

HELLO
EUROPE

an initiative by:



Major challenges and pathways for solutions during and after COVID-19: a conversation with Ashoka's Hellopreneurs

Introduction

Like with any global crisis, COVID-19 is affecting the most vulnerable across our communities in worse ways than others, with migrants and refugees among the groups disproportionately affected by this virus. In the wake of the pandemic, we brought together our community of Hellopreneurs to collectively reflect on COVID-19's impact on migration, asylum and integration, with the aim of aligning action most urgently needed. Working on the front-line, our Hellopreneurs bring new perspectives and solutions to respond to refugees and migrants' needs in these unprecedented times.

Each piece in this article series addresses the pandemic from a different angle and puts forward a number of practical and implementable policy recommendations. Beginning with the most pressing needs refugees face, such as shelter and protection, the Hellopreneurs delve into ways to build communities of support that allow this population to not only become part of society, but improve it, and provide thought-provoking ideas on how to revisit the current migration system to make it more effective and just.

With this series, we aim to facilitate a conversation where social innovation meets policy with a view to jointly design solutions that address these challenges. We believe each of us has a role to play in improving migration policy and practice and hope you will join us in this conversation.

Laura Batalla Adam
HELLO EUROPE MIGRATION POLICY REPRESENTATIVE

About Ashoka

For over thirty years, [Ashoka](#) has identified and supported the world's best social entrepreneurs - leaders with innovative new ideas that transform broken systems for the good of all, in fields from health to human rights, education to civic engagement, economic development to environment. To date, our network consists of nearly 4000 Ashoka Fellows in 90 countries across the world.

About Hello Europe

[Hello Europe](#) is an initiative created by Ashoka and other partners in 2016 to identify the most powerful and proven solutions to challenges surrounding migration, integration and refugee movements. Our [portfolio](#) includes over 100 individual social innovations across the continent in areas ranging from labor market integration and education to housing and health.

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Stay home without a home?

During the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, individuals have been asked to self-isolate - to "stay home". However, millions of people around the globe do not have a home because they have been forced to leave their communities due to war or persecution.

At this moment, for 71 million refugees, COVID-19 poses threats that prove extremely daunting if not addressed in time. The simple recommendations from health officials around the world and institutions like WHO already seem difficult to uphold for the general public, but for refugees, they are more than routine changes - they are almost impossible to carry out.

The mass accommodation conditions most refugees are exposed to - in refugee camps, transit camps and arrival centers - precipitate overcrowding, lack of proper hygiene, virtually non-existent privacy, and lack of access to adequate healthcare. These conditions already were a major obstacle for the psycho - social wellbeing of their inhabitants before the virus, but now, they pose a threat to life.

Mass accommodation, in all its forms, has been openly criticized by experts for some time. It is obvious that the existing solutions are not fit for the protracted crisis scenarios of the 21st century. The contexts have dramatically changed, but the handbooks have not. Mass accommodation approaches were designed to enable monitoring, surveillance, and managing everyday life for a few months. Now, people stay there for years or even decades.

Within those time frames, the prison-like grid structure and the excessive top-down power and control that is often employed in these settings have massive negative psycho-social effects on individuals and their human dignity. Current practice neglects the sociocultural needs of their population, which go beyond the main tenets of survival - shelter, food, and water - such as education, individual and social progress, and self-

realisation. As seen in many places, refugee populations kept in this marginalized state of limbo in camps and closed centers for years suffer in an unimaginable way. Furthermore, camps and centers in their current form impose massive stress to their surrounding local contexts. They are often seen as a burden by local communities, instead of an integrated part of local and regional development.

Adding to these weaknesses, it is a fact that overall, the way mass sheltering is currently designed and implemented is far too costly. This is firstly because the costs of mass accommodation are the costs of human dignity - the ability to grow, connect, and be an active citizen rather than a mere beneficiary of organized aid. In this regard, current solutions come with a high price not only for the refugee communities, but also for the host populations, as refugees are poorly integrated into the local or regional context, lowering their ability to contribute. Lastly, mass accommodation is a poor cost-sensitive solution from an economic perspective if the camps and centers remain beyond crisis-response time frames of a few months. They become a bottomless pit for primary implementation, maintenance costs, and for secondary socio-economic costs within the refugee and host populations.

Whichever way we look at it - human warehousing is always the least beneficial solution for both refugees, local communities, and governments. Again, during times like now, with a pandemic sweeping across the world, mass accommodation also puts the physical safety of millions at risk.

Whichever way we look at it - human warehousing is always the least beneficial solution for both refugees, local communities, and governments.

The good news is that for all contexts - crisis scenarios, transit routes and regions and municipalities of arrival - better solutions are available. MORE THAN SHELTERS, as part of a larger humanitarian innovation context, has developed and tested such solutions within the last decade. The concept of "arrival cities" has been partially implemented for Za'atari refugee camp in Jordan, dignified reception and transit camps were tested in Greece, and a new framework called "Integration Hub" has been developed and implemented for the

cities of Berlin and Stuttgart. These solutions focus on strengthening refugee and host communities. They foster self-agency and self-development within a socio-spatial neighborhood development framework. They incubate locally adapted solutions for living, working, and thriving together by focusing on the needs, talents, and ideas of newcomers and old residents alike.

How to move forward?

In times of COVID-19, life threatening mass accommodation camps need to be closed and their populations evacuated, particularly those on the Greek Islands. Everyone deserves to be equally well protected from COVID-19.

Alternative accommodation models already exist but need to be further supported.

The current pandemic is yet another reminder of the need to change the way mass accommodation centers are conceived. This can be achieved through innovation. Alternative accommodation models already exist but need to be further supported. We - donors, humanitarian agencies, and humanitarian innovators - can define the new standards but the EU and its Member States have to integrate them into policy in order to radically transform the way accommodation is provided to newcomers.

**Sedona Hoppe-Brosse,
Research and Development,
and Daniel Kerber, Founder
and CEO of MORE THAN
SHELTERS**

About MORE THAN SHELTERS

MORE THAN SHELTERS is a German based social business designing innovative solutions for the humanitarian relief in refugee camps.



A Roadmap to Local Inclusion in the age of COVID-19

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the International Welcoming movement - comprised of hundreds of towns and cities worldwide transforming themselves into inclusive places - is working to ensure that norms of inclusion not only don't fall by the wayside, but are further affirmed in this time of extreme crisis. A key lesson our movement is imparting is as follows: if municipalities and other local stakeholders fail to build trust among residents, and fail to follow inclusive practices in their COVID-19 responses, their communities will be more likely to suffer from greater health threats and disparities, greater economic inequality, and squandered human potential. On the other hand, if localities utilize inclusive approaches in their response - and regional and national authorities support them to do so - communities will be much more likely to emerge more resilient, prosperous, and united. What follows is a series of recommendations for inclusive responses, based on the actions Welcoming International members are employing - or preparing to employ - during their COVID-19 response.

Inclusive Emergency Response

During a public health emergency, inclusion is about making sure everyone is safe. Ethnicity, migration status, neighborhood, or language shouldn't determine someone's fate, but too many community residents are facing unnecessary hardship or even death because they face unique barriers to protection and support. An inclusive emergency response should strive to address the unique barriers that migrants, refugees and other marginalized populations face during these times.

Addressing language barriers: To start with, many communities are not currently equipped for the translation needs required to keep migrant communities

informed of near daily changes to information, guidelines, etc. This leaves migrant communities - including migrant business owners - at greater risk of contracting COVID-19, and less likely to receiving accurate and timely information about certain relief benefits that are available to them. In order to ensure the language barrier doesn't inhibit protection and support, local government and civil society actors should create and implement policies and programs to ensure universal access to essential information in all relevant languages.

Addressing information barriers: The same is true for access to accurate information. Traditional channels used to communicate information about public health are often not effective in reaching migrants and other vulnerable residents, who tend to rely on alternative information channels. Instead, local actors should utilize alternative communications platforms - everything from WhatsApp and social media to migrant-owned newspapers that cater to these populations.

Addressing barriers to relief: An inclusive municipality should be mindful of its application requirements for local government relief programs/services. If citizenship or legal status in the country is required, for example, some residents will not be eligible, which will put them at greater risk of falling through the cracks. In addition to creating inclusive guidelines for traditional relief programs, local and regional governments should also explore the creation of alternative "inclusive relief funds," which can be created through partnerships with philanthropic partners. A good example of this is [California Immigrant Resilience Fund](#) being implemented in the state of California.

An inclusive emergency response should strive to address the unique barriers that migrants, refugees and other marginalized populations face during these times.

Inclusive Recovery

Although towns and cities worldwide are currently deep within the emergency response phase, some are gearing up for the next phase - recovery. In order for the local-level recovery phase to be successful, it

must include community-wide recovery planning, and that planning should be as inclusive as possible. Local participants in the global Welcoming movement have been doing community-wide inclusion planning for years. These planning processes - which are usually led by the municipality, and always engage representatives from all sectors of the community - identify, and subsequently address the major barriers that migrants and other marginalized groups face in their journeys towards full economic and civic participation. These processes should serve as a model for inclusive COVID-19 recovery planning. During the recovery phase, there will be pressure on municipalities to act quickly and possibly skip the community-wide planning process. Unfortunately, a closed recovery process is more likely to leave the most vulnerable behind, whereas an inclusive process is more likely to ensure broad recovery and prosperity.

During the pandemic it is also important to note that inclusive planning approaches will need to be adapted slightly - for example multi-sector, in-person planning gatherings must be moved online for obvious health and safety reasons. In moving these processes online, communities must ensure that the technology and technological knowledge needed to participate fully are accessible to all participants.

Inclusive Narrative

One of the biggest future barriers to an inclusive recovery will be threats to social cohesion. As economies begin to gradually open up again, the potential for scapegoating of foreigners and other marginalized groups - which has already begun - is likely to increase. If community members turn against one another, and some leaders take on an "us vs them mindset", public trust and social cohesion - two of the most important ingredients in a successful recovery - will be lost.

In order to avoid this scenario, aggressive work to advance social cohesion needs to begin now. With this in mind, Welcoming International - which has always made local community cohesion core to its work - is laying the groundwork for a global campaign to harness the enhanced sentiments of good will and community solidarity experienced by many during the initial stages of the outbreak, especially towards front line workers in health care, emergency services, food

services and other essential industries - all occupations where immigrants and other marginalized groups play outsized roles. This campaign will be led by local actors, and will ultimately strive to help redefine the "us" in our societies to include everyone - migrants, refugees, religious and other minorities, etc., alongside majority populations. The campaign will be open to all who would like to participate, and the impact and lessons learned will be shared widely.

One of the biggest future barriers to an inclusive recovery will be threats to social cohesion.

All of us have the power to make choices now that will not only reduce the immediate impact of this pandemic, but also make our societies more unified and resilient to future global crises.

David Lubell, Founding Director of Welcoming International

About Welcoming International

Welcoming International supports and connects institutions that are advancing inclusion around the world. Our vision is a world in which all people - including immigrants and refugees - feel at home. We believe the work of accomplishing that vision begins in local communities, with all sectors working together to build community cohesion and advance institutional inclusion.



Connecting newcomers and locals in times of COVID-19

With the COVID-19 pandemic in full swing many are feeling more isolated than ever before. With limited movement being the norm across Europe and other regions, the social and economic consequences are devastating, particularly to the most vulnerable groups of our society such as migrants, refugees and the elderly.

According to Eurostat, in 2018 almost 35% of Europeans lived alone. Several months into 2020, we don't have an updated statistic, but we can certainly assume that the imposed social distancing and forced isolation will have a long lasting impact on people's lives. That's why we shouldn't let such measures cause social and emotional distress, too.

SPEAK's language learning framework is fostering the creation of spaces where newcomers have the opportunity to share the value they bring and develop meaningful relationships with locals as equals, not letting them feel they are disempowered receivers as in some integration initiatives. Having this bottom-up approach generates a feeling of self-worth, as newcomers or refugees feel responsible for their own transformation and integration process. Furthermore, this helps build stronger support networks and a greater sense of belonging throughout the language learning experience.

SPEAK's language learning framework is fostering the creation of spaces where newcomers have the opportunity to share the value they bring and develop meaningful relationships with locals as equals.

Due to the forced isolation measures, we adapted our

methodology to an online model where anyone can sign up to learn a language for free from anywhere, and if available, they can also share their own language, thereby actively contributing to combat social exclusion and loneliness and helping SPEAK community members build relationships of support, trust and loyalty.

Social integration has become an even greater challenge. Newcomers and refugees are struggling more than ever to stay connected, learn the local language and culture and build support networks that can help them with the process of integration. They are facing longer delays when processing their legal status, fewer employment opportunities, and increased difficulties when accessing legal and administrative services.

In addition to this challenge, perhaps one of the most important dimensions when we are talking about one of the most tragic public health situations of the last decade, is the scarcity of culturally and linguistically accessible information about COVID-19 and how to protect oneself and others. This greatly increases the risk for refugees and migrants as well as host populations.

Hence, building a strong community that fights social isolation together and actively contributes to create solutions and make sure no one is left out is absolutely necessary. Making sure that locals, newcomers and refugees are surrounded by solidarity, support, guidance, information and empathy can significantly lessen the daunting social, economic and political consequences of this pandemic.

One of the key aspects that makes SPEAK resilient is adaptability. SPEAK was able to transfer its learning methodology to the online environment in order to stay relevant. The situation that we are living in does not have to lead to disconnection and make integration into a new community, culture or language more difficult.

With online language sessions, everyone, no matter where they are located, can learn a new language and meet new cultures while still helping to flatten the curve. This is SPEAK's solution to fight social isolation and make sure everyone can feel connected, avoiding an abrupt interruption in the integration process.

Implementing an offline model into the online world is not an easy process and we are improving it as we go. In three weeks, more than 3.000 people joined the

community, more than 20 languages are being shared and refugee families located in Portugal, Greece, UK and Syria are enrolled in online language groups.

Everyone can be part of this online SPEAK community as a *buddy* - people who are willing and able to give some of their time to help people learn a new language and culture - or as a participant and help fight social isolation and promote cultural diversity. For both groups, it has proven to be an enriching and comforting experience, especially in times like these.

With online language sessions, everyone, no matter where they are located, can learn a new language and meet new cultures while still helping to flatten the curve.

When we are talking about integration challenges, it is essential to ensure that policies are designed with a community-based approach. Solutions like SPEAK are extremely cost effective, accessible and proven to be impactful. Scaling its impact and promoting it within cities and across regions is something that the EU could help achieve.

The challenges we face are not bound to borders and solving them requires everyone's involvement. This is our small contribution to make sure that we can continue learning about each other's language and culture from our homes. Borders might close, but our minds are still free to travel and more open than ever.

Stay safe. Stay connected.

Hugo Menino Aguiar, Co-Founder & CEO of SPEAK

About SPEAK

SPEAK is a crowd - sourcing language and culture exchange programme that connects newcomers and locals living in the same city.



How disinformation is negatively fueling the migration discourse

Disinformation is not new. It has existed since ancient times. What's new then? Now it's much easier to spread a hoax than 20 years ago thanks to the amplification of channels available to consume and share information. In this regard, not only information has been democratized, but also disinformation. A combination of changes in consumption patterns, lack of media literacy, loss of trust in journalism and the lack of business models for the digital media largely contribute.

Maldita.es is an independent non-profit fact-checking media outlet. One of three inquiries we receive relates to migrants and refugees. The vast amount of disinformation circulating is increasing hate speech towards refugees and migrants and contributes to polarise the public and political debate. The most common migration hoaxes that we can find online are ones where migrants steal jobs from locals, access free health treatments or are involved in criminal activities.

The vast amount of disinformation circulating is increasing hate speech towards refugees and migrants and contributes to polarise the public and political debate.

In spreading this misinformation people use the most popular digital channels like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube or WhatsApp, where the public can easily run

into pictures, videos and memes spreading fear and fake news.

Anyone can spread manipulated information. It's not related to any particular ideology or social class. Sometimes the rationale behind it is simpler than you might think: they believe they are doing the right thing.

Disinformation has become an international phenomena and the strategies behind it are usually the same, as fact-checkers organisations like the International Fact-Checking Network has proven.¹ It's common to see the same hoax repeated in different countries. It's the case of a widely circulated picture in Spain and Italy of a group of black men believed to be aboard the Open Arms vessel when in reality the photo was taken at a music festival in London years before.² A recurrent unfounded rumour circulating in the United States states that undocumented immigrants get Medicare for free.³

How has coronavirus made it worse?

Since the beginning of this outbreak, our Whatsapp service usage has grown more than twofold. We are now currently receiving between 1000 and 3000 queries a day, more than 3 per minute, compared to a total daily average of 250 queries. Almost 50% of the hoaxes users report are a text, image or an audio that circulates in this messaging application.

With COVID-19 we have observed that the disinformation topics are shifting as the crisis advances. At the beginning of the crisis, when the virus was only new to China, we observed that disinformation was related to the nationality or race of those affected by COVID-19, mostly targeting the Chinese community.

Today, with the beginning of the month of Ramadan, the focus of disinformation is evolving around the privileges that the Muslim community is allegedly

¹ <https://www.poynter.org/ifcn/>

² <https://maldita.es/malditobulo/2019/08/21/no-esta-foto-no-ha-sido-tomada-en-el-open-arms-es-de-asistentes-a-un-festival-de-londres-en-2015/>

³ <https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2019/feb/27/facebook-posts/no-undocumented-immigrants-dont-get-medicare-free/>

enjoying by not having to comply with the lockdown.⁴ The strategies are usually the same: republication of fake old disinformation and sharing decontextualised pictures or videos from other countries.

What solutions are needed?

The solution is simple: we need to provide people with facts and verified information so they can make up their own minds. In the fight against disinformation, only if journalists and citizens themselves go hand in hand will we be able to create a safe, healthy, and well informed society. Here are our tips to avoid disinformation.⁵

Don't ignore the problem. Our narrative is simple, direct and aggressive. We have observed that there are usually two groups of people: Group A who believes that migration is a good thing and Group B who believes it is not. In between, though, there's a third group of people who are not positioned towards any of the former. If they are constantly targeted with disinformation they might not be able to differentiate what's true from what's not. They are our main target and our methodology ensures that the information we provide them is verifiable.⁶

We need to provide people with facts and verified information so they can make up their own minds.

We employ the same language as hoaxers do in order to fight against algorithms. When a user searches for "young migrants" in the Internet the first result he or she will find is Maldita's website. We use words such as *menas* and *paguitas*, because, even knowing that they contain negative migration-related connotations, those are the terms used by social media hoaxes. *Mena* is a derogatory word for migrants under 18 years of age who are no longer supported by their families. It is not unusual to find stories accusing them of receiving large government support.

⁴ <https://migracion.maldita.es/bulo-desarrollo/no-este-video-de-una-marcha-de-musulmanes-en-valencia-no-esta-grabado-durante-el-estado-de-alarma-por-el-coronavirus-es-de-noviembre-de-2018/>

⁵ <https://maldita.es/los-manuales-para-que-no-te-la-cuelen/>

⁶ <https://maldita.es/metodologia-de-maldito-bulo/>

Our project's name, Maldita Migración, literally means "Danmed Migration". By calling it this way we are able to attract an audience seeking out the negative and then redirect them towards reliable data that debunks their beliefs.

Our evidence shows that new migration narratives and fact-checking tools must go hand in hand if we are to ensure a healthy information ecosystem. This is a tool that needs to be at everyone's disposal as everyone has the right to verified and reliable information to make better informed decisions.

Yuly Jara, Maldita.es

About Maldita.es

Maldita.es is an independent non-profit fact-checking media outlet. Maldita Migración is a journalistic project supported by Intermon Oxfam.



Historic shocks can bring about historic changes. Fixing our broken migration system should be one of them*

Today's global migration is impacting the public and political debate more than it has in the past 70 years. Its direct implications - for human rights, the economy and security - as well as the indirect ones - as a lever for broader political and economic interests - will shape the societies we live in for the coming decades. If one believes that COVID-19 is reversing this trend, think twice. As with previous global shocks, the state of affairs will hardly remain the same once the pandemic is over. Ensuring it takes a turn for the better or allows us to dig deeper into the current migration system, will depend largely on the kind of decisions and actions we take in the coming months.

There are reasons to believe that we are in front of a make-it-or-break-it point and we should seize the opportunity to reform the migration system.

We had a demographic window of opportunity and our response to COVID-19 opens a new one related to labour markets. Europe and the United States are seeing their populations age and their labour markets change. The demographic pyramid narrows at the bottom and contributes to transform a labor market that attracts immigrants of all skill levels. But this is a far-reaching phenomenon that hardly fits in with the electoral shortsightedness of the existing migration policies. So, it is a good thing that the current crisis is showing

wealthy societies the importance of migrants for their economy and health systems. Better late than never. Europe risks missing out on a demographic window of opportunity that opens in Africa but begins to close in Latin America and Asia. Safe and orderly migration opportunities reduce the attractiveness of irregularity and multiply the benefits for countries of origin and destination.

We had a demographic window of opportunity and our response to COVID-19 opens a new one related to labour markets.

This shock could allow us to introduce far-reaching policies that go beyond border protection or humanitarian assistance. The arrival of migrants is seen by many as a threat to the security and identity of those that receive them. For others, it's seen merely as a humanitarian emergency, trespassing democratic red lines. But this narrow migration debate does not reflect the reality of nearly 280 million migrants worldwide, most of which are workers and students, not victims. This 19th century labour mobility model needs to be recalibrated to respond to the demands of a modern labour market. We need alternative and ambitious strategies that consider the evolution of our economies and the skills that these will demand, loosen the self-defeating rigidities of the current rules and provide foreign workers with the skills and incentives that would make them participate in orderly and predictable migration programs. This is the true solution to the challenge of irregular migration and it should start by bringing millions of undocumented back out of the shadows, as it is now being done in Portugal and discussed in Spain and Italy.

Crises are always a good opportunity to put forward the most creative and appropriate ideas. The Global Compact for Migration is one of the very few good news pieces in recent years when it comes to the governance of human mobility. Its true value does not lie on hard rules and one-size-fits-all models, but rather on providing a level playing field to share best practices and replicate them. Some of these are already happening successfully and often discreetly, like New Zealand's Skilled Migrant Category Visa, the employment of refugees in Uganda, the Global Skills Partnership model developed by the Center for Global Development or the integration

* An original version of this text was published in the author's blog in El País.

and reception initiative by Welcoming America. These solutions combine diverse private partners and enable public administrations to turn what is often seen as a problem into a resource.

In order to effect change, we must win the hearts of the ‘movable middle’, not just their minds. The so-called ‘Overton Window’¹ of the migration debate is getting alarmingly narrower and more conservative. Anti-immigration populism is not winning the game because of its electoral success, but rather because of its ability to contaminate the debate and the political landscape making acceptable what was previously intolerable. The political left unwillingly contributes to reinforce the idea of emigration as a problem when they focus on “helping them stay at home” rather than providing prospective migrants with safe and orderly ways that would maximize the benefits for them, their families and their countries of origin. We need to change this public perception by better understanding the diversity of our audiences and how to reach them. The key lies in persuading the ‘movable middle’, which represents half of the audience in many countries: they could go either way in this debate and they are not impressed by the academic arguments about migrants’ contribution to fiscal balances; but they have their hearts in the right place and respond to narrative frames that highlight the value of diversity, personal ties and mutual dependence.

In order to effect change, we must win the hearts of the ‘movable middle’, not just their minds.

Beyond the tragedy, uncertainty and anxiety, COVID-19 is leaving us a fundamental message: We are all in this together. The sudden realisation that our lives literally depend on the foreigners that nurse our sick in hospitals or pick our vegetables can be a powerful driver for change. The certainty that this virus will stop by helping other countries fight it rather than isolating from them should be used as an opportunity to overhaul the way we manage borders. Let’s take advantage of the opportunity that history offers us to change it.

¹The range of policies politically acceptable to the mainstream population at a given time.

Gonzalo Fanjul, Head of Research at porCausa Foundation and Ashoka fellow.

About porCausa

porCausa promotes research and journalism on poverty and social inequalities in collaboration with media, researchers and social organisations.



Helping everyone by supporting migrant entrepreneurship

The economic downturn following the COVID-19 pandemic will lead to increased unemployment globally, as the International Monetary Fund has recently acknowledged. Those most likely to lose their jobs are people with lower education, and especially migrants, women and youth.¹

Many of these will find in entrepreneurship their only way to make a living. They are likely to start their own companies out of necessity. The challenging task will be to make these companies sustainable and profitable in the long term so they can create jobs in return. By enabling and supporting local entrepreneurs, especially migrant ones, cities and communities will be able to recover faster from this recession. Here are three ways of achieving this:

1. Acknowledge necessity entrepreneurs

For the past decade, European cities have been building an ecosystem supporting high-growth companies (scale-ups) as they lead to the creation of high-productivity jobs.² However, this ecosystem has not been easily accessible for necessity entrepreneurs or migrant founders. At the same time, job and welfare centers have often been left unaware of the existing start-up ecosystems in their regions. There is a need to connect the dots and support regions make the most of the potential offered by this synergy.

This can be done by encouraging regions across the EU to create a coherent talent pipeline for entrepreneurs which needs to bring together a variety of stakeholders ranging from job and welfare centers, schools and NGOs to social entrepreneurs, chambers of commerce and the start-up ecosystem. The pipeline should also include courses in basic entrepreneurship, accounting and insights into the local start-ups ecosystems. This will empower all entrepreneurs, but migrant entrepreneurs in particular.

By enabling and supporting local entrepreneurs, especially migrant ones, cities and communities will be able to recover faster from this recession.

2. Acknowledge migrant entrepreneurs

In most European countries, migrants are often more entrepreneurial than non-migrants. They become entrepreneurs out of necessity, rather than out of opportunity. Even so, they manage to succeed. Nine out of ten unicorn companies in the United Kingdom have at least one migrant, or child of a migrant, on their founding team.³ In Germany, migrant founders in family-owned businesses earn more than migrants with regular jobs.⁴

In Sweden, they have helped create 250.000 jobs, hiring on average 3.3 people per company.⁵ Migrants in Germany have created 1.3 million jobs, which corresponds to 1.8 employees per company. What if migrants all over Europe were as successful as the ones in Sweden?

¹ Frischsenteret Norway, march 2020 www.frisch.uio.no/om-oss/Nyheter/2020/frisc_ssb_nav_arbeidsmarked_korona_krise_27_mai_20.html

² www.weforum.org/agenda/2017/03/start-ups-entrepreneurship-scale-ups-latin-america/

³ Report from the investment firm Zirra, 2016.

⁴ www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/de/themen/aktuelle-meldungen/2016/august/migrantenunternehmen-sind-jobmotor-fuer-deutschland

⁵ www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/de/themen/aktuelle-meldungen/2016/august/migrantenunternehmen-sind-jobmotor-fuer-deutschland

Resilience and willingness to take risks are among the main reasons of their success. They have to work twice as hard to build a new life in a new city. The Swedish foundation Internationalla Företagare Sverige (IFS) has pointed out that for many economic security is an important driver. They hire more diverse teams than local non-migrant entrepreneurs and they usually have a broader international network and diaspora ties. This enables them to scale in other countries.

However, they tend to struggle with bureaucracy and business regulations. Our findings show that most European countries don't have a proper country strategy for migrant entrepreneurship, in spite of their entrepreneurial spirit. In Sweden, Germany, The Netherlands and the UK social entrepreneurs help migrants get access to business ecosystems instead.

Most European countries don't have a proper country strategy for migrant entrepreneurship.

Quite a simple thing as having a multilingual guide on "How to start a company" in each EU Member State would make a big difference and make a pathway for migrant entrepreneurs to succeed. The EU could support this effort and take a public stance on migrant entrepreneurship as a source of new business talent, which, in turn, would contribute to a more nuanced and positive perception of migrants.

3. Creating a European Limited Company

Countries where migrants typically succeed have two things in common: they offer easy and affordable ways to start a limited company, which lowers the risk of hiring and expanding, and they provide ecosystems with readily available advice for entrepreneurs before, during and after the establishment of their companies.

Finding countries that meet these requirements is not always simple. Germany has a great wide - spread ecosystem of job and welcome centers focusing on business creation. However, the costs of starting a company are much higher than in the UK for example.

Countries where migrants succeed are also countries with supportive ecosystems for necessity entrepreneurs. This is why governments need to acknowledge the importance of supporting small businesses, not just high-growth tech-businesses. In turn, the EU could make it easier to start limited companies all over Europe by creating a European limited company (E-ltd), as a non - public alternative to SE companies. That way migrants and non-migrant entrepreneurs with scaling ambitions would be able to establish themselves in different countries with fewer hurdles.

Can Europe become an entrepreneurial superpower?

It's high time to put necessity entrepreneurship on the European agenda and unlock the entrepreneurial talent that lies within the EU.

Nicolai Strøm-Olsen and Maria Amelie, Co-Founders Startup Migrants

About Startup Migrants

Startup Migrants is a company based in Berlin and Oslo. We help cities boost job creation. We are passionate about collecting and analyzing data that can help cities solve their challenges. Our data is collected from 15 countries, 45 cities and over 200 in depth interviews with policy makers, entrepreneurs, NGOs and migrant founders.



Unleashing the talent and potential of next generation migrant leaders

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the multifaceted problems of adversity, exclusion, and stigma that migrants and refugees face around the world. Their already vulnerable position in host countries has deteriorated, leaving most of them in unsustainable situations or alarming circumstances. Regional and country-level policies and responses to the current crisis need to include the voice of these communities to adequately address major problems, and to ensure that sustainable actions are taken that allow us to (re)build more just and equitable societies. Next generation migrant leaders are stepping up to the difficult task at hand and are an important part of the solution. It's crucial that we acknowledge their talent and potential, and support their efforts to create meaningful impact: going beyond a crisis response and towards more resilient societies.

Societies under a magnifying glass

Crises magnify the strengths and weaknesses in our societies' systems and institutions. From research and practice we know that migration can become an opportunity rather than a threat to host countries. This depends on our societies' ability to truly include people and build on their potential.

¹Naimi, A., Hehenberger, L., Clewett, K. (2020) Humans at the center: How social entrepreneurs with a migrant background are making a difference (forthcoming).

²<https://www.kaldorcentre.unsw.edu.au/publication/refugees-refugees-refugee-leadership-during-COVID-19-and-beyond>

³See reference 1

However, up until now, there has been a gap between the realities on a grassroots level, and the discussions and solutions developed at a policy and decision-making level which often do not fully account for the complexity of the situation.¹ Most of the solutions that are implemented to deal with the current pandemic are no exception and therefore do not adequately protect these vulnerable communities.²

Migration can become an opportunity rather than a threat to host countries. This depends on our societies' ability to truly include people and build on their potential.

From research and practice, we also know that there are changemakers from these communities, who are already doing invaluable work to tackle the adversity, exclusion, and stigma that impede the full participation of migrants and refugees in host countries. Their solutions are often more effective and human, because of their experience with and knowledge about migration. Changemakers with a migrant background - migrants themselves and their descendants - have an interconnected view that makes them particularly well equipped to deal with grand challenges that span borders. In addition, they have proven their ability to access resources in difficult circumstances through perseverance and adaptability.³ Their solutions to deal with the current pandemic are also no exception.

Changemakers with a migrant background have an interconnected view that makes them particularly well equipped to deal with grand challenges that span borders.

Necessity is the mother of invention

Despite difficult circumstances, next generation migrant leaders are emerging and providing solutions to deal with the ramifications of the current crisis in underserved communities. For example, refugee-led initiatives around

the world have stepped up to produce face-masks for their communities and to provide information about the virus in various languages. In a matter of weeks, changemakers with a migrant background adapted and distributed their online educational tools for children negatively affected by the pandemic. Former refugees, who have a deep understanding of the meaning of a crisis to people's personal lives, successfully mobilized volunteers to support a broader group of vulnerable people in their host countries (e.g. elderly, homeless) to provide medicine, groceries, and daily conversations to tackle loneliness. In these responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, the civic engagement of young people with a migrant background has especially stood out and they have become important allies to large humanitarian organisations.⁴ These examples are only the tip of the iceberg of next generation migrant leaders who are creating social impact in host and home countries around the world.⁵

Opportunity for change

Amidst this unprecedented global crisis, there is an opportunity for meaningful change. On one hand, creative and rapid solutions that are emerging at a grassroots level need to be supported and scaled. Large institutional actors, such as governments, businesses, and NGOs, can provide access to resources, networks, and visibility to make this happen. On the other hand, changemakers from migrant and refugee communities need to get a seat at the table at a policy and decision-making level.

Changemakers from migrant and refugee communities need to get a seat at the table at a policy and decision-making level.

Large institutional actors can include the voice of these vulnerable communities by pushing for diversity within their own organisation as well as through their external collaborations. Finally, we need to adopt solutions that empower and unleash the untapped potential of young

people with a migrant background, because they will make the difference we need to move forward. Only together, we can ensure that sustainable actions are taken that allow us to (re)build more just and equitable societies.

It's time for solidarity, now and beyond this crisis.

**Asma Naimi – PhD Candidate at
ESADE Business School**



⁴ <https://blogs.unicef.org/blog/COVID-19-support-refugee-migrant-children-italy/>

⁵ <https://www.hello-europe.eu/changemakers-for-migration>

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