UPSCALING THE
EUROPEAN PLATFORM
OF INTEGRATING
COMMUNITIES

Deliverable D2.2:

Creation of the Communities of Practices (CoPs)

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EPIC-UP in a nutshell

EPIC-UP project aims to improve **migrants' integration and inclusion** at local level in both rural and urban areas, by designing an enhanced model of **multi-actor collaboration**. This methodology fosters partnerships among stakeholders, including migrants and migrants-led organisations, public authorities, and civil society organisations, so that the integration strategies are user-centred and more effective.

The project will:

- Establish **Community of Practices (CoPs)** in six EU countries (Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland and Spain).
- Identify, map and benchmark good practices in local migrant integration strategies to clearly illustrate the wealth of effective approaches that can shape future interventions.
- Identify specific local needs and barriers to the development of certain integrating services.
- Implement a capacity building programme on how to promote migrants' participation in the design of integration policies.
- Produce policy recommendations to make migration policies and initiatives better future proofed.
- Test, monitor and consolidate six new migrant integration services locally.

EPIC-UP will capitalise on the existing knowledge of the consortium working on migrant integration, and on the know-how generated by the previous EPIC project.

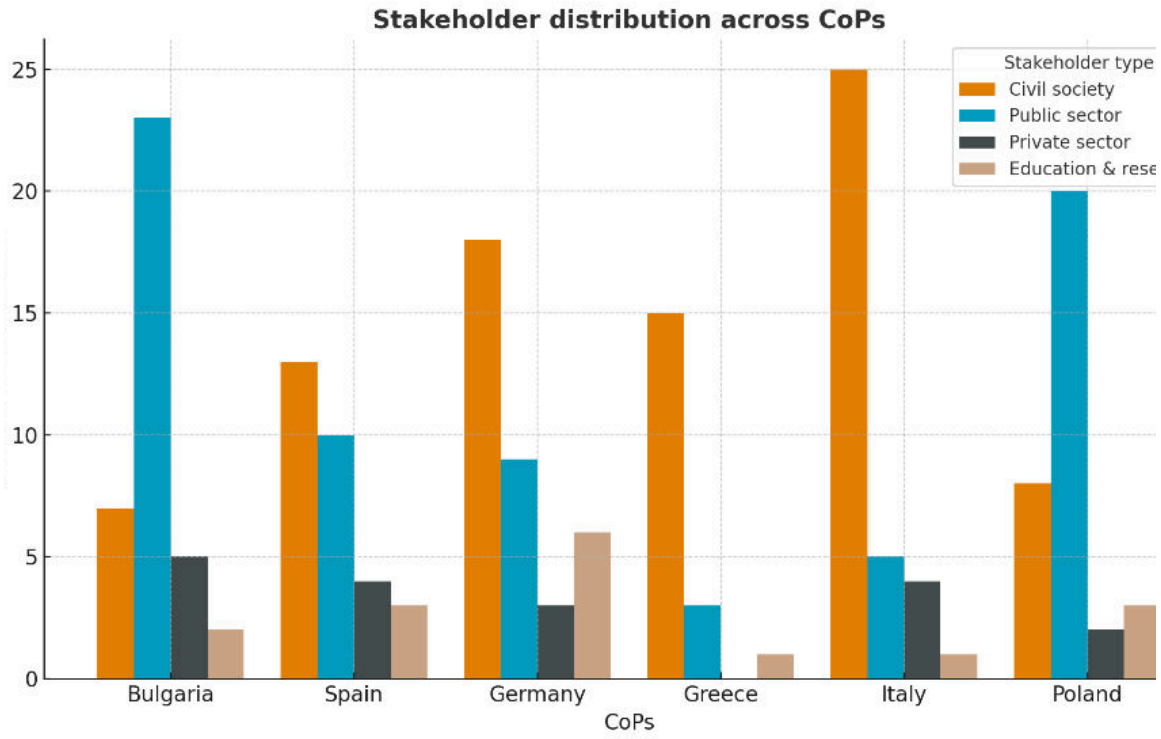
Overall, EPIC-UP will contribute to enhance social cohesion and promote the active participation of migrants in local communities.

Summary

The Communities of Practice (CoPs) established in the EPIC-UP project are multi-actor spaces designed to bring together local stakeholders—public institutions, civil society organisations, migrant and refugee-led groups, researchers, and private actors—to collaboratively identify and address challenges in migrant integration. Each CoP functions as a participatory platform that fosters mutual learning, knowledge exchange, and joint problem-solving tailored to local contexts.

Under Task 2.2, AEIDL was responsible for developing and coordinating the CoP creation process. This included designing the conceptual and methodological framework, delivering a practical working document and training sessions to guide local CoP leaders, and supporting the roll-out of stakeholder mapping and engagement strategies in six territories: Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, and Spain.

The methodology adopted defined clear structures and roles within the CoPs—core teams, core groups, active and occasional members—ensuring inclusivity and differentiated levels of engagement. It also introduced practical tools to support stakeholder mapping, prioritisation, and outreach, with particular emphasis on ensuring migrant participation and balancing representation from different sectors. The CoPs were encouraged to adapt this model to their specific territorial needs while following a shared roadmap to ensure consistency across the project.

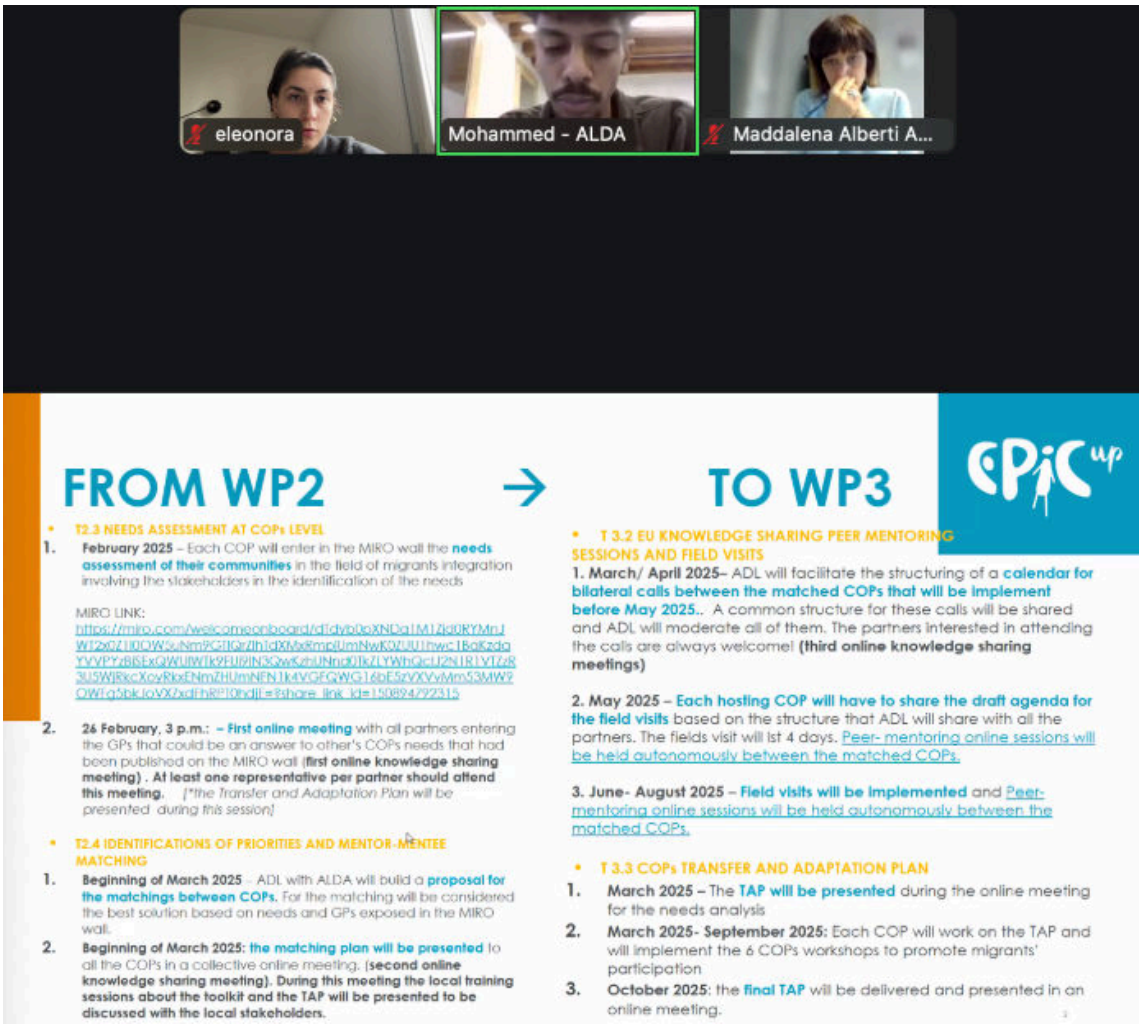


In total, 195 stakeholders were engaged across the six CoPs, including 86 civil society representatives, 73 from the public sector, 23 from the private sector, and 13 from education and research. All CoPs successfully established core groups ranging from 7 to 16 members, ensuring strategic leadership and continuity. While civil society and public institutions were well represented in most territories, engaging migrant-led organisations, small NGOs, and private sector actors remained a challenge in several contexts, often due to resource constraints or limited existing connections.

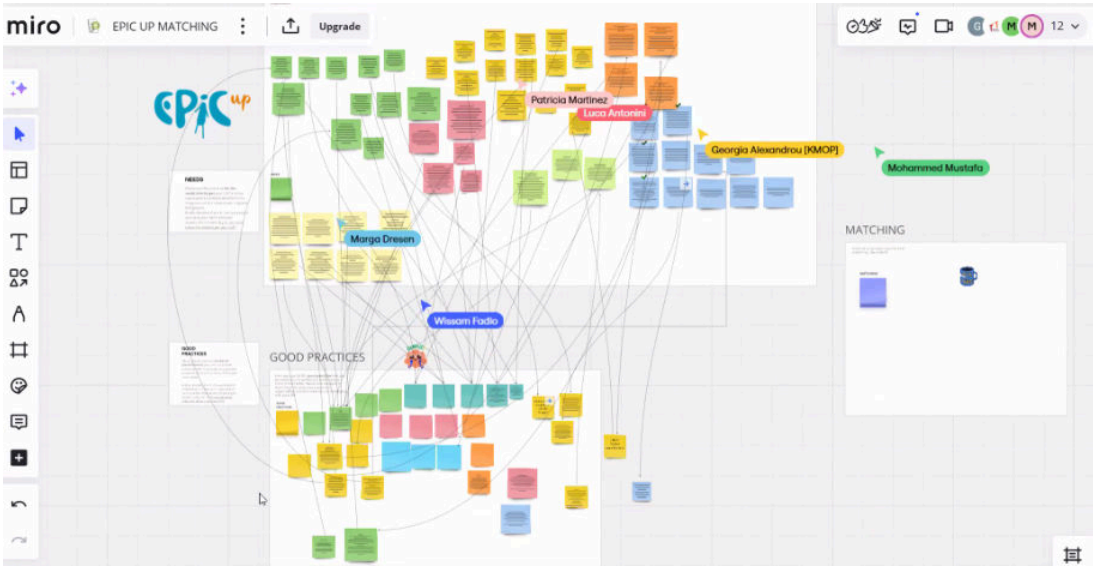
Gender inclusion emerged as a positive feature, with women playing leading roles in several CoPs, particularly in Spain and Poland. These early dynamics reinforced the importance of tailoring outreach efforts, ensuring diversity, and embedding co-design from the outset of the CoPs' development.

Following the preparatory work, each CoP was formally launched between February and March 2025 through a **local Kick-off Meeting (KoM**). These meetings marked the operational start of the CoPs, bringing together key actors to introduce the project, validate the CoP structure, exchange practices, and begin identifying local integration barriers. These events not only generated momentum for the next phases of EPIC-UP but also fostered the initial collective ownership necessary for a long-term, collaborative process of social innovation in integration policy

Under **Task 2.3**, ALDA coordinated a structured **local needs assessment process across all CoPs, combining local input and peer collaboration to identify key integration challenges and align them with relevant good practices.** Each CoP engaged stakeholders in participatory sessions to assess the needs of migrant communities using a shared MIRO board. This collaborative workspace served as a central tool for visualising local challenges, encouraging cross-territorial learning, and integrating outputs from the earlier good practices mapping under Task 2.1.



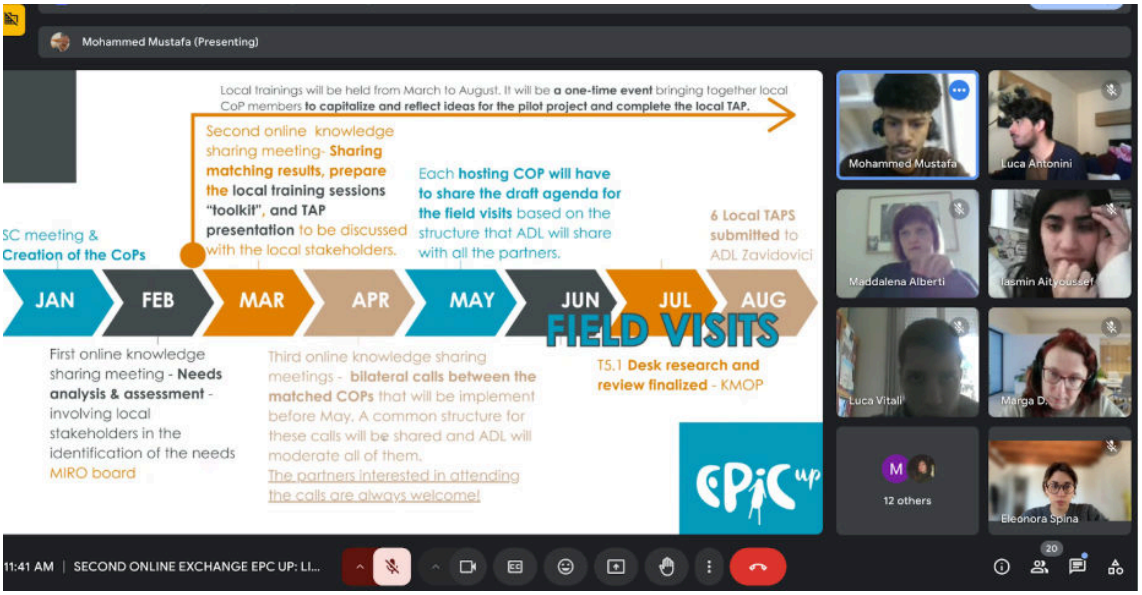
On 26 February 2025, **all partners participated in a joint online meeting to collectively review the identified needs and begin matching them with existing good practices shared in the MIRO space**. This session marked the project's first formal peer exchange on applied integration strategies and set the stage for upcoming co-learning actions.



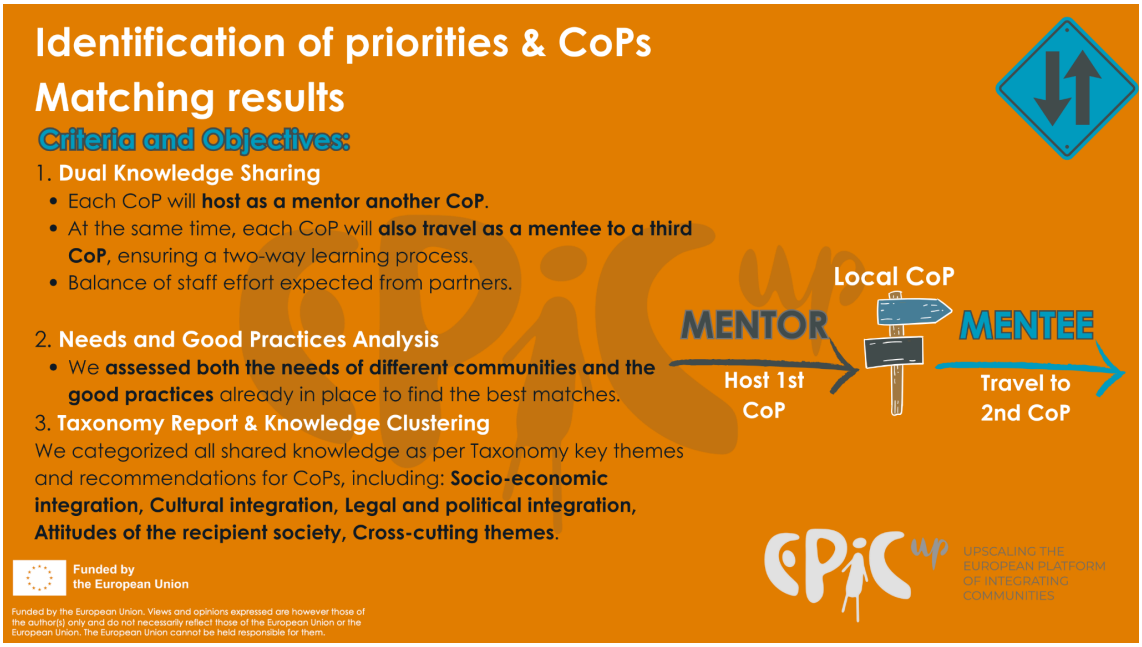
Following this, ALDA and ADL initiated a matchmaking process between CoPs, aiming to pair those in need of specific solutions with others offering relevant expertise or good practices. This groundwork directly supports the design of pilot actions in Task 2.4 and facilitates knowledge transfer through mentoring and upcoming field visits.

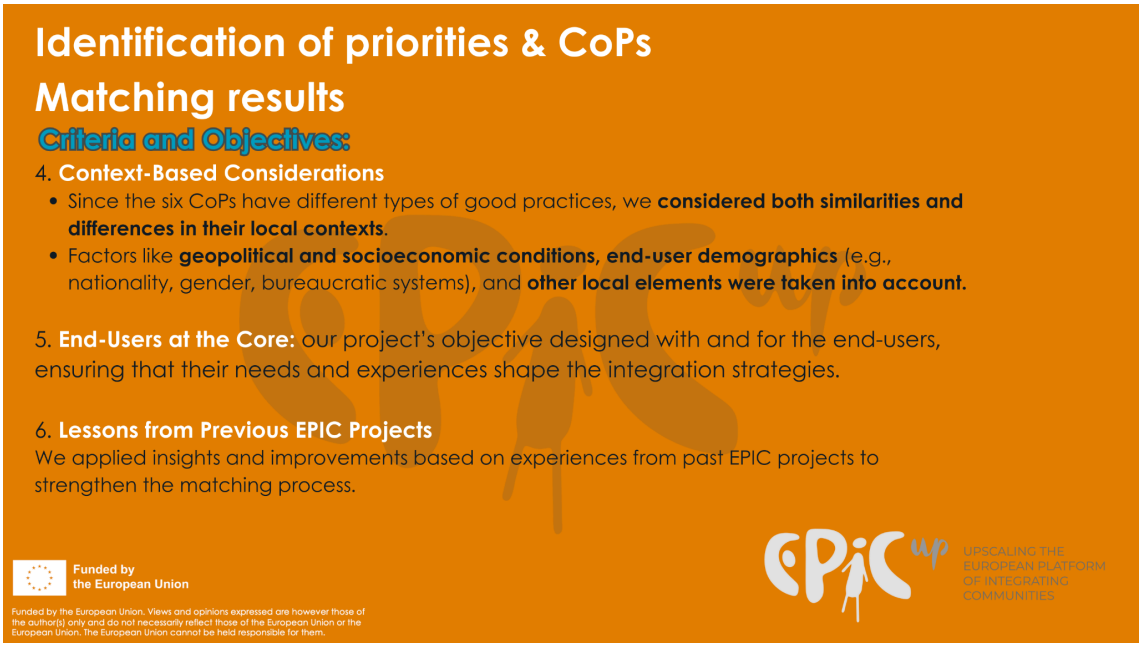
Task 2.4 focused on translating **identified needs into priorities and establishing strategic partnerships between Communities of Practice (CoPs) through a mentor-mentee matching process.** Led by ALDA in collaboration with ADL Zavidovici, this task built on the participatory groundwork laid in previous activities, using a dual-exchange model to foster reciprocal learning between CoPs.

During the second EPIC-UP online exchange held on 19 March 2025, the matching results were presented to all partners. **The process was informed by the needs assessments and mapped good practices shared via the MIRO platform, as well as context-based considerations such as demographics, integration challenges, and institutional capacity.** Each CoP was paired based on a balance of what they could offer and what they aimed to learn, allowing for two-way knowledge exchange and shared ownership of the process.



The session also introduced the **Transfer and Adaptation Plan (TAP)**, a practical framework that will guide CoPs in shaping pilot projects aligned with their local integration priorities. Follow-up bilateral meetings scheduled for April 2025 will provide space for matched CoPs to deepen their collaboration, discuss specific needs, and adapt relevant practices. These sessions will also serve to prepare the field visits planned between June and August, where hands-on exchanges and stakeholder engagement will take place.





To support this process, each CoP will organise a local knowledge-sharing workshop, involving a balanced representation of civil society organisations, public authorities, end beneficiaries, and integration actors. **These workshops aim to ensure that pilot projects are not only technically viable but also co-designed with those directly affected.**

These priorities have been shaped through a participatory process that incorporated feedback from previous activities, the CoPs' creation process under social innovation methodology. The integration of these perspectives ensures that the forthcoming steps, including knowledge sharing, field visits, and the implementation of pilot projects under Work Package 4, are grounded in the real needs of the communities served.

The **priorities outlined reflect a comprehensive approach to migrant integration, encompassing access to the labor market, social inclusion, community engagement, housing, service accessibility, and countering political challenges.** These focus areas are not only critical for the immediate support of migrants but also for fostering long-term social cohesion and resilience within host communities.

Introduction

Work Package 2 of the EPIC-UP project focuses on conceptualising the CoPs on migrant integration across six European territories. This includes both the **creation of the CoPs and the identification of local needs and priorities to inform future integration strategies**.

This deliverable (D2.2) reports on the results of these initial steps. It documents the establishment of six CoPs - multi-actor collaborative structures designed to improve integration policies and practices at the local level - **through a process involving stakeholder mapping, engagement, and local KoMs**. These activities were developed under Task 2.2, coordinated by AEIDL, and led by each local partner to initiate and structure their CoP.

Beyond the creation process, WP2 also aimed to **identify specific integration needs and assess existing good practices in each context.** These elements form the foundation for a shared, evidence-based framework for co-designing local responses. The analysis of needs and definition of priorities emerging from each CoP will be detailed in the next sections of this report, led by ALDA and ADL Zavidovici, responsible for facilitating this second stage of WP2.

Together, these efforts are essential to initiate the CoPs' longer-term role within the EPIC-UP project: **enabling social experimentation, supporting local-level innovation, and fostering more coordinated and inclusive integration ecosystems.**

CoP Bulgaria

CoP creation

The CoP in Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria, initiated by **Association Euni Partners** in cooperation with the Regional Administration of Blagoevgrad, brings together a range of stakeholders to support the integration of migrants, particularly those under temporary protection.

The stakeholder mapping and engagement phase identified 37 organisations as potential contributors to the CoP. These include 23 public sector institutions, 7 representatives from civil society, 5 from the private sector, and 2 from the education and research sector. Engagement with the private sector proved the most challenging due to limited data on employers of migrants and a general lack of perceived incentives for participation. Migrants and their organisations are already involved in the CoP, contributing practical perspectives and grassroots insights into integration needs.

The CoP was officially launched at a Kick-off Meeting on 19 March 2025 at Blagoevgrad Municipality. The event welcomed 15 attendees, including members from public institutions, civil society organisations, and academia.

Participants introduced their organisations and expertise, exchanged good practices, and identified barriers in the local integration landscape. Discussions centred on building stronger coordination between institutions and migrants, and creating channels for cooperation, particularly between public authorities, NGOs, and migrant-led organisations.

The event concluded with a shared commitment to strengthening cooperation across sectors and developing pilot actions inspired by good practices in other EU contexts, including a leadership and integration programme from Lodz, Poland. Future CoP activities will focus on adapting and testing such practices locally while fostering inclusive participation and institutional collaboration.

Main needs

Among the key challenges identified were the need for **improved Bulgarian language skills** among Ukrainian migrants, **lack of clear procedures for deregistration** from public services for individuals with temporary protection, and limited mechanisms to manage unexpected situations such as medical emergencies. The participants also stressed the need for **reliable and sustained information channels** and better communication strategies among stakeholders.

1. **Language Barriers:** The lack of accessible and structured Bulgarian language courses hinders migrants' ability to integrate into education, employment, and public services. Tailored language programs are needed to support refugees of different age groups and backgrounds.
2. **Recognition of Qualifications**: Refugees face difficulties in having their foreign qualifications and professional experience recognized, leading to underemployment and social exclusion. A transparent and reliable system is needed for skills validation.
3. **Empowerment of Refugee Women**: Refugee women face specific vulnerabilities that require targeted empowerment programs focused on social inclusion, vocational training, and leadership development.
4. **Shortage of Interpreters and Translators**: The absence of qualified language support in key areas such as healthcare, legal services, and public administration creates serious integration barriers and risks of rights violations.
5. **Community Engagement and Intercultural Exchange**: Greater efforts are needed to create spaces for dialogue, cultural exchange, and joint activities between migrants and local communities to foster mutual understanding and social cohesion.
6. **Legal Barriers**: Current legal frameworks prevent individuals from withdrawing from temporary protection status, limiting personal agency and complicating long-term integration. Legal reforms are necessary to address this gap.

Main priorities

In Bulgaria, the integration of migrants is a multifaceted challenge, influenced by social, economic, and political factors. While the country has made significant strides in accommodating migrants, particularly in urban centers like Sofia and Blagoevgrad, there are still gaps in employment opportunities, social inclusion, and access to essential services. Migrants, especially those from war-torn regions, often face cultural and linguistic barriers, limited access to public services, and struggles in securing stable employment and housing. These challenges are compounded by the need for better

coordination between civil society organizations, local authorities, and other stakeholders working on migrant integration.The country's historical context of low levels of migration has led to a lack of long-established migrant communities and limited experience in managing cultural diversity, which exacerbates the challenges for migrants and refugees.

The CoP in Bulgaria is focusing on strategic priorities that promote inclusive, community-based integration pathways:

Inclusive Service Design Cycle: Inspired by good practices across Europe, this model advocates for involving migrants in the co-design of public services. The goal is to align services with migrant needs from planning to evaluation, ensuring adaptability and effectiveness.

Inclusive Labor Market Program: A pilot initiative aimed at increasing refugee access to employment through targeted training, employer engagement, and integrated support. The model promotes sustainable job placements via multi-stakeholder collaboration and continuous mentorship.

Shift Toward Inclusion-Oriented Governance: The CoP supports a broader transition from segregated approaches to participatory models where migrants are active contributors in planning and decision-making. This marks a step forward in building socially cohesive, inclusive communities.

CoP Germany

CoP creation

The CoP in Oberhausen, led by **the Municipality of Oberhausen** and **Kitev** has successfully identified 36 organisations willing to contribute to the CoP during the initial stakeholder mapping and engagement phase. These include 18 representatives from civil society, 9 from the public sector, 3 from the private sector, and 6 from research and education institutions. An initial challenge encountered has been the engagement of private sector actors, as many local businesses lacked the capacity or resources to participate. Additionally, migrant self-organisations were identified as a key target group, but their active participation required further outreach and engagement efforts.

The CoP was officially launched at a KoM on 6 February 2025 at Leerstand bei Kitev in Oberhausen. The event attracted 31 participants from those members identified, including 12 representatives from civil society, 9 from public institutions, 2 from the private sector, and 8 from academia.

The agenda included a welcome address by Apostolos Tsalastras, followed by a speed-dating session where participants introduced themselves and shared their connection to migrant integration. A presentation on the EPIC-UP project and its participation opportunities was also held, alongside interactive group discussions to identify strengths and challenges in Oberhausen's integration work.

Discussions during the event focused on **existing integration practices and the challenges faced by migrants. Participants highlighted the strong cooperation among local stakeholders, including public authorities, social organisations, and voluntary groups, as a major asset.** This collaboration is characterised by long-term commitment, equal footing among partners, and effective use of existing networks. However, it was acknowledged that there is still a need to strengthen engagement with migrant self-organisations to ensure more inclusive and representative collaboration.

Future CoP activities will focus on exploring best practices from other countries and enhancing collaboration between local stakeholders to develop innovative approaches to migrant integration.

Main needs

Key challenges identified included labour market integration for long-term residents without formal qualifications, the slow recognition of foreign credentials, and the limited availability of childcare, which particularly affects migrant women and hinders language learning and job market access. Participants also emphasised the importance of psychological support for migrants, improved communication strategies, and the provision of multilingual services, including enhancing language skills among staff in public institutions.

Additionally, concerns were raised about funding constraints affecting integration services and the broader social climate, particularly the rise of far-right sentiment and its impact on public attitudes towards migration. Participants noted the importance of fostering positive narratives, counteracting hate speech, and promoting the idea of integration as an opportunity rather than a challenge.

1. **Service Guidance and Accessibility:** Migrants face significant barriers in navigating public services due to language issues and the complexity of bureaucratic procedures. Simplified, multilingual service guidance is essential to overcome these challenges.
2. **Social Exclusion and Isolation:** Many migrants experience social isolation due to a lack of community connections or cultural familiarity. Intercultural activities and initiatives are needed to help reduce exclusion.
3. **Access to the Job Market:** Migrants struggle to access the labour market, particularly due to the non-recognition of foreign qualifications and complex employment procedures.
4. **Combating Discrimination and Promoting Social Cohesion:** Discriminatory narratives and xenophobic rhetoric contribute to social division and hinder integration. Promoting inclusive dialogue and counteracting hate speech are necessary steps for fostering social cohesion.

Main priorities

Germany's integration policies are comprehensive, yet challenges remain in areas such as housing, employment, and social inclusion. The main priorities for migrant integration in Oberhausen are to address the specific needs identified, drawing inspiration from good practices within the project and the EU context.

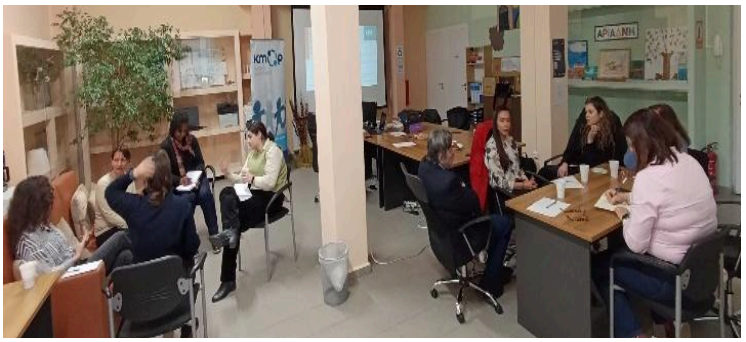
Improving Access to Public Services: Simplifying access to services for migrants, offering clear guidance, multilingual support, and user-friendly systems to ensure they can navigate public services effectively.
Increasing Employment Opportunities: Enhancing the recognition of qualifications and providing dedicated support mechanisms to help migrants enter the job market and become economically self-sufficient.
Fostering Community Engagement and Reducing Isolation: Promoting intercultural exchange programs and community-building initiatives to reduce isolation and encourage mutual understanding between migrants and host communities.
Combating Discrimination and Hate Speech: Developing initiatives that involve various community stakeholders to counteract discrimination and xenophobic rhetoric, while fostering an inclusive environment for migrants.
Legal Flexibility and Support: Advocating for legal reforms that provide more flexibility and ease in recognising migrants' rights, including improving their access to services and employment.

CoP Greece

CoP creation

The CoP in Greece, coordinated by **KMOP** and facilitated by the **Piraeus Municipal Development Enterprise (KODEP)**, was established to address integration challenges through collaboration and local engagement, with a particular focus on women's empowerment in the context of migration.

The stakeholder mapping and engagement phase identified 19 organisations as potential contributors to the CoP. These include 15 civil society actors and citizen representatives, 3 from the public sector, and 1 from the education and research field. Both the public and private sectors were more difficult to engage due to structural and administrative constraints; public sector participation in Greece requires prior authorisation, while private sector actors have limited involvement in migration-related initiatives. Nonetheless, refugee and migrant associations, such as the Greek Forum of Refugees and the Piraeus Council for Refugees/Migrants' Integration, are already actively participating in the CoP.



The CoP was officially launched at a Kick-off Meeting on 18 March 2025 at KMOP's premises in Neo Faliro. The event brought together 15 participants, primarily from civil society and end-user groups, including many women and individuals with migrant backgrounds. The session included presentations of KMOP and KODEP's roles, research findings, and good practices from the EPIC-UP project.

Participants took part in a collaborative workshop focused on women's empowerment and explored local needs, potential strategies, and ways to improve migrant inclusion and gender equity.

The meeting concluded with positive feedback from participants and a strong sense of shared purpose. Future CoP activities will build on the workshop outcomes and further develop gender-sensitive, locally adapted integration strategies. The next CoP meeting was scheduled for 9 April 2025 and will introduce the project's mentor/mentee model and upcoming inter-CoP visits.

Main needs

The initial stakeholder mapping and discussions revealed several challenges faced by migrants, particularly women and vulnerable groups:

1. **Access to the Labour Market:** Migrant women often face significant barriers to employment, including challenges related to the recognition of foreign qualifications and a lack of opportunities for professional development. Without targeted support programs, these barriers lead to underemployment and reliance on informal or low-wage jobs. Moreover, the absence of direct intermediation between employers and migrant communities exacerbates the situation, particularly for women who have fewer networks in the local labour market.
2. **Racism and Intergroup Conflicts:** In Greece, racism within migrant communities - often linked to intergroup conflicts - poses a significant barrier to integration. Migrants from different backgrounds experience tensions that further exacerbate social exclusion. These challenges require awareness-raising initiatives, such as intercultural dialogue activities and participative programs (e.g., shared cultural events and storytelling activities), to break down prejudices and promote mutual understanding.
3. **Language Barriers and Cultural Integration: Language acquisition** remains one of the most significant barriers to migrant integration. Limited access to structured language courses hinders migrants' ability to interact with local communities, access essential services, and integrate into the labour market. In

addition to language skills, cultural integration programs are necessary to help migrants navigate local customs and societal norms and feel a sense of belonging.

Main priorities

Greece has long been a front-line country for migrants and refugees arriving into Europe, primarily due to its geographic proximity to Turkey and other parts of the Middle East and Africa. Greece's integration challenges are complex and multifaceted, shaped by both the country's economic crisis and its positioning as a transit point for migrants seeking to reach other European countries. With significant migration flows, particularly since 2015, Greece has faced substantial pressure on its asylum systems, housing, and public services, particularly in islands like Lesbos and larger cities like Athens.

Based on the identified needs, the CoP Greece has outlined specific priorities that aim to address the challenges faced by migrants and contribute to building a more inclusive integration local system:

Creating Safe and Supportive Spaces for Women & Girls: Establishing dedicated inclusive and safe spaces, to offer services such as counseling, healthcare, language support, and empowerment programs. These spaces are essential to reduce isolation and support women's integration.

Empowering Migrants through Self-Advocacy: to equip migrants with the skills to advocate for their rights, participate in decision-making processes, and take ownership of their integration journey.

Comprehensive Services for Unaccompanied Minors: Providing legal assistance, shelter, education, and psychological support to unaccompanied minors and offer a solid model for addressing the unique challenges faced by these vulnerable groups.

CoP Italy

CoP creation

The CoP in Brescia, coordinated by **ADL Zavidovici** in collaboration with **the Municipality of Brescia**, focuses on the integration of young migrants and their access to public spaces.

The stakeholder mapping and engagement phase identified 36 organisations participating in the CoP, including 25 representatives from civil society, 5 from the public sector, 4 from the private sector, and 2 from research and education institutions. Private sector involvement posed challenges, as engagement needed to align with their interests, particularly in social initiatives. Additionally, reaching young migrant associations required targeted outreach through informal networks.

The CoP was officially launched at a KoM on 27 February 2025 at Biblioteca UAU in Brescia. The event gathered 31 participants, including civil society actors, public officials, and representatives from academia.

Discussions explored young migrants' use of public spaces, integration challenges, and strategies for engagement. Through interactive exercises, stakeholders mapped key public areas relevant to young people with migrant backgrounds and proposed interventions to enhance inclusivity.

Participants emphasised the need for improved youth engagement in urban spaces, stronger collaboration with migrant-led initiatives, and the adaptation of public services to the realities of young people with migration backgrounds. Future meetings will refine these priorities into actionable projects.

Main needs

The integration of migrants (especially young migrants) in Brescia faces various challenges, including barriers to active participation, housing, and access to essential services. Addressing these issues is key to fostering a more inclusive community and promoting social cohesion.

1. **Active Participation of Migrants in Social, Political, and Community Life:** Migrants face challenges in being included in local decision-making processes, impacting their overall integration and societal engagement.
2. **Access to Adequate Housing:** Rising rents and limited affordable housing options pose significant challenges, especially for migrant and refugee families, affecting their stability and long-term integration.
3. **Engagement Between Migrants and Local Communities:** There is a need for stronger efforts to foster understanding and collaboration between migrants and local communities, which is essential for mutual acceptance and social cohesion.
4. **Service Guidance and Accessibility:** Migrants often struggle with navigating the complex landscape of social services, legal processes, and public administration due to language and cultural barriers.
5. **Financial Aid for Vulnerable Social Groups:** Migrants face exclusion and isolation without sufficient financial support, particularly those in vulnerable situations.
6. **Access to the Job Market and Professional Training:** Legal, linguistic, and social barriers limit migrants' access to the labor market, leading to underemployment and hindering professional growth.
7. **Psychological Support for Vulnerable Individuals:** Many migrants experience psychological distress due to displacement and isolation, requiring targeted mental health services.

Main priorities

The city of Brescia is emblematic of the migration challenges faced by smaller urban centers, which struggle to manage the increasing diversity brought about by migration. While Italy has long been a key destination for migrants, Brescia, situated in northern Italy, is home to a significant number of migrants from North Africa, Eastern Europe, and, more recently, the Middle East. Brescia's economic landscape relies heavily on industries such as manufacturing, and migrant workers often fill low-wage, labor-intensive jobs, which are essential yet precarious.

Based on the identified needs, the CoP Italy has outlined specific priorities to foster a more inclusive, supportive integration process for young migrants:

Improving Access to Housing and Financial Stability: Co-designing inclusive housing policies through public-private partnerships to provide affordable accommodation for migrants, and establishing financial aid mechanisms to ensure stability and prevent social exclusion.

Enhancing Service Guidance and Accessibility: Simplifying access to social services, legal processes, and healthcare through multilingual and culturally-sensitive guidance, ensuring migrants can navigate systems effectively and receive the support they need.

Promoting Active Participation and Social Cohesion: Creating opportunities for young migrants to engage in decision-making processes and encouraging interaction between migrant groups and local communities to build social cohesion and reduce exclusion.

Facilitating Employment and Vocational Training: Providing tailored vocational training and creating pathways to employment by addressing legal and linguistic barriers, as well as promoting the recognition of foreign qualifications.

Strengthening Psychological Support Services: Expanding access to mental health services, ensuring vulnerable migrant groups, especially those in rural or isolated areas, can receive the psychological support needed to cope with displacement challenges.

CoP Poland

CoP creation

The CoP in Łódź is coordinated by the **Human Rights Cities Institute (IMPC)** and focuses on improving the inclusion of migrants in local public services through a human rights-based approach. The initiative brings together a range of actors to explore barriers to integration and identify innovative, participatory solutions grounded in the lived realities of migrants.

The stakeholder mapping exercise led to the identification of 37 relevant organisations. These include 20 from the public sector, 8 from civil society and end-user groups, 2 from the private sector, and 3 from education and research. The CoP structure includes 16 core group members, 11 active members, and 8 occasional participants. While public institutions have been well represented, the engagement of migrants and smaller NGOs has proven more difficult. Limited availability of financial resources to compensate participants was noted as a barrier to the involvement of underrepresented voices.

The CoP was formally launched at a Kick-off Meeting held on 26 March 2025 at the Office of the Culture Department of the City of Łódź. The event brought together 15 participants, mostly from local public institutions, covering areas such as health, transport, education, social services, and data management. Discussions centred on the situation of migrants in the city, perceived integration barriers, and how administrative structures currently respond to the needs of newcomers.

Participants reflected on gaps in communication between institutions and migrant communities, the absence of coordinated data systems, and the challenge of adapting mainstream services to increasingly diverse user groups. At the same time, several good practices were identified, including initiatives in health and education sectors that could be further developed and scaled.

Main needs

The CoP expressed interest in adapting integration strategies already piloted in other cities. Future activities will prioritise more inclusive engagement - particularly of migrant voices - and the co-design of practical tools to embed integration into local policy design.

1. **Job Placement Services and Equal Access to Fair Working Conditions:** Migrants face significant barriers in the labor market, including discrimination, non-recognition of qualifications, and discrimination. Many also encounter violations of legal standards related to remuneration and health and safety.
2. **Service Guidance and Accessibility:** clearer guidance and accessible services to help navigate bureaucratic and legal systems. This includes more information on social services, rights, and opportunities available to them.
3. **Access to Adequate Housing:** Refugees and migrants often face housing insecurity, discrimination, and exploitation, especially women and single mothers. Limited affordable housing availability and tenure security remain pressing concerns.

Main priorities

Łódź's and Warsaw's rapid urbanization has led to a significant increase in its migrant population, but integration efforts are often hampered by bureaucratic obstacles and limited support for migrants in terms of social services. The political climate in Poland, which often takes a skeptical view toward migration, also affects the level of local engagement with migrant communities. This climate makes it difficult for migrants to feel fully accepted and integrated into Warsaw's social and economic fabric. The CoP in Łódź has outlined specific priorities to address these needs :

Improving Access to Employment and Job Security: Addressing the barriers migrants face in the labor market by improving job placement services, supporting the recognition of foreign qualifications, and enhancing legal protections against discrimination in the workplace.

Co-Designing Inclusive Services with Migrants: Engaging migrants in the co-design of services, particularly in key areas like health, housing, and legal support. The goal is to ensure that services are culturally sensitive, accessible, and meet the needs of diverse migrant populations.

Enhancing Housing Accessibility and Security: Developing and implementing inclusive housing policies that ensure migrants, especially vulnerable groups such as women and

families, have access to safe and stable housing. This includes using public-private collaboration to improve housing affordability and reduce discrimination.

Integrating Migrants into Decision-Making Processes: Encouraging the active participation of migrants in local policy-making and the design of integration services. This includes working directly with migrant communities to identify service gaps and improve their access to rights and opportunities.

CoP Spain

CoP creation

The CoP in Béjar, located in the region of Castilla y León, Spain, is coordinated by **Fundación Cepaim**. It brings together local stakeholders to address the integration challenges specific to rural territories, where service provision, mobility, and access to opportunities can be particularly constrained for migrants.

Following a stakeholder mapping process, 14 organisations committed to participate in the CoP. The Kick-off Meeting, held on 27 March 2025 at the Altair Centre in Béjar, gathered 49 participants, including 24 representatives from civil society and end-user groups, 23 from public institutions, and one representative each from the private sector and academia. The group showed significant gender and age diversity, and the structure of the CoP was defined with 11 core members, 24 active participants, and 14 occasional ones.

The meeting was structured to facilitate both information sharing and collaborative exchange. After the initial presentation of the project, participants engaged in mixed-group activities to identify local good practices and map key integration challenges. **These exchanges were designed to ensure representation from across sectors, including migrants themselves, and fostered a horizontal, inclusive discussion environment.**

The good practices identified included cultural events that celebrate diversity, language and employment training programmes, radio platforms for migrant voices, and psychosocial support initiatives targeting vulnerable groups. Schools and youth centres were also noted for their role in awareness-raising activities and fostering intercultural dialogue.

The event concluded with broad consensus on the need for stronger coordination among institutions, NGOs, and migrant-led groups. Participants expressed interest in continuing the peer-learning process and shaping concrete actions in future sessions, based on the issues raised during this first encounter.

Main needs

Among the main challenges discussed were the limited availability of public transportation, particularly affecting mobility between rural towns; bureaucratic hurdles in the regularisation of legal status; lack of access to affordable housing; difficulties in recognising foreign qualifications; and the need for more targeted training programmes adapted to local labour market needs. Participants also emphasised the

importance of legal advice for migrants and support for frontline workers dealing with complex administrative procedures.

1. **Psychological Support and Reinforcement for Migrants in Rural Areas**: Migrants in rural settings often face social isolation and lack access to mental health services. The emotional burden of displacement, coupled with limited community ties and scarce psychosocial resources, makes it difficult for them to rebuild stable and fulfilling lives.
2. **Employment Support for Migrants in Rural Areas**: Geographic isolation, language barriers, and non-recognition of foreign qualifications limit employment opportunities for migrants in rural areas. Additionally, self-employment and social enterprise opportunities are often underdeveloped.
3. **Support for Migrant Women's Work-Life Balance**: Migrant women face compounded challenges balancing integration with caregiving responsibilities. The lack of accessible childcare services limits their ability to participate in language courses, employment, or skills training.
4. **Financial Literacy and Job Market Preparation**: Migrants often lack familiarity with financial systems, job application processes, and employment rights in Spain. This limits their ability to access stable employment or achieve financial independence.
5. **Community Engagement Initiatives for Migrants and Locals**: Social cohesion in rural areas can be challenged by cultural misunderstandings or lack of interaction between migrants and local residents. Initiatives to foster mutual understanding and interaction are essential.
6. **Empowerment Programs for Refugee Women**: Refugee women, particularly those facing gender-based violence or economic dependency, need empowerment programs that promote autonomy, resilience, and integration into the labor market.
7. **Language Barriers**: Language remains a fundamental barrier to accessing services, employment, education, and building social connections. Tailored language support is crucial for successful integration.

Main priorities

The integration context in Salamanca and Béjar is particularly shaped by the smaller, more rural nature of these cities compared to larger urban zones, the social infrastructure in Béjar is less developed, and migrants may feel more isolated, making the integration process more challenging.While the policies are designed at the

national level, local implementation varies significantly across different cities and regions.

The CoP has defined several concrete priorities to address these needs and enhance migrant integration in Béjar:

Promoting Women's Empowerment and Employment: aim to improve the employability and empowerment of migrant women through training and socio-labor integration initiatives.

Psychosocial Support and Well-being Initiatives: Expanding psychosocial support services to migrants, particularly in rural areas, to address the mental health needs caused by isolation and trauma. Strengthening community-based mental health programs and ensuring that migrants have access to counseling and support networks is a priority.

Addressing Language Barriers Through Tailored Language Support: Providing targeted language training programs for migrants to help them navigate daily life, access services, and enter the job market. This would include not only Spanish language courses but also cultural orientation and job readiness programs.

Enhancing Social Cohesion Between Migrants and Local Communities: Building stronger relationships between migrant and local communities through cultural exchange initiatives, community engagement programs, and joint activities to promote understanding and cooperation, reducing social tensions.

Coordinating Support Services for Migrant Women: Creating integrated, interdisciplinary services for migrant women, addressing both social and professional needs. This includes access to childcare, legal support, and employment services, all tailored to the specific challenges migrant women face in rural areas.

Strengthening Local Integration Networks: Drawing from the success of the Oberhausen Integration Network, the CoP aims to create a similar framework in Béjar that involves all local stakeholders, including public, private, and civil society actors, to ensure that migrants can access services based on their individual needs, whether related to health, housing, employment, or social support.

Annexes

1.1 Working document_Task 2.2_Creation and start-up of the CoPs - EPIC-UP

Introduction

This document, elaborated by AEIDL, aims to provide the overall framework for the creation of the EPIC-UP Communities of Practices (CoP) in six territories. It describes the terminology, objectives, methodology, general workplan and monitoring the six CoPs created under task 2.2 will implement for the 36 months of the project duration.

The document is part of the training that the task leader (TL) 2.2 AEIDL implements in the framework of the EPIC-UP project to guide the partners leading the CoPs.

Summary

The **EPIC-UP CoPs are multi-actor collaboration environments**, bringing together public authorities (PA), Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), migrants' associations, researchers, and other relevant stakeholders, working together to improve their capacity to design, implement, and disseminate effective integration practices at the local level. Guided by the reference partner in each area, the CoP members will share their experiences to identify common needs, priorities and existing practices (WP2), learn from each other (WP3 and 5), and carry out a social experimentation process through which they will test innovative solutions to improve local governance in the field of migrant integration (WP4). CoPs will therefore embark in a **social innovation (SI) journey** in the spirit of developing new ideas and solutions regarding products, services, practices and models, which simultaneously meet social needs and create new social relations or collaborations between public, civil society or private organisations, thus benefiting society and empowering its capacity for action.

The CoP leader partners in each territory are EUNI in Bulgaria , KITEV and the municipality of Oberhausen in Germany, KMOP and KODEP in Greece, ADL Z in Italy, Cepaim in Spain, and IMPC in Poland.

A short training programme for the designated partner CoP leaders and when possible, other core team (CT) members of each CoP will be delivered by the TL AEIDL. It will consist of a series of online sessions and a guiding document where CoP leaders will be guided on the principles, methods, and tools to run a CoP and carry out a social

experimentation (WP4) to test solutions able to respond the needs identified and based on other good practices learned (WP2).

After the completion of that training programme, all CoP leaders will have mapped their stakeholders and planned an engagement strategy. Particular attention will be placed on properly engaging 1) migrants and refugees in the CoPs, applying the strategy learned in WP3 civic engagement and tailoring messages in an easy-to-read manner (WP6 local communication campaigns); and 2) engaging PA beyond the local level of the CoP.

After that, a Kick-off Meeting (KoM) at the local level will take place to present the project and CoP objectives and activities to stakeholders. A local campaign and call for CoP participants will be carried out before the KoM so that the CoP leaders start engaging stakeholders.

Description of the EPIC-UP Community of Practices and their social experimentation process

Definitions

What is a CoP

The term "Community of Practice"(CoP) was popularised by Etienne Wenger, Jean Lave, and others in the field of social learning theory and organisational learning. CoPs are groups of people who share a common concern, set of problems, or interest in a topic, and who come together to fulfil both individual and group goals.

CoPs are characterised by three key elements: domain, community, and practice. The **domain** represents the shared area of interest that brings members together, providing them with a common focus and a sense of purpose. The **community** highlights the relationships and interactions among members, who participate in joint activities and discussions, support one another, and share information, thereby fostering a network of mutual engagement. The **practice** involves the shared resources, tools, language, and methods for addressing issues that members develop over time, creating a collective repository of knowledge and skills. These elements together create a collaborative environment where members can learn, enhance their expertise, and contribute to the group's objectives.

Examples of CoPs

EMEN

The European Migrant Entrepreneurship Network (EMEN) project focused on supporting and promoting migrant entrepreneurship across Europe. EMEN aimed to foster the exchange of knowledge, best practices, and resources to create an enabling environment for migrant entrepreneurs. The project set up three thematic CoPs **1) Access to Finance CoP**: to improve access to financial services and funding for migrant entrepreneurs; **2) Coaching and Mentoring CoP**: to enhance coaching and mentoring services for migrant entrepreneurs; and **3 Professionalisation of Migrant Entrepreneurs' Support Organisations (MBSO) and diversity management CoP**: to professionalise the organisations that support migrant entrepreneurs and raise awareness about migrants entrepreneurs needs for a better diversity management in chambers of commerce.

During the period 2017-2020 EMEN's activities and results included: a series of physical and online events bringing together the members of the three CoPs; two surveys and related need analysis with MBSO and chambers of commerce; 15 training sessions; implementation of a diversity tool assessment with 15 chambers of commerce; collection of 23 good practices on supporting migrant entrepreneurs; co-production of several other papers, discussions notes, articles and reports led by the project with CoP members contribution; participation in a large number of international conferences and external workshops to disseminate the results.

CONNECTION

The CONNEcting Cities Towards Integration action (CONNECTION) project aimed to enhance the integration of migrants and refugees through transnational learning and policy implementation across European cities. The project established Communities of Practice (CoPs) focusing on four key areas: developing strategic integration approaches, incorporating gender dimensions into policies, creating pathways to employment for migrants, and designing one-stop shops for integration services. These CoPs facilitated mutual learning and the exchange of best practices among cities through workshops, staff exchanges, and action planning. Seven less experienced cities developed new integration policies with EU support, while experienced cities trained 'integration ambassadors' to extend the project's impact beyond its lifespan.

The activities of the CoPs included organising workshops for policy discussions, conducting staff exchanges for practical learning, and developing tailored action plans for integration. These collaborative efforts resulted in the creation of practical guides for integration policies, the implementation of new local integration plans, and enhanced capacity among city staff through targeted training.

Social innovation

SI means the design and implementation of new ideas as regards products, services, practices and models that simultaneously meet social needs and create new social relationships or collaborations between public, civil society or private organisations,

thereby benefitting society and boosting its capacity to act. SI aims to improve social outcomes and create positive societal change by addressing challenges such as poverty, inequality, environmental sustainability, and demographic change. It needs to involve collaboration between various stakeholders, including civil society organisations, businesses, governments, and citizens, and can include a wide range of activities and approaches, from grassroots initiatives to large-scale systemic interventions. SI should go beyond filling public service gaps; it should repair and transform the relationships that caused the problems.

Social experimentation

Social experimentation aims to provide an innovative response to social needs, implemented on a small scale and in conditions that enable its impact to be measured, prior to being implemented in other contexts including geographical and sectoral ones, or implemented on a larger scale, if the results prove to be positive. Social experimentation can provide empirical evidence and insights into what works and what does not work in addressing social challenges. This evidence base can inform the design and implementation of social innovations by helping innovators understand which approaches are most effective and scalable.

Examples of social innovations and experimentations

Rural Care

The region of Castilla y León in Spain has an over-ageing population living mainly in rural areas. The low population density, its high dispersion in the territory, rapid ageing and high life expectancy, hinder the access to long-term care services, which are also of poor quality and expensive. In addition, users have the desire to receive care at home. At present, care services are mainly performed in residential and daily care centres, which will be unsustainable in the future. Rural Care project consisted of a public-private partnership that tested a model of integrated long-term care adapted to rural areas, which is affordable, of higher quality, and is based on users' needs and aspirations, including receiving care support at home, and on an enhanced cooperation between health and social services. The project tested pilot services in 74 local municipalities with 150 users based on individual life plans agreed between care users and care professionals. The evaluation showed positive cost-effective results and high satisfaction from users

RIAC

The Regional Integration Accelerators project developed a model to allow refugees and asylum seekers faster access to the labour market, reducing from 48 months to 12 months, in some cases the process. There is a significant gap period between the moment of arrival of an asylum seeker and the recognition of international protection and thus subsequent access to labour market guidance. Refugees need to navigate through many different services to access language training, recognition of diplomas or skills, and for job advice. The lack of a concrete support structure means refugees and asylum seekers can spend 2 or 3 years searching for a job, and very often people get lost and even they 'disappear' from the system, defeated by the lack of understanding of the context, the language, and the urgent need to support themselves and their families. RIAC modifies the methodology and timing of the standard integration process by ensuring that the different pathways are implemented simultaneously rather than in sequence and by starting from the employers' needs and availability of real job opportunities. This is done by: 1) Searching for employers with vacancies and involve them in the recruitment of refugees; 2) Developing parallel integration steps able to reduce the waiting time and uncertainty; 3) Appointing a 'Speed Manager' per RIAC, to be the contact person overseeing the whole process; 4) Strengthening the cooperation among volunteers and other actors; 5) Promoting long-life learning to motivate refugees; 6) Including a gender gap integration strategy; 7) The project has developed 21 RIAC units in 4 countries (Germany, Italy, Denmark and Turkey), attracting 756 participants and successfully integrating 224 into the labour market. RIAC units also identified a number of stakeholders who play a major role in the integration of refugees, such as voluntary associations, employees in the job centre or advice centres, policymakers, and people from the community. In total, 5 employers, 4 Speed Managers from different sectors, and 200 mentors participated in RIAC.
The standardisation of the RIAC model was done in 4 cycles of optimisation: Pilot, adjustment of concept, proof of adjusted concept, final concept. The main innovation of the project resides in the creation of a new service with a methodology that 1) modifies the standard integration process by identifying obstacles that slow down the process; 2) design specific interventions to tackle such obstacles, combining the different steps in parallel rather than subsequently; 3) and start the process for the real market opportunities existing in each territory by involving employers from the beginning of the action.

EPIC-UP Community of Practices

Considering the above definitions, we define the EPIC-UP CoPs as collaborative networks established in six EU countries (Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, and Spain) to enhance local-level integration and inclusion of migrants.

- The **domain** of these CoPs centres on improving migrant integration through a model of multi-actor collaboration that involves stakeholders such as migrants, public authorities, and civil society organisations.
- The **community** aspect refers to the active engagement and creation of a partnership among these diverse stakeholders, fostering mutual learning and support.
- The **practice** involves the identification, mapping, and benchmarking of good practices in migrant integration, the analysis of needs and priorities, capacity building on migrant participation in policy design and on concrete good

practices identified through field visits and exchanges, and the co-design, testing and implementation of local integration services.

Figure 1. CoPs elements

These CoPs aim to create sustainable, user-centred integration strategies that are effective and replicable across different local contexts.

Objectives

The EPIC-UP CoPs will carry out a **social experimentation process** to create positive social change in the integration of migrants by addressing new or unmet social needs identified and evidenced within the CoPs, where end-users (migrants, local authorities) will be at the core of the decision-making process. These objectives include:

- **Create positive social change:** foster inclusive and supportive environments that significantly enhance the integration of migrants at the local level.
- **Address unmet social needs:** identify and address new or previously unsatisfied social needs through thorough analysis and evidence gathered within the cops.
- **Develop and implement innovative solutions:** collaboratively develop, implement, and assess innovative solutions—such as new products, services, partnerships and models—by involving a wide range of stakeholders, including end-users, to ensure relevance and effectiveness.
- **Test and evaluate solutions:** rigorously test and evaluate the new solutions to confirm they produce better outcomes compared to existing practices.
- **Define sustainability plans:** develop sustainability plans to scale up, transfer, or mainstream successful solutions to other contexts, including different target groups, territories, organisations, and sectors, ensuring long-term impact and adaptability.

Methodology

CoPs structure, roles and responsibilities

CoPs are dynamic social structures that require 'cultivation for them to emerge and grow. Moreover, they are not stationary bodies but groups that increase or decrease based on the membership offer, the evolution of needs, the perception of the usefulness of the given opportunity and the timing, the availability of the members, among other externalities.

For a CoP to success, it is very important to set-up the right foundations and start by:

1. Understanding there are different kinds of members who will contribute to the CoP in different ways.
2. Identifying the right key actors (members) who will form the CoP core group in relation to each CoP context.
3. Assigning clear and realistic responsibilities to the members.

The CoPs have **four levels of participation, with different roles and responsibilities, as shown in the graph below**:

1. **Core team (CT):** the group leading the CoP. It is normally composed by partners of the consortium, but it is not closed to external organisations if the partners find it appropriate. Within the CT we find two key roles: the **CoP administrator**, in charge of the management and monitoring of the CoP, and the **CoP facilitator**, in charge of encouraging participation, and guiding discussions.
2. **Core group (CG):** members who form the governing and executive body responsible for and fully invested in developing the CoP. It is essential that actors from different public and private organisations as well as end-users are present in the CG. A maximum of 10 members is recommended to have an operational CG. They are expected to remain in the CoP for the whole project duration.
3. **Active members**: members who are recognised as practitioners. They engage in the CoP activities regularly, ideally from the beginning. They are in direct contact with the core group, with whom they work closely to help shape the definition and direction of the CoP.
4. **Occasional members:** members who are connected and interested but less engaged. They only participate when the topic is of special interest, when they have something specific to contribute, or when they are involved in specific activity.

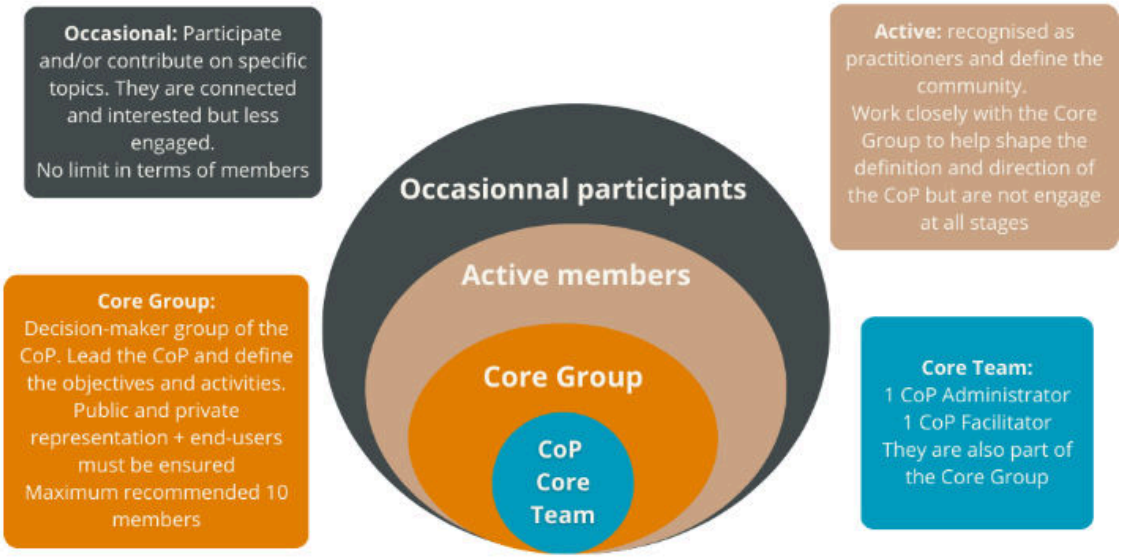


Figure 2. CoPs levels and type of members

Membership in a CoP is voluntary, and individuals join based on their shared interests, expertise, and commitment to the community's goals.

Target: at least 30 members per CoP, with a balanced representation of members, including end-users.

Set up the CoPs

Who should be involved in my CoP to better design local integration strategies? Which principles should I keep in mind to do my mapping? The first step for the six CoPs CT will be to map all potential stakeholders who would be useful and relevant for the CoP, based on their interest for and influence on the challenges and possible topics identified.

A precondition is the need to understand the various categories needed to ensure all perspectives, competencies, skills, and experiences are in, with regards to each CoP specific objective, in a true SI approach. Given the nature of the EPIC-UP project, public authorities, CSO/NGO and migrants and migrant-led organisations are fundamental members of the CoP, even if other categories (businesses, academics, media, etc.) are welcome.

Stakeholder mapping

The first step will be to reflect and map the local ecosystem in each territory to identify an engage potential members. Partners in the CT should do this from the beginning of the project and during it.

A visual tool to start the process is a **stakeholder map**. There are different models that have been used by many social innovation projects and initiatives[1].

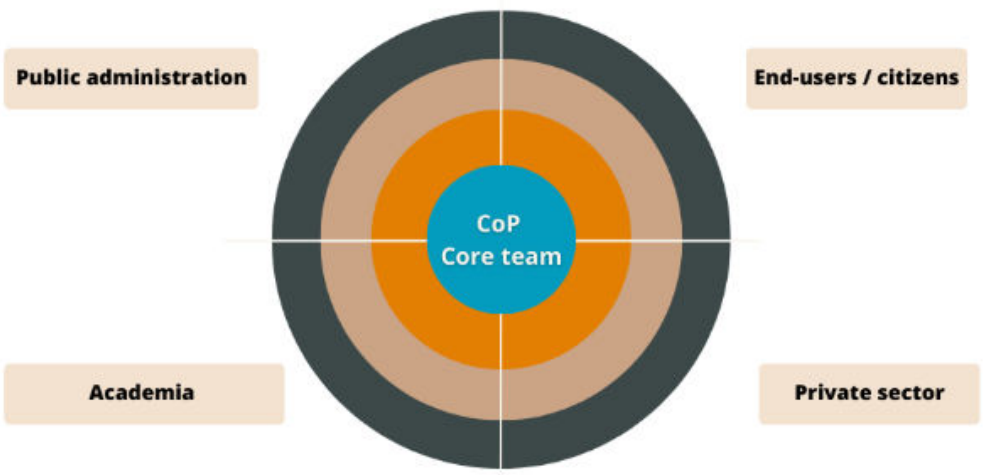


Figure 3. Stakeholder map canvas 1

The EPIC-UP CoPs CT will start doing the initial stakeholder's map. They need to keep in mind that not all CoP members will have the same level of interaction nor level of contribution. Therefore, for each stakeholder category, they will assess whether they should be part of the core team, an active or an occasional participant.

The canvas presented above represents the four main stakeholder groups and their role and positioning in the CoP. More categories can be considered if relevant for the CoP's objectives. The closer they are to the centre, the more engaged they will be in the CoP.

This mapping can be organised online or during a face-to-face meeting or workshop, first between the administrator and the facilitator, and then with the whole Core Group

Two additional models presented below should be used to further analyse stakeholders and complement the 1st exercise.

[1] See for instance the panel circle used by the project EU-MACS (**EU**ropean **MA**rket for **C**limate **S**ervices) for a panel of stakeholders led by ENoLL (European Network of Living Labs)

The model below is useful to understand stakeholders' expectations with regards to their influence and to their interest, helping to better define their roles in the CoP and how to meet their needs.

Figure 4. Stakeholder map canvas 2

Once the two previous steps are concluded and the main stakeholders are identified, it is very important to understand how they can benefit from the CoP and how they can contribute to it, being realistic with the role and level they operate within the CoP. With the table below, collectively, identify each category needs and expectations to ensure their active engagement, as well as the inputs and contributions needed by the CoP. You can redo the exercise for each category, going more in-depth or even for each specific actor previously identified.

CoP stakeholders' categories	Needs & expectations	Inputs and contributions
End-users / Citizens/CSO		
Public administration		
Private sector		
Academia, researchers, trainers, teachers		

Figure 5. Stakeholder map canvas 3

After the three previous steps are done, partners shall start doing a concrete list of people they will reach out an invite to the CoP. This will be **the first step to consolidate a list of CoP members** with clear roles in the group.

Stakeholder group	Organisation	Persona	Role in the CoP

Figure 6. Stakeholder map canvas 4

Stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder engagement refers to the systematic process of identifying, involving, and empowering diverse groups, including public authorities, civil society organisations, migrant associations, NGOs, educators, and other actors, to collaboratively design and implement effective and user-centred migrant integration strategies at the local level. This involves active participation, capacity building, and continuous feedback to ensure that integration practices meet the needs of migrants and local communities.

The CoPs CT will need to communicate effectively how stakeholders will be able to join, contribute but equally important, benefit from the CoP. To encourage them to have a say about the CoP direction and keep them informed of any progress it is very important to build trust and avoid mere consultation but actual participation.

Why join the CoPs?

Raise your voice: by joining the EPIC-UP Community of Practices, you have the opportunity to amplify your voice and advocate for the rights of migrants, express your concerns and share your ideas.

Meet others: engage directly with others you do not often meet with, share your experiences, and influence the design of integration policies that truly reflect the

realities on the ground. This collaboration allows for meaningful exchanges, fostering a supportive environment where you can build lasting relationships and partnerships.

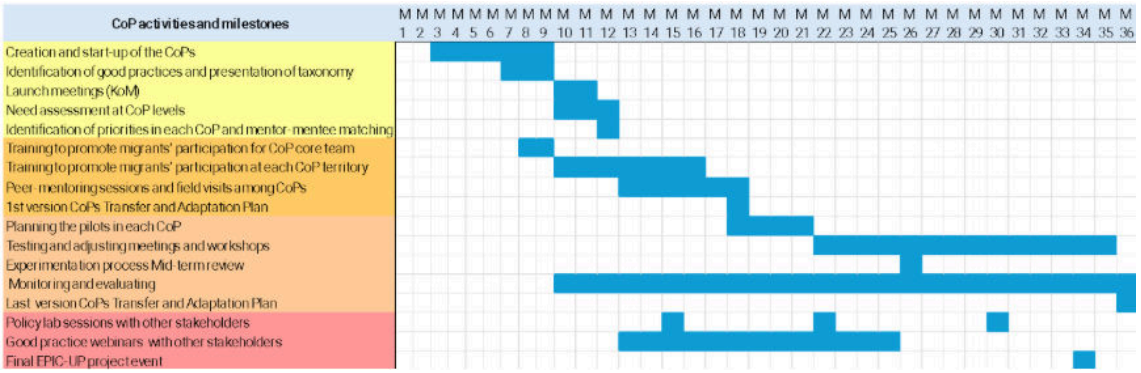
Acquire new skills and knowledge: participate in training programmes, workshops, events and peer-to-peer learning sessions. Enhance your skills and knowledge in the field of migrant integration, gaining insights from best practices and innovative approaches from across Europe.

Shape the future: be part of a proactive community that co-designs and pilots new integration strategies. Your involvement will help create sustainable, effective solutions tailored to the needs of local communities, ensuring that integration practices are not only user-centred but also future-proof.

How join the CoP?

If you are an individual or representative of an organisation working on migrants' integration in one of the six countries where CoPs are established - Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, and Spain, **CONTACT US HERE** The CoPs welcome members of the above-mentioned sectors throughout the project duration (May 2024 – April 2027).

Workplan



The CoPs will go through four main phases of 1) creation and start up; 2) capacity building; 3) piloting, monitoring and evaluation; 4) exchanges with other CoPs and stakeholders and dissemination of results. The section below provides more information about the process.

Figure 7. Cops' timeline in EPIC-UP

Months 1-6: creation and start-up phase (WP2)

- **Creation and start-up of the CoPs (months 1-9):**
    - This initial phase focuses on the stakeholder mapping and creation of the CG of the six CoPs, definition of communication channels and first review of main needs, priorities and existing practices.
- **Launch meetings (months 9-10):**
    - Formal launch meetings are conducted to introduce the project, its goals, and the CoP framework to the CG members and invited stakeholders (potential members)
    - These meetings aim to align expectations and secure commitment from participating organisations and individuals.
    - CoP administrators will start collecting data (agendas, minutes, participant list, feedback forms, presentations)

Months 9-21: assessment and capacity building phase (WP2-3)

- **Need assessment at CoP levels (months 10-11):**
    - Comprehensive assessments are carried out to understand the unmet needs of each CoP territory. This will define the trajectory of the social innovation process in each CoP.
    - This involves gathering data from the CoP members.
- **Identification of Priorities in each CoP and mentor-mentee matching (months 11-12):**
    - Based on the needs assessment, key priorities for each CoP are identified. This is a first match between those who have a need and those who may have a possible solution for it.
    - Mentor-mentee relationships are established to support knowledge transfer and capacity building.
- **Training to promote migrants' participation for CoP CT (month 9):**
    - Focus is on techniques and strategies to ensure meaningful participation so that the CoP CT can apply them during the rest of the project.
- **Training to promote migrants' participation at each cop territory (months 10-16):**
    - Training is extended to broader stakeholders within each CoP territory to foster inclusive practices.
    - The goal is to equip local actors with the tools needed to engage migrants in the integration process.
- **Peer-mentoring sessions and field visits among CoPs (months 13-18):**

- One initial peer-mentoring session online, an in-person field visit of four days, and a follow up online meeting are organised to encourage knowledge sharing and collaborative learning across different CoPs.

- **1st version CoPs Transfer and Adaptation Plan (Month 18):**
  - The first draft of the Transfer and Adaptation Plan is based on insights gained from the initial phases and peer-mentoring activities. The plan will be tested and adjusted as needed during the next phase.

Months 9-24: implementation and testing phase

- **Planning the pilots in each CoP (months 18-21):**
  - Detailed planning for pilot projects is undertaken in each CoP (resources needed, venue, calendar, the role of the different CoP members throughout the process, etc.)
  - One-day workshop at each CoP to validate the TAP, present the plan and kick-off the experimentation process
  - These pilots are designed to test the identified integration strategies in real-world settings.
- **Testing and adjusting meetings and workshops (months 22-35):**
  - Meetings and workshops are held to test the pilot projects.
  - Feedback is gathered, and necessary adjustments are made to improve the strategies.
  - Each CoP leader receive a limp sum of 40 000 EUR for the 14-months process.
- **Experimentation process mid-term review (month 26):**
  - A mid-term review is conducted including partners, CoPs, Advisory Board members and the external evaluator to assess the experimentation process and advice.
- **Monitoring and evaluation (months 10-36):**
  - Continuous monitoring and evaluation are carried out to track the effectiveness of the integration strategies, based on the process set up in WP1.
- **Last Version CoPs Transfer and Adaptation Plan (month 36):**
  - The final version of the Transfer and Adaptation Plan is developed, incorporating the new service tested by the CoPs, lessons learned, possibilities to scale up or replicate, and MoC among CoP members.

Months 24-36: Dissemination and Finalisation Phase

- **Policy Lab Sessions with other stakeholders (months 15-30):**

- Policy lab sessions are organised to engage a wider range of stakeholders, including policymakers and practitioners.
- These sessions aim to influence policy based by bringing the experiences from the ground to policymakers at the different levels.

- **Good practice webinars with other stakeholders (months 14-25):**
  - Webinars are conducted to acquire wider knowledge that can benefit the CoPs and create more collaboration.
- **Final EPIC-UP project event (month 36):**
  - A concluding event is held to showcase the achievements of the EPIC-UP project and disseminate the results to ensure their sustainability.

Launch of the CoPs

Objectives of the kick-off meeting

Once partners have concluded their stakeholder mapping, and other tasks in the project are also advanced, such as task 2.1 '*Taxonomy, mapping and benchmarking of good practices on integration'* and task 3.1 '*Promoting migrants' participation in the design and implementation of integration policies'*, the six CoPs CG will host a kick-off meeting at the local level.

The CoPs KoM will also be the launch of task 2.3 '*Needs assessment at CoPs level'*, led by ALDA.

The **KoM of the EPIC-UP CoPs objectives** are:

- Present the EPIC-UP project's goals and CoP objectives and upcoming activities to local stakeholders, especially to those who have been identified as CG in the CoP.
- Introduce the principles of multi-actor collaboration to improve migrants' reception and integration at the local level.
- Engage key stakeholders, including public authorities, Civil Society Organisations, migrant associations, researchers, and other relevant actors to further expand the CoP and create synergies with other local initiatives when possible.
- Facilitate an open dialogue to validate and challenge the CoP leaders' assumptions about local needs, reshaping them through a multi-stakeholder lens.

- Share and refine the results of the benchmarking activities (T2.1) to ensure best practices are considered from multiple viewpoints.
- Collect feedback and set the foundation for future cooperation and the social experimentation process that will be undertaken by the CoP.

Agenda and methodology

The agenda should be tailored to each local context, but a suggested outline is as follows:

1. **Welcome and introduction to the EPIC-UP CoP**
   Introduction of the CoP CT and overview of the EPIC-UP project and the CoP objectives, activities, and expected results. Outline the objectives of the KoM.

   - Partners can use the PPT and/or video provided by AEIDL for this introduction.
   - To keep it short and engaging, it is recommended to share some materials about the project before the event, so that participants have some background information prior to the event.

2. **Introduction of participants**
   Participants introduce themselves, highlighting their role and interest in the CoP. This sets the tone for inclusive participation and starts creating connections among CoP participants. To ensure participants feel comfortable and engaged from the start, CoPs CT can use creative and inclusive ice-breaking methodologies. Here are some suggestions:

   - **Partner interview and introduction:** each participant pairs with a person sitting next to them and take a couple of minutes to learn about their partners by asking a ser of guiding questions shown in a PPT in the screen room, such as name, organisation, role, how they are involved in migrant integration initiatives, what they hope to contribute to and to benefit from the CoP. If time allows, each participant introduces their partner to the group.
   - **Human bingo:** create a bingo card with characteristics or experiences that might apply to participants (e.g., 'Has worked with a refugee organisation', 'Speaks more than two languages', 'Has lived in more than one country', etc.). Participants move around the room trying to find people who match the boxes on their card, and when they do, they introduce each other.

- **Common ground exercise**: participants are put into small groups and asked to find five things they all have in common (these could be professional, personal, or related to the topic of migrant integration). Each group then shares their commonalities with the larger group.

- **Speed networking**: arrange participants in two circles, one inside the other, facing each other. Each pair has two minutes to introduce themselves and answer a question like "What do you hope to contribute to the CoP?" or "What challenge related to migrant integration are you passionate about solving?". After two minutes, the outer circle shifts, and they meet a new person

3. **Sharing good practices - benchmarking results (T2.1)**
   Presentation of key findings from the benchmarking activities related to local integration strategies. Discuss how these can inform the CoP's activities and refine local best practices.

   - Share with participants a summary of report or similar about task 2.1 benchmarking results, so that they can see which good practice are there

   - CoPs CT should do a short presentation about it, with the documents and support received from task 2.1 leader

   - After the presentation, open the floor for questions and comments, inquiring participants if they knew these practices, if they are aware of others, why do they think they are good (or not) practices, etc. CoP CT can ask an initial question to the group, such as, 'Which of these findings resonate most with your local experience?'. If the group is big, you can dedicate some time after the presentation for small group reflection (e.g. tree to four people) on the findings of the benchmark and provide discussion prompts. Each group should have a facilitator or someone to take notes, or participants can write ideas down on post it and paste them in a flipchart. And assigned group representative will share the key conclusions with the group. Discussion prompts can include:

     - Which good practice/benchmarking results seem most relevant to our local context?

     - Are there any findings you feel don't apply or need further adaptation?

     - How can the good practices identified be applied or modified to fit our local needs?

     - What are the gaps in the findings that we should explore further?

4. **Workshop: local needs assessment**

The local needs assessment workshop will provide a structured opportunity for all participants to voice their views. Depending on the number of attendees, breakout sessions or small group discussions will foster deeper exploration of key topics from diverse perspectives.

To start the discussion and identify pressing needs, the point of departure can be the CoP partners questionnaires done during the draft preparation process – saved in Google Drive (for the four CoPs that prepared it) plus additional information based on the partners experience or desk research. In those questionnaires, partners already listed a number of key challenges and needs when it comes to migrants' integration in their local context.

The **objective** is to validate/challenge those initial assumptions about local needs, reshaping them through a multi-stakeholder lens, to explore them more in deep and identify key priorities for the CoP. A suggested process for the workshop includes:

- **Setting the stage for the workshop:** the CoP CT briefly presents the initial assumptions and findings about local needs and challenges and explain the process to collect feedback.
- **Small group discussions:** split participants, mixing stakeholders in each group to encourage diverse perspectives, where every group considers needs from a multi-stakeholder angle. Or, if there are many participants, you can cluster them in concrete stakeholders' groups (CSO/NGO, public authorities, etc.) Assign specific roles within each group (e.g., note-taker, presenter, timekeeper) to keep things organised and ensure participation from all and put a flipchart or boards for sticky notes per group.
- **Discussion prompts for groups**:
  - **Validate needs**: do the needs presented reflect the real challenges you experience or observe? What are the most pressing?
  - **Challenge assumptions**: are there local needs that were overlooked? What new challenges should be added?
  - **Explore priorities**: Which needs should be prioritised for action? Why are these important to address now? What are the causes and consequences of those needs in the local community?
- **Plenary session:**
  - Participants do a **gallery walk** after each group posts their findings on a wall or board, and other groups can walk around and review. Participants use sticky dots or coloured markers to vote on the needs and priorities they consider more important
  - Each group rapporteur shares its findings

- The CoP CT facilitates the debate and summarises common themes across the group.

5. **Feedback and next steps**

- Distribute a feedback form to gather participant input on the meeting, and if needed/possible about the benchmarking results, and local needs.
- Outline the process for follow-up consultations to complete the needs assessment and identification of priorities.
- Explain the next steps for compiling findings into a need assessment report that will serve as a baseline for future interventions.

6. **Closing Remarks**
   Summary of key takeaways and next steps, emphasising the importance of continued collaboration and what are the communication channels the CoP will use to be in touch.

Time	Agenda item	Details
10:00 – 10:15	**Welcome and introduction to the EPIC-UP CoP**	Introduction of the EPIC-UP project overview. CoP objectives, activities, and expected results shared.
10:15 – 10:30	**Introduction of participants**	Roundtable presentation or ice-breaking activities to foster engagement
10:30 – 11:30	**Sharing good practices - benchmarking results (T2.1)**	Presentation of key findings from benchmarking local integration strategies. Open discussion and group reflections on good practices.
11:30 – 11:45	*Coffee Break*	Informal networking
11:45 – 12:45	**Workshop: local needs assessment**	Initial needs and challenges presented by CoP CT. Group discussions
12:45 – 13:00	**Plenary session: sharing group findings**	Gallery walk and sticky dot voting on prioritised needs. Group rapporteurs share findings. Facilitator summarises common themes.
13:00 – 13:05	**Feedback and next steps**	Distribute feedback form. Outline next steps for consultations and needs assessment report.
13:05 – 13:15	**Closing remarks**	Summary of key takeaways and explanation of communication channels for continued collaboration.

Figure 8. Example of an agenda for a CoP KoM

Monitoring and evaluation

Key performance indicators

The project Grant Agreement and Task 1.3 set the methodology for the overall monitoring and evaluation. Partners in the CoPs will receive guidance and templates to ensure adequate data collection. Key performance indicators (KPIs) used for benchmarking include:

- Participation metrics: number and diversity of participants involved in CoPs.
- Engagement levels: frequency and quality of interactions among members.
- Satisfaction and feedback: member satisfaction and qualitative feedback on the value derived from the CoP.
- Outcome measures: tangible results such as the new integration strategy tested.

Key Indicators and targets set in the grant agreement include:

- Six CoPs created, each involving at least **30 participants** in co-creation workshops and participatory meetings.
- **180 direct beneficiaries**, including migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, public authorities, and CSO.
- At least **eight events/meetings/workshops per CoP**:
  - A koM
  - A training session on participatory methods for 10 beneficiaries in each CoP
  - Two online meetings and a physical field visit with the matching CoP
  - Three pilots' meetings: presentation of the TAP/planning, co-design and co-creation workshops
- Six Memoranda of Cooperation (MoC) co-designed and signed by the CoPs for their continuation post-project.

In the next section, the process that the CoPs CT need to follow collect the information that will allow the project to monitor and evaluate the CoPs is described.

Monitoring and evaluation process

The table below list the activities which will be the occasion to gather the relevant data that will allow us to monitor and evaluate the progress of the six CoPs, indicating when and how to do it. The CoP CT needs to ensure all relevant materials listed below are saved under their relevant folder all the materials in the project database created for it **here**.

When/activity	KPIs	MoV	Template/tool	How
First stakeholder mapping (M6 to 9)	Identification of CoPs Core Group: between 6 and 10 members are identified	**- CoP creation template**	Annex 1. CoP creation template Annex 2. Stakeholder mapping tools	The CoP CT do the stakeholder mapping with the tools in annex 2 and then fill in annex 1 CoP creation template. Materials are saved in the CoPs reports folder
CoPs' kick-off meetings (M9-10)	Six CoPs are launched with the attendance of at least all members of the Core Group	**- Event report** summarising main activities, points of discussions and conclusions, and feedback received **- Participant list** **- Feedback form** **- Agenda, presentations and pictures/recording** (when possible)	Annex 3. Event report + annexes (agenda, presentations, etc.) Annex 4. Participant list (or similar model) Annex 5. Feedback form (or similar model) Annex 6. Event agenda (or similar model)	The CoP CT prepare the templates before the event, collect data during and after it, and save all materials in the CoPs reports folder

Training session on participatory methods to promote migrants' participation (M10-16)	10 beneficiaries in each CoP attend the training Satisfaction and engagement levels and feedback	- **Event report** summarising main activities, points of discussions and conclusions, and feedback received - **Participant list** - **Feedback form** - **Agenda, presentations and pictures/recording** (when possible)	Annex 3. Event report + annexes (agenda, presentations, etc.) Annex 4. Participant list (or similar model) Annex 5. Feedback form (or similar model) Annex 6. Event agenda (or similar model)	The CoP CT prepare the templates before the event, collect data during and after it, and save all materials in the CoPs reports folder
Two online meetings and a physical field visit with the matching CoP (M13-18)	8 people per CoP participate in the activities as both as hosting and visiting CoPS Satisfaction and engagement levels and feedback	- **Event report** summarising main activities, points of discussions and conclusions, and feedback received - **Participant lists** - **Feedback forms** - **Agendas, presentations and pictures/recordings** (when possible)	Annex 3. Event report + annexes (agenda, presentations, etc.) Annex 4. Participant list (or similar model) Annex 5. Feedback form (or similar model) Annex 6. Event agenda (or similar model)	The CoP CT prepare the templates before the event, collect data during and after it, and save all materials in the CoPs reports folder

At least three pilots' meetings: presentation of the TAP/planning, co-design and co-creation workshops (M18-35)	In each CoP, at least 30 men and women from 18 years old onwards participate in the workshops, with a balanced representation of PA, migrant associations and representatives and NGO/CSO Satisfaction and engagement levels and feedback	- **Event report** summarising main activities, points of discussions and conclusions, and feedback received - **Participant lists** - **Feedback forms** - **Agendas, presentations and pictures/recordings** (when possible)	Annex 3. Event report + annexes (agenda, presentations, etc.) Annex 4. Participant list (or similar model) Annex 5. Feedback form (or similar model) Annex 6. Event agenda (or similar model)	The CoP CT prepare the templates before the event, collect data during and after it, and save all materials in the CoPs reports folder

Annexes

Annex 1. CoP creation template

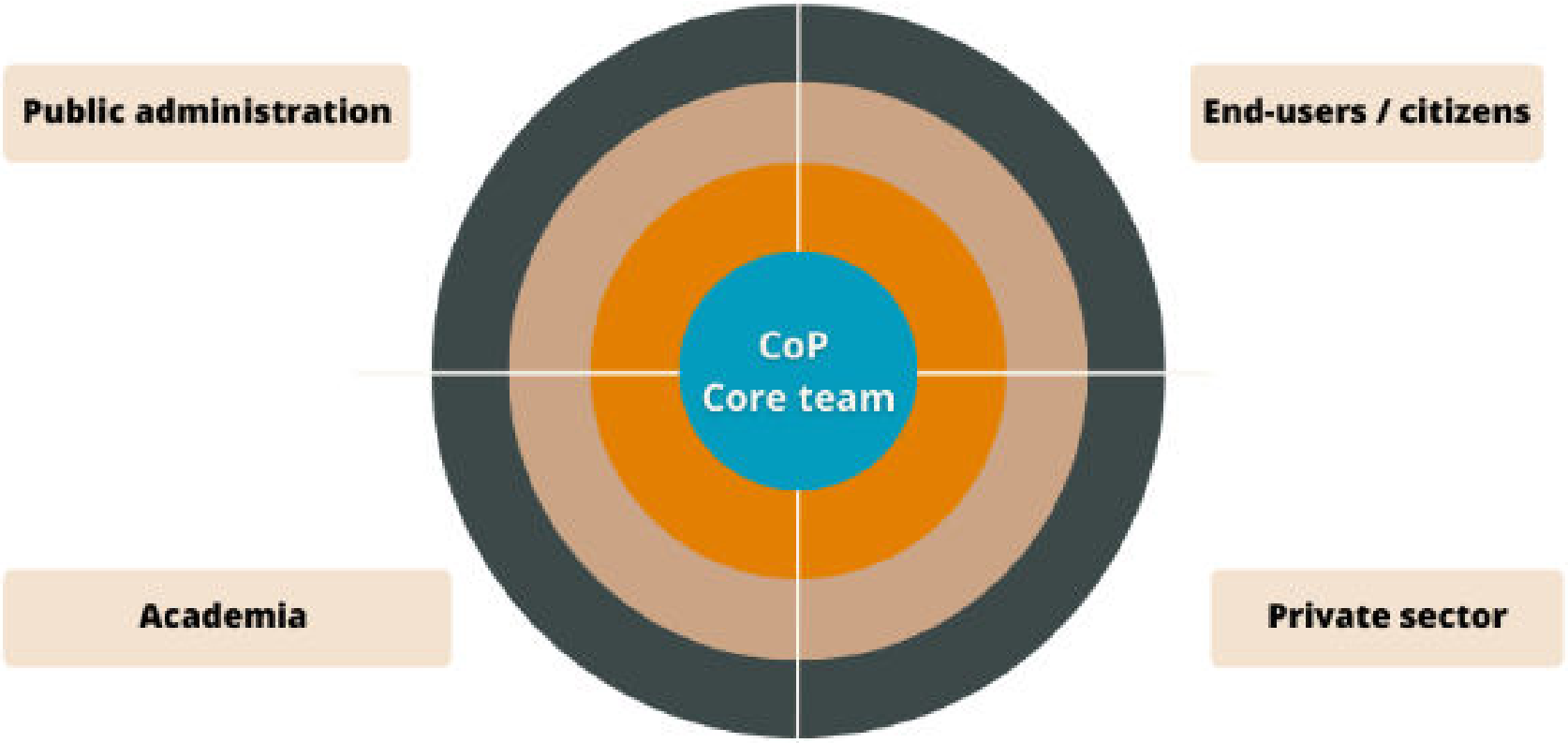
Practical information			
Country of the CoP			
Name and organisation of the CoP administrator			
Name and organisation of the CoP facilitator			
Stakeholder mapping			
Please fill in the information below after you have done the first version of your stakeholder mapping			
Type of actors identified	*Type of actor /Number*	Civil society / end-users /citizens	
		Public sector	
		Private sector	
		Education & research	
		Other	
		TOTAL	
Members identified for each level of participation in the CoP	*Level of participation /Number*	Core group	
		Active members	
		Occasional participants	

Stakeholder category	**Main needs and expectations**	**Main inputs and contributions**
Civil society / end-users /citizens Public sector Private sector Education & research		

Questions for the CoP administrator and facilitator	
What stakeholder group is more difficult to identify and why?	
Are migrants or migrants' organisations already part of the CoP? *So far, how is the gender, age and country of origin distribution in your CoP?*	

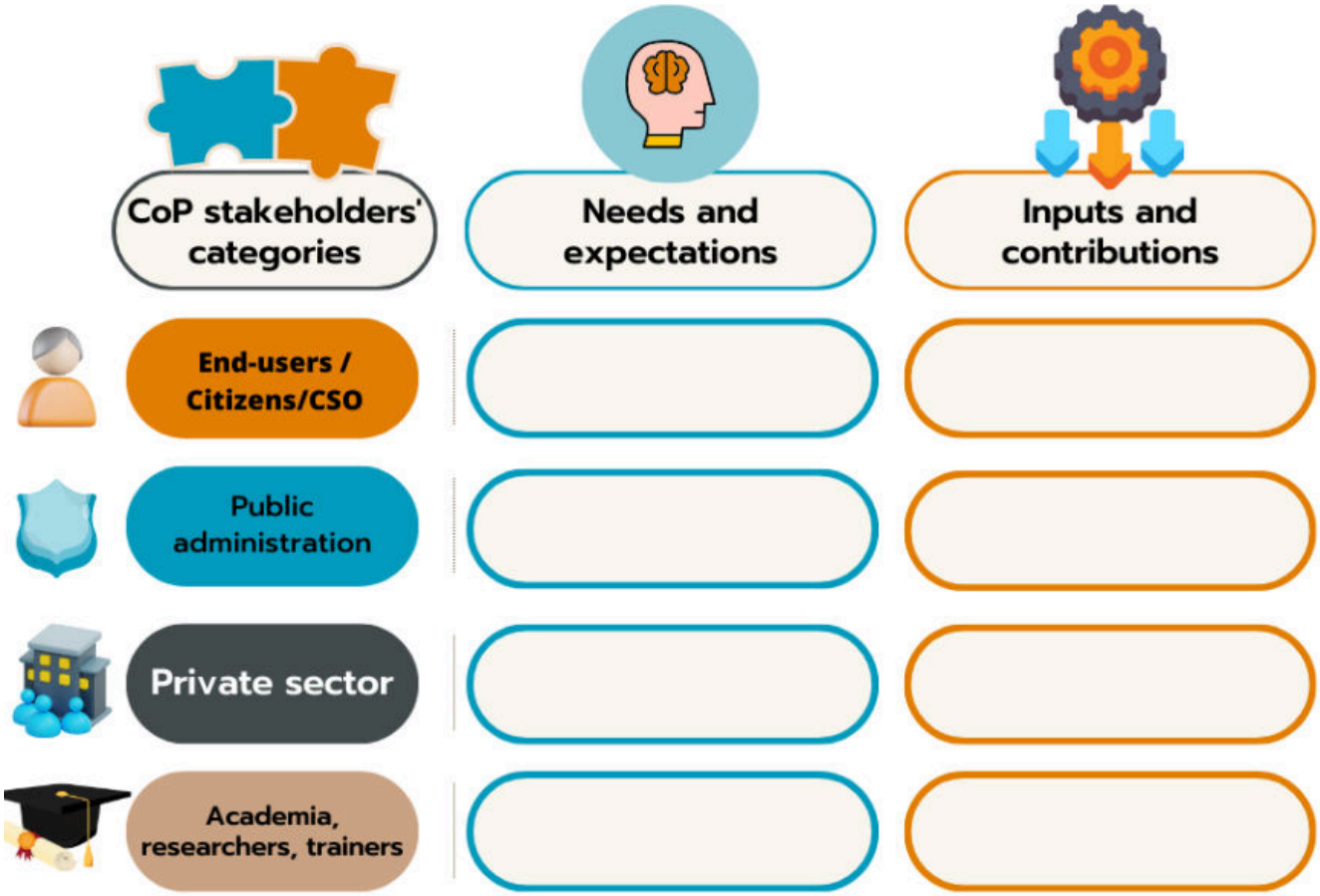
Annex 2. Stakeholder mapping tools

Annex 2.1 Stakeholder mapping tool 1



Annex 2.2 Stakeholder mapping tool 2

Annex 2.3 Stakeholder mapping tool 3



Annex 2.4 Stakeholder mapping tool 4

Stakeholder group	Organisation	Persona	Role in the CoP

Annex 3. Event report

Practical information			
CoP country			
Date of the event/meeting	*DD/MM/YYY*		
Location	*(venue address, online event, etc.)*		
Type of event/meeting	*(i.e. KoM, pilot workshop, etc.)*		
Main objectives of the event/meeting	*(Summarise the main objectives the event/meeting wanted to address)*		
Please remember to upload all the materials from the event (i.e. agenda, pictures, presentations, etc.) in the CoPs reports folder			
CoP participation analysis			
Type of actors	*Type of actor /Number*	Civil society / end-users /citizens	
		Public sector / Government	
		Private sector	
		Academia/Researchers	
		Other	
		TOTAL	0
Members per CoP level of participation	*Level of participation /Number*	Core Group	
		Active members	
		Occassional participants	
Gender distribution	*Gender /Number*	Women	
		Men	
		Other	
Age distribution	*Group age/Number*	**18-24 years old**	
		25-34 years old	
		35-44 years old	
		45-54 years old	
		55-64 years old	

		65 years old and above	
Country of origin	*Type of country /Number*	Originally from the CoP country	
		Originally from another EU country	
		Originally from a non-EU country	
Event/meeting main results/conclusions: what were the main topics discussed, key takeaways and conclusions of the event?			
Participants' feedback: what are the main results of the feedback forms collected and what ideas, suggestions, or recommendations emerged during the event or in the feedback form?			
Anything else you would like to add?			

Annex 4. Participant list

(Type of event, i.e. EPIC- UP CoP kick-off meeting)

(Title of the event)

(Date of the event)

(Location)

Participant list

Please be informed that photographs and video recordings may be taken during this event to document and promote our activities. If you do not wish to appear in any photographs or recordings, kindly let the organisers know in advance, and we will take the necessary steps to ensure your preferences are respected. Your participation in the event will be considered as your informed consent for the use of any photos or recordings in project-related materials, including reports, social media, or publications, unless you specify otherwise. **Participation in any part of this form is entirely voluntary, and you may leave any sections blank if you prefer.**

	Last name	Name	Organisation	Country of origin	Gender	Age	Signature
1							
2							

	(Add as many rows as needed)						

Annex 5. Feedback form

Suggestion for a feedback form for the EPIC-UP CoP events and meetings. This template is not exhaustive and besides the common questions all CoPs are requested to complete, CoPs may decide to add additional questions that are relevant to the concrete Cop event or meeting.

EPIC-UP CoP Participant feedback form

Community of Practice - COUNTRY

Place, Date

Your participation in this form is greatly appreciated. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential and used solely for research/evaluation purposes. **Participation in any part of this form is entirely voluntary, and you may leave any sections blank if you prefer.** Your participation is valued regardless of the information provided. Thank you for your cooperation.

To help us better understand the work of the CoP better, please provide the following optional information:

Name of the participant:_____

Name of the organisation:_____

Type of organisation:_____

Country of origin:_____

Gender: Please select your gender identity, if comfortable.

- € **Male**
- € **Female**
- € **Non-binary**
- € **Other (please specify):**_____
- € **Prefer not to say**

Age: Please select your age group, if comfortable.

- € **18-24 years old**
- € **25-34 years old**
- € **35-44 years old**
- € **45-54 years old**
- € **55-64 years old**

€ **65 years old and above**

What is your opinion about…

Questions	**Please rate from 1 to 5, where 5 is the maximum positive value.**
To what extent were you able to share your views or expertise during the meeting/ event?	1 2 3 4 5
How well did the meeting/event foster collaboration between participants from different sectors (migrants, CSOs, public authorities, etc.)?	1 2 3 4 5
To what extent did the event/ meeting help you understand migrant integration in your community or identify new approaches or strategies that could be applied in your local context?	1 2 3 4 5
How satisfied are you with the structure, organisation and facilitation of the event/meeting?	1 2 3 4 5
How clear are you about the CoP objectives and next steps?	1 2 3 4 5
Is there anything else you would like to add or suggest for the CoP or future meetings/events?	

Annex 6. Event agenda

(Type of event, i.e. EPIC- UP CoP kick-off meeting)

(Title of the event)

(Date of the event)

(Location)

Agenda

Timing	Agenda items
XX.XX – X.XX	Title of the session - Speaker's name and title - …..
XX.XX – X.XX	Title of the session - Speaker's name and title - ….. >
XX.XX – X.XX	Break
XX.XX – X.XX	Title of the session - Speaker's name and title - ….. >
XX.XX – X.XX	Title of the session - Speaker's name and title - …..

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