

# International conference on migrants' labour market integration in European cities

Exchange on successful strategies and challenges

## Documentation of the conference

---

On 2 May 2022, about 100 participants from various European metropolises came together for an exchange of expertise on urban strategies and projects to support migrants' labour market participation. The conference was organised by the project "[European Berlin](#)".

**Katja Kipping, Berlin's senator for Integration, Labour and Social Affairs**, and Dr. Christian Pfeffer-Hoffmann, managing director of Minor, opened the conference. Katja Kipping emphasised that in the past and currently Berlin has attracted many and diverse groups of migrants and refugees who have had a decisive impact on economic development and the city's society. The influx of numerous young and well-educated people from the EU and from third countries, but especially the currently high number of people who fled the war in Ukraine, comes with the responsibility to promote migrants' and refugees' access to the labour market and to fair paid jobs. From the senator's perspective, the exchange with other European cities offers an ideal opportunity to learn from each other about best practices and solutions to existing challenges.

Subsequently **Dr. Lars Ludolph**, an economist at the **OECD's** Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities (CFE), held a **keynote speech** on the role of large cities, which are particularly attractive to migrants and refugees for historical, demographic and economic reasons. Mr. Ludolph pointed out the key reasons for difficulties in accessing the labour market, which were also repeatedly addressed in the following project presentations. These included f. ex. the lack of recognition of foreign vocational and educational qualifications, uncertain prospects of staying and traumata among refugees, language skills, but also discrimination. Although national legislation sets the framework at many levels, cities can successfully use the existing room for manoeuvre and complement labour market and education policies - especially by focusing on migrants' strengths.

**Panel I** focused on projects or city strategies that strengthen the labour market participation of migrants with low formal qualifications. Two **Berlin** projects providing online migration counselling pointed out the advantages of reaching out to migrants in their first languages, which allows for fast and direct communication of information, legal counselling and counselling for typically difficult-to-

The project "European Berlin. Analysis and development for the labour market integration of EU immigrants" is funded by the Berlin Senate, Department for Integration, Labour and Social Affairs.

reach target groups such as so-called “live-in” care workers. In the following, the projects from **Gothenburg** and **Ghent** presented their activities, that centre on a holistic approach and individual, close support for low-skilled people. What distinguishes the cities’ strategies is that depending on the life situation and goals of the individuals, job placement can take place in parallel with other services such as language courses or apartment hunting, instead of being a prerequisite. The city of **Amsterdam** also funds activities that connect migrants and refugees with potential employers. In addition, one project also focuses on strengthening soft skills that are indispensable for finding a job and supports people in developing these skills through storytelling techniques.

The panel speakers agreed that **sufficient time for individual guidance**, but also a **focus on individual strengths** and the **appreciation of foreign qualifications** play an essential role in supporting people in finding good and sustainable employment and in promoting their general wellbeing.

In **panel II**, several projects presented their approaches to supporting (highly) skilled migrants on their way into the labour market. The Agency for Employment **Berlin** South and the Berlin IQ Network made the start: They have, among other things, developed tools for skills assessment for people with different educational backgrounds (e. g. the programme "MySkills") and multilingual counselling services for the recognition of foreign educational and vocational qualifications in Germany. The City of **Munich** and the IQ-Network offer, in addition to counselling on the recognition of foreign qualifications, a mentoring programme in which professionally experienced mentors and new immigrants from the same industry exchange ideas and jointly develop a specific career strategy. The **Vienna** Business Agency sets a different focus by emphasising the economic potential of business creation by migrants: Vienna’s programme supports them on this path with free and multilingual coaching, workshops and guidance services. **Bilbao** and the **Bizkaia region** also focus on attracting and retaining international professionals: To this end, the project “Bizkaia Talent” works with companies, public institutions and with migrants, their partners and Spanish returnees, supporting them with a holistic programme - from advice on administrative matters to career counselling and social activities.

The diverse panel contributions made it clear that **focusing on potentials** together with **multilingual counselling on the recognition of foreign qualifications, on sector-specific career paths** but also **on the potentials of self-employment** are promising strategies for attracting and supporting international skilled workers.

**Kirsten Bagusch-Sauermann, Head of the Unit "Labour Policy and Regulatory Issues in Vocational Education and Training" at the Berlin Senate**, and Dr. Christian Pfeffer-Hoffmann (Minor) closed the conference. Ms. Bagusch-Sauermann was pleased with the impressions gained during the event and with the opportunity to further develop Berlin’s offers by exchanging with experts from other cities. The issue of attracting and retaining skilled workers is key for all European cities and entails the task of continuously promoting migrants’ participation in the labour market. In his concluding remarks, **Dr. Christian Pfeffer-Hoffmann** pointed out the similarities in the approaches of the various cities. In his

The project "European Berlin. Analysis and development for the labour market integration of EU immigrants" is funded by the Berlin Senate, Department for Integration, Labour and Social Affairs.

view, it is crucial to focus on people's strengths and to promote their further development. Good cooperation and an active exchange between the various cities will continue to play an essential role for the continuous development of their respective strategies.

---

Many thanks to all speakers of the conference! We would like to thank Senator Katja Kipping, Kirsten Bagusch-Sauermann, Dr. Lars Ludolph and all the panellists: Nesrien Abu Ghazaleh, Andrada Catranici, Dr. Yasemin Haack, Carmen Mendez de Castro, Tina Naga, Wendy Neyrinck, Sofia Olsson Quist, Agnieszka Skwarek, Anna Stahl-Czechowska, Louise Stiernström, Yannick Thuy, Tülay Tuncel, Mihaela-Violeta Vochin, Maaïke Wit.

The speakers' presentations are available for download on this website. For questions and suggestions, please contact Dr. Anne von Oswald ([a.oswald@minor-kontor.de](mailto:a.oswald@minor-kontor.de)).

The project "European Berlin. Analysis and development for the labour market integration of EU immigrants" is funded by the Berlin Senate, Department for Integration, Labour and Social Affairs.