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Crossroad of the Regions - fostering involvement of
all citizens in local life to Improve Social COhesion

CRISCO project – Cities’ network Theme: “Cultural and social barriers to integration”

5th March 2018

Maison des Associations, Strasbourg, France

Organized by: ALDA

Taking place within the first reporting period, the **Strasbourg’s Local Panel of Stakeholders** met on Monday 5th March 2018. This meeting took the form of a reflection workshop with interventions from varied stakeholders (local authorities as well as NGOs) who reviewed the existing local initiatives in terms of welcoming migrants. The focus was particularly put on the comparison between Germany’s and France’s legal and structural ways to welcome migrants and refugees, and how to overcome social barriers in migrants’ and refugees’ integration.

Introduction of the meeting

The meeting was opened with an introduction word from **Mr. Thomas Chandesris, volunteer in the JRS Welcome network** which aims to provide temporary housing to asylum seekers in France. Mr. Chandesris stressed the diversity of the reflection group, and its original idea: not only think about migrants and refugees related issues but also act in Strasbourg and in Alsace. This is how the JRS’ branch in Strasbourg was launched, which activities are not limited to housing since a lot of activities are required to ease the integration of asylum seekers and refugees.

Then, **Agata de Latour, project manager and responsible of French networks at ALDA**, explained ALDA’s role in this meeting. ALDA was created by the Local Powers Congress of the Council of Europe 19 years ago, to coordinate the Local Democracy Agencies in the Balkans and Caucase, and support local democracy implementation in these territories after the end of communism. Today, ALDA’s aim is to facilitate the link between citizens and local authorities on diverse topics (migrant integration, sustainable development anchored locally, sustainable energy, co-creation of local policies...). ALDA has 5 offices in Europe and a great network of more than 300 members acting in 40 EU Countries and in the EU’s neighbourhood countries. ALDA is an independent NGO who



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receives funds from the EU and implements many European projects on, among others, topics relating to migrants and refugees' integration in their host societies. Therefore, ALDA is interested in internationalizing this Local Panel of Stakeholders' work and good practices, to disseminate it towards other organizations in the CRISCO project.

Finally, **Kevin Sauques from ALDA's Strasbourg Office** introduced the project CRISCO to the participants of the meeting. The project's aim is to foster citizen's participation in local life and cohesion between citizens. An important part of the participant cities' foreigners are not sufficiently integrated in the general population. Therefore, the project's objectives are to

- create reflection groups in each participant city on social cohesion and how to associate some members of the community such as refugees and migrants to other citizens
- create networks between these 10 cities to reinforce the durability of the good practices shared in the reflection groups, and to disseminate them

The project is conceived as a starting point, the initiation of a wider movement who will then disseminate these good practices at the European level. The project is based on a **territory approach**, opposed to a community approach, meaning that it aims to reach every citizen of the participant cities and not only a public of migrants or refugees.

During the project, 4 transnational events are scheduled to happen in Italy, France, Denmark and Belgium. The first one will happen in Bassano, Italy, from 14th to 16th March 2018. This meeting in Strasbourg therefore aims to work upstream on the matters that will be discussed in Italy, since each reflection group will send 5 delegates to the transnational event to carry the good practices presented in one city and open a dialogue with the European partners on possible solutions, in a bottom-up approach.

Presentation of good practices to overcome social barriers to integration: a comparison between Germany and France

During the meeting, two speakers were invited: the first one is Mr. Dieter Eckert, lawyer, ex-first deputy mayor of Offenburg, local counsellor of the Ortenau Land, who introduced German's methods to overcome social and cultural barriers to migrants and refugees' integration, and in general to welcome these persons. The second one is Mr. David Robert, Chief Executive at SINGA France, an NGO dedicated to create bonds between refugees and their host society, by providing housing and organising common activities.

Dieter Eckert, lawyer – ex-first deputy mayor of Offenburg – local counsellor of the Ortenau Land





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Mr. Eckert aimed at answering the question of how Germany welcomes “so many migrants” and still manages to overcome cultural barriers. Was the successful welcoming of migrants in Germany a miracle or a coincidence? He started with some remarks on the legal and political context in Germany, to better understand this situation. He stressed that Germany's history has to be considered: from 1945 to 1947, the country was devastated and still welcomed 14 million refugees coming from the east of Germany. Albeit a difficult socio-economical situation, the German population managed to integrate these migrants. In the 1950s, 1,5 million people came from the communist German Democratic Republic and USSR, Poland, etc. In the 1970s, the number of asylum seekers has steadily grown. In 1992 only, 500 000 to 600 000 individuals migrated to Germany. So Germany has some experience in managing these issues.

The organisation of the German state is very different from the French state and quite different from other EU members. It is a very decentralized federal state, with the Bund dealing with foreign affairs, external matters, then 16 Länder who are, from a juridical point of view, states *per se* and deal with internal politics. Finally, the third level is the local authorities (territorial collectivities). In France there are 36 000 territorial collectivities, whereas in Germany there are 16 000 due to strong territorial reforms aiming at constituting strong collectivities from an administrative and financial point of view.

The constitutional and legal basis of the refugees and migrants welcoming is the art. 16A from the German constitution, which states that any individual, persecuted for political reasons, can be welcomed in Germany. It is enough that the individual wants to file a complaint saying that he is violated in his rights. The key principle of the German's organization is, much alike to the EU's organization, is the attribution of powers and specific competences to specific levels; therefore, the German state always acts according to the principle of subsidiarity, meaning that a central authority can only manage tasks that cannot be managed by a lower level such as the Länder or the territorial collectivity. There is a strong defiance towards centralism, central authorities, and a taste for local affairs.

So what about migrants in Germany ? Welcoming them at the borders is the first task for the Bund since it relates to external security. After that, the refugees are “allocated” to the Länder where they are welcomed and can complete their registration. Until the asylum process is over, temporary housing is provided for 2 years maximum which is normally sufficient to end the asylum application process. After that, “follow-up housing” is provided by the territorial collectivities for 2 years maximum, to give them the possibility to search for their own housing – this is mandatory for the collectivities. Every commune or municipality has available housing for homeless people (including asylum seekers and migrants). The social benefits, language and integration classes, sanitary services and scholarship, the housing, clothing, public transportation and feeding are free.



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In practice, in 2015, approximately 1 million people have arrived in Germany and were allocated to the Länder according to their size, for example:

North-Rhine Westphalia: 176 895 persons	Hesse: 55 478 persons
Baden-Württemberg: 79 051 persons	Rhineland-Palatinate: 31 516 persons
Low Saxony: 76 890 persons	Saarland: 6 319 persons
Bavaria: 76 269 persons	

In the Ortenaukreis, in 2015, 4150 individuals including 330 unaccompanied minors benefited from 48 supplementary housing that had to be built or took the place of other infrastructures such as sports centres, former school buildings, inhabitable containers... In Offenburg, during the same period, approximately 1000 migrants arrived and were housed in Landkreis accommodations. The city launched a welcoming process including aids to prepare people to lead a life in the German society, and to avoid social tensions during their stay in Offenburg. Since mid-2015, volunteers presented themselves to the city, from churches associations or NGOs, asking if they could participate and help. Up to 350 volunteers have made themselves available to the authorities and associations to help with the city's projects. A lot of them gave clothing, furniture, toys etc.

To conclude, Mr. Eckert said that while it is clear that, in Germany, the territorial collectivities bear the most of the responsibility in the welcoming of migrants and refugees, the integration process has only just begun. Housing, schools etc. are still needed and the collectivities need financial support to preserve the facilities already established. 30-40% of the newcomers are illiterate and 60% of them do not have the required qualifications to find work. Moreover, integration is a cultural concept, which doesn't echoes the same way for everyone. The management of the "2015 situation" was, in Mr. Eckert's opinion, not a miracle, and was made possible because Germany had strong regional administrations and clear financial tools to deal with this issue. It was therefore made possible because of

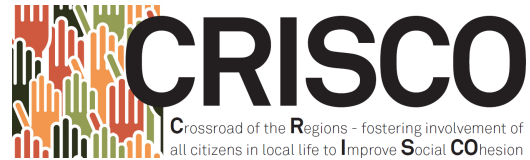
- strong local and regional administrations with clear competencies
- great asset of Offenburg: the neighbourhood centres for the welcoming of families
- some lasting structures in the civil society such as associations animated by churches
- a large number of volunteers, coordinated by the city, who sometimes created their own structures afterwards

Finally, Mr. Eckert quoted Albert Camus, who said that football is a real school of life; meaning that collective activities, stepping out of the context of "integration" *per se* such as language classes, can be a way to overcome social barriers. If it is true that some people who came to Germany in 2015 will never be able to adjust to work requirements or social life, and it is particularly true for women, the rest of them mostly need to "go out" and practice language skills by sharing common activities with the local population. For the professional insertion, the creation of non-technical jobs might be the solution, to adapt to the low-level





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of qualification of the target group. It is, in the end, a great social laboratory, constantly enriched by local initiatives and ideas.

David Robert, Chief Executive at SINGA France

Mr. Robert started his presentation by introducing SINGA and SINGA's main working idea: that the difference between a newcomer and a local is the social capital (family, friends, contacts, networks...). SINGA aims to be the "Tinder between newcomers and the French society". They want to work on the social capital of the newcomers, an idea born from the offset between some associations' actions and the field reality. SINGA also prefers to talk about "**inclusion**" rather than "**integration**", a word that suggests, in their point of view, a one-way process where the newcomer has to adapt to the host society, which is then conceived as a stable and impermeable element.

What are the tools to realize this project? 3 key words seemed constitutive of SINGA's approach:

- **inform**
- **interact**
- **innovate**: the association aims to create numerical platforms of exchange to increase the interactions between newcomers and local society

One of SINGA's working principles is to create open source tools. The idea is to multiply initiatives and to develop SINGA's branch in France and other countries: SINGA already exists in 7 countries and has the ambition to exist in 50 cities by 2019. SINGA must ultimately only be a structure, a label disseminating replicable tools throughout Europe, and allowing other structures to use these tools or become SINGA's local branch.

Some key-figures about SINGA:

- 500 persons have experimented cohabitation via the CALM program
- 700 persons were put in contact via "Buddies" meetings
- The SINGA community counts more than 25 000 members
- More than 1000 activities and events have been organized
- SINGA is present in 12 cities and 7 countries
- SINGA is funded at 30% from public aids, 50% from private funds (sponsorship from enterprises, sometimes exchange of services with enterprises who need to form new workers), 20% of private individuals donations.

To create social capital and organize encounters, their main program is called "**Buddy**" and aims at forming pairs (one asylum seeker and one local) to create bonds. Visits can be organised with the refugees (for example, museum visits). Each event is organised by a pair (one refugee and one local).





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Another program of SINGA is called “**CALM**” (“Comme à La Maison”). It is a structure dedicated to put people in contact: one refugee seeking housing and one or several local(s) wanting to provide housing. The main idea is to go further than “housing” considered as a goal, and to ensure that the professional project of the refugee matches with the work of his/her accommodation providers, to create synergies for both parties. CALM was created 2 years ago and has already provided 650 accommodation solutions. CALM functions through a platform that puts newcomers in contact with locals. People who register on the platform have to describe themselves, answer questions about their tastes and hobbies. The program then lasts from 3 months to a year – from 6 months, results show that the French level of newcomer betters and their social capital increases.

The third program of SINGA takes the form of an incubator, and is based on the principle that a newcomer brings novelty, new ideas with him that don't exist in the host country. SINGA aims to provide support to these persons who might want to launch their business. 20 projects have been carried so far including 8 of them which created jobs.

Etude du HCR : en France il y avait en 2015 90 % des réfugiés qui n'avaient pas parlé à plus d'une personne française en dehors de l'Administration.

Finally, **Mr. Cédric Bischetti, from the association Makers for Change**, concluded the meeting with a few words about overcoming social and cultural barriers in integration. In a HCR's study, it was revealed that in 2015, in France, 90% of refugees had not talked to more than one French person outside from the administration. For Makers for Change, the key-words are “do together” - for example, they have created a “tour of the positive initiatives” with a local group in Strasbourg. This kind of initiatives allows to overcome the sociocultural barriers and fractures between the newcomers and the local society and to set up projects together.





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A. Local Process – General information for the reporting period n°1 (4 in total)

- **Name of the partner:** ALDA
- **Reporting period:**
 1. **From September 2017 to March 2018 (theme: “Cultural and social barriers to integration”)**
 2. From March 2018 to September 2018 (theme: “Prejudices and precarious individual situations”)
 3. From September 2018 to January 2019 (theme: “Language barriers to integration”)
 4. From January 2019 to August 2019 (theme: “Lack of (public) places for inclusion activities”)
- **Summary of the local process for the reporting period (max. 10 lines):**

Taking place within the first reporting period, the **Strasbourg’s Local Panel of Stakeholders** met on Monday 5th March 2018. This meeting took the form of a reflection workshop with interventions from varied stakeholders (local authorities as well as NGOs) who reviewed the existing local initiatives in terms of welcoming migrants. The focus was particularly put on the comparison between Germany’s and France’s legal and structural ways to welcome migrants and refugees, and how to overcome social barriers in migrants’ and refugees’ integration.

- **What are the 3 things you consider successful and 3-unsuccessful about the local process for the reporting period (max. 10 lines):**

Successful aspects:

- the diversity of the organisations represented in the group: different NGOs working in the field but also ordinary citizens.
- political representation from En Marche, for the questions of migration. The meeting brought some political interest.
- Identifications of solutions to social barriers to integration: the good practices from Paris, Strasbourg and Germany.

Challenges of the local process/unsuccessful aspects:

- A general challenge is to identify the group of key stakeholders that will facilitate the local process and will ensure its sustainability even after the project end;
- **How did the local process support the preparation and contribution to the forthcoming transnational thematic event (max. 5 lines):**

The local process has first of all contributed to the identification of the main actors in Strasbourg working around the issues, the practices existing in place and potential contribution to the transnational events. Equally, during the Local process was consolidated the group to attend the transnational meeting and identified 2 relevant practices to be shared with the other participants.

- **During this reporting period, representatives of the partner have taken part as ‘experts’, ‘external resource persons’ or ‘interested persons’ in the local process of another partner (2 missions per CRISCO partner):**

0 YES **0 NO**





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Name(s) of the person(s):

Name(s) of the visited partner(s):

Motivation, reason of the visit(s):

Summary of the mission(s):

- **During this reporting period, representatives of another partner have taken part as 'experts', 'external resource persons' or 'interested persons' in the local process of the partner:**

YES **NO**

Name(s) of the person(s):

Name(s) of the visiting partner(s):

Motivation, reason of the visit(s):

Summary of the mission(s):

Annexes:

- At least one signed attendance list per reporting period (obligatory)
- Signature(s) of the representative(s) of other partner(s) who came on visit in the partner's local process (obligatory)
- Pictures (obligatory)
- Evidence documents for the local process: invitations, meeting reports, local on-line and paper press, leaflets... (obligatory)
- Other.....





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B. Local Process – Activities during the reporting period n°.1

C.1. Activity 1

Name of the activity: Meeting on the theme of the cultural and social barriers to integration, with a focus on German's and French's good practices on the matter

Venue: Maison des associations, 1a place des Orphelins, Strasbourg, France

Date: 5th March 2018

Number of participants: 35

Attendance list:

X YES: see annex

Representative(s) of another partner have taken part as 'experts', 'external resource persons' or 'interested persons' in this activity:

X NO:

Type of activity:

X Reflection (e.g. meeting, debate...): meeting to compare German and French methods to deal with migrant welcoming and integration and gather good practices on the matter

Description of the activity (about 10 lines):

The meeting was organised to compare German and French methods dealing with migrant's welcoming and integration. The objective was to gather good practices and exchange about experiences. Two speakers intervened: one was formerly part of a German local authority and one was the director of a successful NGO dealing with migrants' and refugees' housing and inclusion. Then there were exchanges with the participants who were from NGOs, but also artists, interested individuals and professionals of the matter.

Results and outcomes of the activity (max. 10 lines):

The stakeholders participating at the meeting got acquainted with the German practices in integrating migrants and overcoming socio-cultural barriers between citizens and migrant community. The activity resulted in a report summarizing the event. Moreover, the Local Panel of Stakeholders was informed of the soon-to-come transnational event in Bassano and were invited to share their experiences and ideas to the delegates going to the event.

Relevance for and link to CRISCO (max. 5 lines):

The first activity has been organised under the first CRISCO topic (cultural and social barriers) and contributes to the aim of the project by fostering the involvement of all citizens in local life to improve social cohesion and mutual understanding among the population of Strasbourg.

Other comments on the activity:





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Annexes for the activity:

- X Signed attendance list
- 0 Signature(s) of the representative(s) of other partner(s) who came on visit at the activity
- X Pictures (obligatory – at least 5 per activity)
- X Evidence documents for the activity: invitation, meeting report, local on-line and paper press, leaflet...
- 0 Other:

Please submit (at crisco@etterbeek.irisnet.be) a draft report (+ annexes) of the activity not later than 7 days after the activity, and a final report (+ annexes) of the activity not later than 1 month after the end of the reporting period

Please send pdf documents and keep all original documents in your possession and in good conditions until five years after the end of the project.

