



BUILDING NEW NARRATIVES: MIGRATION AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO EUROPEAN SOCIETY

THE MAX PROJECT FINAL EVENT

25 /26 NOVEMBER

📍 BRUSSELS

BUILDING NEW NARRATIVES

Migration and its contribution to European society

Over the last 3 years, the [MAX project](#), an initiative funded by the European Commission, has been working to change the narrative around the migration discourse. A total of 6 policy and research reports, two training courses on a solution-focused approach to migration reporting for over 100 journalists in 20 different countries, an online Diversity Film Festival and Award Ceremony with hundreds of candidates and more than 20 online and physical events are some of the outcomes of that work.

The MAX team believes that well-managed migration to Europe contributes to our societies, culture and economy. The integration and social inclusion of people with migrant backgrounds, refugees and asylum seekers is crucial for cultural exchange, economic development, fighting against the downward demographic slope and community cohesion. It also helps address skills gaps and labour shortages, and to boost economic performance overall. Currently in the EU, too many migrants face challenges in terms of unemployment, discrimination, non-recognition of certificates and diplomas, lack of educational and training opportunities, language barriers and limited social interaction with other local communities.¹

European societies are, and will continue to become, increasingly diverse. Notwithstanding the efforts and progress made, many third-country nationals across the EU continue to fare worse than EU citizens in terms of employment, education, and social inclusion outcomes.²

The 25th and 26th November the MAX project invites you to hear and debate with us the findings of the MAX project and, most importantly, the voices and experiences of the migrants, as well as all those actors working on social inclusion and migration policies at local, national and EU levels, to continue working together for real inclusive societies. On the 26th, the role of art, culture and creativity in changing the narrative will be highlighted through film screening, music, food, literature and art exhibitions.

¹ EC press release 22 July 2020, Integration of migrants: Commission launches a public consultation and call for an expert group on the views of migrants, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1364

² See Eurostat data: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migrant_integration_statistics_-_overview and OECD/European Union (2015), Indicators of Immigration on Integration 2015 – Settling In: <http://www.oecd.org/els/mig/Indicators-of-Immigrant-Integration-2015.pdf>.

Programme 25th at Les Ateliers des Tanneurs, Rue des Tanneurs 60A, 1000 Bruxelles

- 09:00 - 09:30** **Welcome coffee and registration**
Come early and start networking with us!
- 09:30 - 10:00** **Official opening & welcome**
Presentation of the MAX Journey and
Keynote Speech by the **Commissioner for Home Affairs Ylva Johansson (tbc)**
- 10:00 - 11:00** **Migration landscape and voices**
Presentation of the main project results, policy recommendations and lessons learnt from the last 'crisis', how to make Europe a safe place for migrants
- 11:00 - 12:00** **Migrants' voices: Nothing about us without us!**
There is no inclusion without representation. In this panel, migrants will share their stories, ideas, opinions and recommendations for a more inclusive society benefiting all.
- 12:00 - 13:30** **LUNCH BREAK**
- 13:30 - 14:30** **Parallel sessions - Round 1**
- Changing the narrative: how to communicate about migration to overcome wrong stereotypes and misperceptions
 - Migrant women's journeys
 - The role of the social economy in supporting diverse ecosystems and migrants' integration
 - The impact of mass media on the migration discourses: how to counterbalance misinformation and wrong perceptions
- 14:30 - 15:30** **Parallel sessions - round 2**
- Integrating cities: access to local services for all
 - Access to education: how to strengthen the educational ecosystem in cooperation with the Third Sector
 - The importance of migrant workers during and after the COVID pandemic: main trends, challenges and opportunities
 - ICT and Digitalisation: towards integration of migrants and refugees. Stories around Europe
- 15:30 - 16:00** **COFFEE BREAK**
- 16:00 - 16:45** **The strategy going forward**
Panel discussion with representatives from several European Commission DGs to discuss how all the lessons learnt, policy recommendations presented and feedback received from migrants and civil society.
- 16:45 - 17:15** **Closing words**
- 17:30 - 18:30** **Networking drinks**

**Programme 26th at the Museum of Natural Science of Belgium,
Rue Vautier 29, 1000 Bruxelles**

- 16:30 – 17:00** **Welcome & Opening**
- 17:00 – 17:30** **Keynote speech**
- 17:30 – 18:15** **Film Screening Migration Stories and panel discussion: The importance of art, culture and creativity in changing the narrative**
- 18:15 – 21:00** **Open buffet, art, culture & creativity exhibitions**

18:15 - 20:00 Art Exhibitions (Lobby BiodiverCITY)

An exhibition of paintings and cartoons about migration made by refugee and migrant children
Mosaic photography exhibition describing the contribution of immigrants to Belgium

18:15 - 20:00 Gastronomy Fair (Mezzanine van de Galerij van de Dinosauriërs)

Dishes that describe the traditions and rituals of immigrants living in Europe
Gastronomy buffet: Cuisine of immigrant and refugee groups living in Belgium

18:15 - 20:00 Media

Social media corner

Interviews & Live broadcasting

18:45 - 21:00 Concerts (Galerij van de Dinosauriërs)

Tatyos Ensemble 18:45 - 19:30

Tatyos Ensemble takes you to southern rich and varied journey through both classical and popular music <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PcEuElvz-dw>

In C 20:00 – 21:00

Fourteen musicians with as many instruments as different cultural influences reflect the wealth of music in the city. To complete the picture, illustrator Gerda Dendooven provides colorful projections and Josse De Pauw also adds text for the first time. Expect a magical concert, a kind of tantric experience that enraptures you and lets you escape for a while <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aX96z7AulCs>

PROGRAMME 25TH

PANEL SESSIONS

Title of the session **Opening & welcome to the MAX project final event!**

Time & place

9:30 am, Brussels (Les Ateliers des Tanneurs, Rue des Tanneurs 60A, 1000 Bruxelles/main conference room)

Description & objectives of the session

Migrants are very often portrayed by the media and politicians as a threat to national unity and social cohesion, and a burden on public finances. This rhetoric has led to an increasingly hostile environment and debate. The reality is in fact quite different. Overwhelming evidence suggests that migrants are a benefit to society, contributing more in taxes and social contributions than they receive in benefits, boost the working-age population, bring in skills, create enterprises, form a bridge to global markets and enrich culture. A change of narrative is thus essential to work jointly towards a future in a peaceful, cohesive and booming Europe. The MAX project have implemented a set of actions to help create a momentum, provide more visibility and a fairer account in the media of the positive contribution of third-country nationals to our societies. To set the scene for the rest of the conference, the project will present the audience the key activities and results achieved through the MAX journey. Such a project would have not been possible without the commitment and financial support of the Directorate-General Migration and Home Affairs. The **Commissioner for Home Affairs Ms. Ylva Johansson (tbc) will present the main priorities and actions for the Commission department responsible for EU policy on migration and home affairs in the next years.**

Speakers

[Adem Kumcu](#), President of UNITEE, Project Coordinator of the MAX project
[Patricia Martinez](#), AEIDL, Project Manager for Local Engagement of the MAX project
Ylva Johansson, Commissioner for Home Affairs (tbc)

Moderator and rapporteur

[Anya Sitaram](#)
AEIDL

Title of the session

Migration landscape and voices

Time & place

10:00 am, Brussels (Les Ateliers des Tanneurs /main conference room)

Description & objectives of the session

MAX partners conducted for more than a year a literature and research exercise about the benefits (economic, social, cultural) of a diverse society and about the image of migrants as channelled in the news, associated fears, experiments and solutions. Such an intense exercise, led by the experts from Idea International AISBL Professor Umberto Triulzi (University of Rome "La Sapienza"), Dr Charlie Dannreuther (University of Leeds) and Old Nord (expert at Idea International AISBL), culminated with the publication of six thematic reports and one set of policy recommendations.

Dr. Charlie Dannreuther from University of Leeds will present the main conclusions and lessons learned and what are our main policy recommendations to make Europe a safe place for migrants. Three of those main policy recommendations will be presented more in detailed:

- How to extend Human Corridors into EU policy strategies and lessons learned from the Afghan crisis
- A strategy path for research mobility and self-entrepreneurship with third country nationals
- A success story of inclusion of refugees and migrants in depopulated rural areas

Speakers

[Charlie Dannreuther](#), researcher at Idea International AISBL and Doctor at the University of Leeds

[Giulia Gori](#), FCEI Italian Evangelic Churches Federation

[Professor Monder Ram](#), Director of the Centre for Research in Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship (CREME)

["New Trails/Nuevos Senderos"](#), by the CEPAIM Foundation

Moderator and rapporteur

[Anya Sitaram](#)

DEISIS

Title of the session **Migrants' voices: Nothing about us without us!**

Time & place

11:00 am, Brussels (Les Ateliers des Tanneurs /main conference room)

Description & objectives of the session

A dynamic two-way process on integration means not only expecting third-country nationals to embrace EU fundamental values and learn the host language, but also offering them meaningful opportunities to participate in the economy and society of the Member State they settle in, and have their voice heard. Actively contributing to and being allowed to contribute to the political, cultural and social life are both at least as important as one another to creating a sense of belonging and feeling fully anchored in the host society, as well as to building socio-economically thriving societies. Developing welcoming, diverse and inclusive societies is a process that needs the engagement both of the third-country nationals and of the receiving society.

In this session we will have the opportunity to hear the voices, opinions and recommendations of newcomers in Europe, to get to know in first person how they perceive the current integration programmes and services, what they think about the recommendations presented by the MAX project and what they would recommend to make EU countries better placed to actively include migrants in all spheres of society.

Speakers

Gina May, Syrian interpreter and cultural mediator living in Rome sharing her experience with the Humanitarian Corridors project
Razan Ismail, Founder of Kudwa and member of the Migration Expert Group of the European Commission and the New Women Connectors

Miroslava Keryk, historian, a specialist in migration issues and the Ukrainian community in Poland, President of Nasz Wybór [Our Choice] Foundation and editor of a monthly with the same title.

Moderator and rapporteur

[Anya Sitaram](#)
DEISIS

PARALLEL WORKSHOPS ROUND ONE

Title of the session **Changing the narrative: how to effectively communicate about migration to overcome wrong stereotypes and misperceptions**

Time & place 13:30 pm, Brussels (Les Ateliers des Tanneurs /workshop room)

Description & objectives of the session

While there are many publications producing excellent reporting on migration, it is still the case that reporting on migration is over-simplified. Migrants are often portrayed in the media as victims, as a threat, or as heroes. Each of these over-simplifications can cause harm, by dehumanising people, by presenting their existence as a threat to others, or by suggesting that they need to do something exceptional to be worthy of attention or even acceptance. When writing about problems affecting migrants, or programmes that are supposed to improve things for them, we need to listen to the people affected, understand what is working, how and why so that we can get the full picture of the situation and not a biased interpretation. This workshop aims at presenting and discussing good practices on how to communicate and report about migration in the spirit of providing more nuanced information that can lead to informed debates and changing the narrative about the very often polarised and negative discourse about migration.

Speakers

The Local, guests from the CoE Antirumors/Integrating cities programme; Por Causa (tbc)

Moderator and rapporteur

[Catherine Edwards](#) , Award-winning digital editor and content strategist at [The Local Europe](#)

Title of the session

Migrant women' journeys

Time & place

13:30 pm, Brussels (Les Ateliers des Tanneurs /workshop room)

**Description &
objectives of the
session**

Women represent half of the world's population and thus, half of its potential. However, gender inequality persists in all spheres of society. When it comes to migrant women, such inequalities are even higher due to a double discrimination based on gender and migration status. While in past decades migration flows towards EU countries were predominantly men, this tendency has drastically changed, with an increasing arrival of migrant women, though family reunification but also with their own personal project or as labour migrants, high-skilled workers or asylum seekers.

Despite the adverse situations, migrant women around the world have shown strength and resilience. Each year, some 100 million migrant women send remittances to their countries of origin.

To empower migrant women to feel secure and independent and develop a sense of belonging that encourage them to fulfil their aspirations it is essential to protect their human rights, boost their social inclusion and self-support that, in return, will mean the unlocking of an enormous potential for themselves and for our societies. A way of achieving that is to design support, accompaniment, education and training services and projects that effectively take into account the actual needs but also the experiences and points of view of migrant women in their design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Evidences show that there is a lack of policy , action plans and strategies with particular focus on migrant women or gender issues

The main objective of this workshop is to understand effective ways of incorporating migrant women lens into the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects so that they are planned not only for them but with them.

To do so, we will

- Present and analyse a case study where a migrant women users' journey approach has been applied to understand: a) what worked and what needs to be improved and b) how it could be replicated in other initiatives



- Debate about ways of promoting migrant women's meaningful participation
- And most importantly, to hear from migrant women what their experience being part of such a process have been and what are their recommendations

**Speakers
Moderator and
rapporteur**

BOOST, Youth Included, New Women Connectors, Kudwa
EPN and AEIDL

Title of the session **The role of Social Economy in supporting diverse ecosystems and migrants' integration**

Time & place 13:30 pm, Brussels (Les Ateliers des Tanneurs /workshop room)

Description & objectives of the session

By definition, the social economy enterprises respond to the needs of communities and societies. Therefore, they have always been involved in the assistance and support to the integration of migrants in Europe. They do so by providing many different services: social and legal assistance, housing, training and education, job integration, etc.

This workshop has a double focus: to explore the implications that the new [Social Economy Action Plan](#) will have on integration and to showcase some good examples of how social economy enterprises contribute to migrant integration in EU countries.

Speakers

- Italy, Legacoopsociali and Consorzio Comunitas
- Slovenia, ASES
- Czech Republic, Youth Included
- Germany, Netz
- Greece, KMOP

Moderator and rapporteur

[Gianluca Pastorelli](#), Executive President at DIESIS, [Eleonora Lamio](#), Project Manager and Policy Officer at DIESIS

Title of the session

**The impact of mass media on the migration discourses:
how to counterbalance misinformation and wrong
perceptions**

Time & place

13:30 pm, Brussels (Les Ateliers des Tanneurs /workshop room)

**Description &
objectives of the
session**

The objective of this session is to understand the impact of media on the public opinion, diversity and culture, and learn from organisations carrying out different initiatives how community-led initiatives can work to overcome misconceptions, prejudices and stereotypes in the spirit of triggering a more nuanced debate about migration, avoid xenophobia and strength social cohesion.

The session will start with a short lecture, followed by panel presentation of initiatives and roundtable debate with the audience.

Speakers

Giacomo Toffano, PhD fellow of the Research Council – Flanders (FWO) and a member of ECHO, the research group on media, culture, and politics at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium

Madeleina Kay, Media Diversity Institute

Sophie Van Haasen, Coordinator GFMD Mayor Mechanism

Frankie Reid, Research and Production Assistant at Migration Matters

**Moderator and
rapporteur**

[Anya Sitaram](#)

PARALLEL WORKSHOPS ROUND TWO

Title of the session **Integrating cities: access to local services for all**

Time & place 14:30 pm, Brussels (Les Ateliers des Tanneurs /workshop room)

Description & objectives of the session

The percentage of foreigners living in many of Europe's cities has considerably increased over the last couple of decades and it is likely more migrants will be arriving in urban areas of the EU in the coming years. Urban areas are therefore on the front line of migrant reception and subsequent integration. They play a significant role in managing migrants' integration but they face several challenges such as lack of resources or a top-down multilevel governance. Nonetheless, many of them have recently been doing efforts to deploy innovative strategies to try to reduce barriers for newcomers and make their cities a welcome space for all. In this workshop we will hear the experiences of those integrating cities, the process they have been setting up to make their local services more accessible and inclusive, the impact that COVID19 has had on them and the way ahead to continue building more inclusive cities for all.

Speakers

[Maria Grazia Montella](#), Project and Policy Officer IncluCities and Migration and Integration Task Force CEMR-CCRE

[Dolinda Cavallo](#), Project Manager Migration projects at the European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA)

[Katharina Bamberg](#), Migration Policy Advisor at EURO CITIES

Moderator and rapporteur

[Patricia Martinez](#), Project Manager and Policy Officer at [AEIDL](#)

Title of the session

**Access to education: how to strengthen the
educational ecosystem in cooperation with the
Third Sector**

Time & place

14:30 pm, Brussels (Les Ateliers des Tanneurs /workshop room)

**Description &
objectives of the
session**

The right to education is often taken for granted, but for newly arrived migrants to access and exercise this important right means very often to be able to short out many barriers. For migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, receiving an education is the best way to become independent full members of their new countries. In order to promote a supportive ecosystem able to make the access to education for migrants easier, the education system needs to coordinate efforts with other relevant actors, such as local authorities, NGOs and CSO. Nonetheless, this multi-stakeholder ecosystem is not always in place or acts as ad hoc cooperation rather than a sustainable scheme.

Knowing how to navigate the system or have access to support and social networks is crucial for migrants to establish themselves in the socio-cultural and economic part of the host society. The role of the public sector is to create the conditions for everyone to participate in society on an equal basis. However, very often the NGOs play the key role as connectors or "icebreakers" in social integration, including accompaniment to access the education system or to receive training and no formal education directly from them. They fill the gaps where the public system is not arriving and have the trust of migrants' communities, which makes them essential bridge-builders.

The main objective of this workshop is to understand effective ways of generating and sustaining a supportive ecosystem aiming at guaranteeing the access to education for migrants.

To do so, we will

- Present and analyse two existing supportive ecosystem
- Hear the testimonies of migrants and cultural mediators to identify good practices and key breaking points in the process to generate that ecosystem
- Debate with the audience, and particular with migrants and NGO representatives

Speakers



Karolina Czerwińska , Project Manager on Training, Informal
Education and Migrants' Integration at Polish Migration Forum
Afroditi Azari, Project Manager at the Social Action and Innovation
Centre in Greece (KMOP)

**Moderator and
rapporteur**

[Anya Sitaram](#)

Title of the session

**Labour market integration after the COVID pandemic:
main trends, challenges and opportunities**

Time & place

14:30 pm, Brussels (Les Ateliers des Tanneurs /workshop room)

**Description &
objectives of the
session**

Details will be provided soon

Speakers

Cooperatives from Legacoop, CCM, EPN, HOGIAF, FEDIF, ASES, Singa
Belgium, Duo for a Job

**Moderator and
rapporteur**

[Kenan Kasimoglu](#), [SweTurk](#)

Title of the session

ICT and digitisation: towards the integration of migrants and refugees. Stories around Europe

Time & place

14:30 pm, Brussels (Les Ateliers des Tanneurs /workshop room)

Description & objectives of the session

The link between social and digital exclusion is particularly obvious for migrants, who usually enter a new country with few local resources, less knowledge of how to access these resources, and cultural and linguistic barriers to understanding how to access help and engage in the digital economy.

Digital technology can play a positive role in building social capital and hence social inclusion among refugee and migrant groups. Initiatives supporting digital inclusion therefore benefit migrants' integration to society, wellbeing, and their potential to contribute to the digital economy.

Speakers

ENoMW, Youth Included, Molengeek, Hack Your Future

Moderator and rapporteur

Vesa Latifi, Diesis Network

PANEL SESSIONS & CLOSING

Title of the session	The strategy going forward
Time & place	16:00 pm, Brussels (venue to be confirmed/main conference room)
Description	Panel discussion with representatives from several European Commission DGs to discuss how all the lessons learnt, policy recommendations presented and feedback received from migrants and civil society can be implemented in their DGs' strategy and work
Speakers	Monique Pariat, Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs (tbc) Maciej Popowski, Deputy Director-General for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement (tbc)
Moderator and rapporteur	Anya Sitaram

Title of the session

CLOSING

Time & place

16:00 pm, Brussels (Les Ateliers des Tanneurs /main conference room)

Description

Margaritis Schinas, Vice-President of the European Commission for Promoting the European Way of Life (tbc)

Speakers

Stefano Manservigi, Chair of the governing board at GCERF (Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund) and former Director-General for International Cooperation and Development (DEVCO)
Adem Kumcu, President of UNITEE, Project Coordinator of the MAX project

Moderator and rapporteur

[Anya Sitaram](#)

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