate reminder of the need for robust and adaptive integration policies.

With 2.2 million people displaced, the disaster may lead to additional population outflows. Also, given that half of Türkiye's 3.5 million Syrian refugees where living in the impacted region, many of these displaced populations are now more vulnerable than ever.

These ever-evolving challenges facing refugees and their host communities are the reason why the continued support of financial institutions such as the Development Bank of the Council of Europe is so crucial.

It is also why we need to continue to have debates and discussions such as the ones we've had today.

I am confident that the conversations and ideas exchanged during this conference will contribute to shaping more effective policies and practices for the local integration of refugees.

Following the workshop, we will post the proceedings on our web site and continue our efforts to share good practices across countries and work towards a better integration of refugees

As we move forward, let us continue to work together, across sectors and borders, to create more inclusive and prosperous societies for all.

Thank you for your active participation!

Thank you again to the CEB for the great partnership in the organisation of this event.

I wish you all a safe journey back home.