



**Migrant
Integration through
Locally designed
Experiences**

The inclusion of migrants in policy making

A report on Ioannina, Greece

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides research evidence on the inclusion of international migrants in local policy making in the Municipality of Ioannina (Mol), Greece. It focuses on the existing equality, diversity, integration and civic participation policies and practices at the local level and situates them in the national framework.

Mol is the capital of the Region of Ipeiros (EL54). According to the 2021 Greek census, Mol has 113,094 residents, showing population stability in comparison with 2011. The unemployment rate is slightly lower than the national average (17.4% and 18.7% respectively), but the gender gap in unemployment is wider. The proportion of employment in industry and construction is relatively large; almost 1/5 of the total, and 1/4 of the male population. The proportion of unskilled workers in Mol (8.3%) is slightly lower than the national average (10.2%). Overall, Mol shows a higher educational profile in comparison with the national average and especially with its surroundings, the Region of Ipeiros. The municipality has a comparatively low percentage of early drop-outs.

Foreign citizens make up 5.8% (or 6,497) of the local resident population. In detail, 0.6% come from economically developed countries while 5.1% from other countries. The most frequent nationality of foreign citizens in 2011 were Albanian, Pakistani and Bulgarian. In addition, according to data from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM, March 2022), there are 676 asylum seekers residing in the Katsikas long-term accommodation centre.

Concerning integration policies at the municipal level, Mol has a range of competencies, such as provision of nurseries and care centres, that directly or indirectly affect migrant's socioeconomic integration. Moreover, since 2021, Ioannina has established its own Migrant Integration Council (MIC) as stipulated by the national institutional framework for local authorities, in order to promote civic participation, to assist migrants in getting access to local services, to suggest relevant policy measures and to support collaboration between the authorities and migrant associations. Prior to its establishment, an Urban Working Group had been launched as an ad hoc discussion forum to bring together all services and bodies that deal with refugee issues at the local level.

In terms of strategic planning of the Municipality, although the "Ioannina Operational Program 2020-2023" includes a list of measures about migrants, refugees and minority groups among its priorities, there are no specific actions focused on diversity and inequality per se. However, according to most participants in the focus groups conducted as part of this project, ethnic diversity is nowadays recognized as an asset for the city. Various actions, such as training seminars for the Municipality's permanent personnel or the cooperation with the UNHCR for reporting racist violence incidents, express the political willingness of Mol to reinforce the participation of migrants and refugees.

As far as the participation of residents in local affairs is concerned, there are a number of relevant actions adopted by Mol's administration, such as a consultation platform. Migrants' and refugees' participation takes place mainly through the MIC, as well as the informal, but very helpful, structure of "Akadimia" – the Intercultural Centre for Social Integration – where migrant representatives get involved in informal discussions with local practitioners. According to the interviews collected, women's participation still

remains a challenging issue that needs further coordination, while it is also crucial to foster civic participation of the long established migrant communities of the city.

As far as the communication of those actions is concerned, MoI is working towards the creation of a feedback mechanism between the members of the MIC and the members of the communities living in the city, both in the urban area and in the Katsikas accommodation facility. The overall assessment of this communication channel is positive.

Equal opportunities for participation remain a challenge at the local level. Established migrants usually rest on personal life strategies and their collective participation unfolds, if at all, via informal interpersonal networks. The challenge is even greater for some refugee communities, large parts of which were established quite recently in the city while, at the same time, their members continue to be highly mobile and leave the city as soon as they can, since their opportunities for employment remain rather marginal.

MoI has also developed certain instruments and processes to enable citizens' participation in local affairs. Among them, the local Ombudsman is responsible for receiving and examining citizens' complaints for instances of rights' violations and poor administration and to suggest relevant solutions. Migrants and refugees are not excluded from the procedures. The 'Open Governance' platform is also open and accessible to everyone via the Municipality's website. However, there are no specific measures dedicated to reduce barriers that migrants and refugees may face, especially those concerning language barriers and limited access to information.

Since the refugee crisis of 2015-16, MoI has participated in a number of EU funded projects targeting migrant's integration at the local scale. Among them, one can list the "Emergency Support to Integration & Accommodation - ESTIA programme", 2016-2021 co-funded by AMIF and a number of research-oriented AMIF projects such as EPIC and EMBRACE. The Municipality's participation in such projects has provided the local administration with resources that were used effectively to reach migrant communities and to establish networks of communication and consultation. While this has been a great opportunity for experimentation with the participation of groups that are otherwise excluded from official local politics, the challenge remains whether such funding produces sustainable structures of participation.

1 THE LOCAL AND NATIONAL CONTEXT OF MIGRATION

1.1 The municipality context

The Municipality of Ioannina (Moi) is located in north-western Greece (Map 1), quite close to the border with Albania and is the capital of the Region of Ipeiros (EL54). It has a surface of 403 km² and a population density 279 residents per km². Ioannina is served by the Ioannina National Airport and the *Egnatia Odos* highway (part of E90) passes by the Municipality.



Map 1: The location of Ioannina

According to the 2021 Greek census, Moi has 113,094 residents (1.1% of the country's population), showing population stability in comparison with 2011.¹ By far the biggest part of the local population lives in the city of Ioannina which constitutes the urban part of its surface and a historically significant urban centre.

¹ All census data presented throughout this report come from EKKE (National Centre for Social Research) – ELSTAT (Greek Statistical Authority) (2015) *Panorama of Greek Census Data 1991-2011*. Internet application to access, process and map census data (<http://panorama.statistics.gr>).

The current composition of the Municipal Council that was constituted in the local elections of 2019 comprises 8 political groups. The current Mayor's group is officially independent from national political parties and the elected councillors from different political origins participate in it, while its main political orientation is that of the centre-left. The biggest group of the opposition is led by the ex-Mayor and is similarly orientated to centre-left politics and officially independent from party politics. Among the smaller groups, three originate from the political right and three from the left.

According to the economic activity structure of the active population in Mol (2011 census), the proportion of employment in industry and construction is relatively large; almost 1/5 of the total, and 1/4 of the male population. The employment rate in accommodation and food service activities is 7.2%. As Mol is a regionally important urban centre, the population employed in agriculture is relatively small, especially in comparison to the Region of Ipeiros (3.9% and 13.1% respectively).

The unemployment rate in Mol is slightly lower than the national average (17.4% and 18.7% respectively), but the gender gap in unemployment is wider. More specifically, the difference in unemployment between men and women in Mol was 2 percentage units (16.5% percent for men and 18.5% percent for women), with a corresponding smaller difference at the national level (1.2%). There is also a gender gap in the proportion of first-time job seekers, which is higher for women (7.3%) and lower for men (5.1%) – in this case, the gender gap is twice as large in Ioannina as the national average (2.1% in Ioannina and 1% nationwide).

The proportion of unskilled workers in Mol (8.3%) is slightly lower than the national average (10.2%) and the corresponding proportion in the Region of Ipeiros (9.4%). Women show a higher rate in unskilled jobs than men. Furthermore, the percentage of people employed less than 20 hours per week is higher than the national average. Specifically, it is 4.5% for men and 7.2% for women. A possible explanation is that a significant proportion of university students who live in the city, work in part-time jobs in order to supplement their income.

Self-employed residents make up 16.9% of the local active population in Ioannina and employers another 7.1%. These rates are comparable with the respective ones at the national level (19.7% and 6.4% respectively). Unsurprisingly, the bulk of self-employed and employers in Mol is found in food service activities (33.9%), followed by retail trade (22.9%). Female self-employed represent 31.2% of the total self-employed population and female employers are no more than 28.4% of total employers. Foreign self-employed individuals from less developed countries are 3.6% of total self-employed, and foreign employers represent only 1.9% of total employers.

Overall, Mol shows a higher educational profile in comparison with the national average and especially with its surroundings, the Region of Ipeiros. The municipality has a comparatively low percentage of early drop-outs (population over 12 years old having finished up to Primary Education - ISCED 1) for both men and women (25.7% in

comparison with a national rate of 30.7%). Ioannina seems to be by far different from its surroundings since in Ipeiros, early drop-out rate rises to 41%.

Young people (15-18) neither in employment nor in education or training (NEET 15-18 index) seem to follow the national profile, representing 5.6% while the national average is of 7.0%, although an expected variation between men (7%) and women (4.4%) is observed. An interesting differentiation from the national average is observed for the group of 19–24-year-old (NEET 19-24 index). Both men and (especially) women in Ioannina, between 19 and 24 years old having finished up to lower secondary education (ISCED 2) and not being in education, employment, or training, are much less than the national average profile. They represent 19.3% in Ioannina (15.6% for women and 24.9% for men) versus 31.9% at the national level (30.8% for women and 33% for men).

Households living in rented accommodation are less than 1/5 (17.6%) of the households of Mol. The city also has a young housing stock, as only 0.38% of the housing stock was built before 1981. The proportion of households living in irregular dwellings is very small (0.13%).²

1.2 Migrant population and migration history

1.2.1 Migrant population and migration trends

In 2011, 5.8% of the Mol population (6,497 people) were of foreign citizenship.³ Table 1 outlines the population of Ioannina by nationality and gender, drawing from census 2001 and 2011 data.⁴ In detail, 0.6% of foreign nationals come from economically developed countries⁵ while 5.1% from other countries, a profile revealing a limited differentiation to the rest of the country where they represent 0.5% and 7.5% respectively. The most frequent nationality of foreign citizens in 2011 were Albanian, Pakistani and Bulgarian. Therefore, the languages most spoken by immigrants are Albanian, Urdu, and Bulgarian. At the local scale, both Albanian and Pakistani population show proportions that are higher than at the national level. The Albanian population represents 73.6% of foreigners in Ioannina in comparison with 54.1% at the national level, and the Pakistani population represents 3.5% at the national level and 8.4% in Ioannina.

² EKKE-ELSTAT (2015), 'Panorama of Greek census data 1991–2011. Internet application to access and map census data'. Available at: <https://panorama.statistics.gr/en/>

³ Greek census data do not distinguish between nationality and citizenship. We use hereby the second term which refers to the legal bond between a citizen and a state. Thus, foreign-born individuals who acquired Greek citizenship at any time after their birth are not considered as migrants.

⁴ 2021 census data are not fully released as yet (October 2022) and data breakdown for citizenship, occupation, age groups, education etc. is not available.

⁵ 'Developed' is used for countries in the category 'very high human development' according to the Human Development Index (HDI) of the UN Development Program (UNDP) in 2011. 'Other countries' include those of every other level of development ('high', 'medium' and 'low human development').

Table 1 Population of Ioannina by nationality and gender

Nationality	2011 census			2001 census		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Greek	50,592	55,397	105,989	48,360	51,031	99,391
Developed countries	183	418	601	227	450	677
Albanian	2,380	2,233	4,613	2,139	1,834	3,973
Pakistani	594	26	620	1	0	1
Bulgarian	36	102	138	5	19	24
Romanian	16	63	79	6	23	29
Ukrainian	7	48	55	3	19	22
Indian	42	9	51	0	0	0
Other	125	215	340	73	110	183

Source: EKKE-ELSTAT (2015)

Additionally, according to data from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM, March 2022),⁶ there are 676 asylum seekers residing in the Katsikas long-term accommodation centre (also within the Mol boundaries). The centre shows a 58.7% occupancy of its full capacity with 21.9% of the beneficiaries being women, 32.4% being men and 45.7% children. Concerning the beneficiaries' distribution by nationality, the Afghan population prevail (60%) while Democratic Republic of Congo (11%), Iraq (10%) and Syria (7%) follow. These migrant groups were very small or non-existent before the significant number of refugee arrivals occurred during 2014-2016 (Table 2), with implications for the integration prospects of these groups in the city.

Table 2 Greece, 2014-2022, Total Refugee Arrivals, by Sea and Land.

Year	Sea arrivals	Land arrivals	Total
2014	41,038	2,280	43,318

⁶ UN Migration (2022) 'Supporting the Greek Authorities in Managing the National Reception System for Asylum Seekers and Vulnerable Migrants (SMS)', Factsheets, March 2022, Available at: https://greece.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1086/files/documents/_merged-mainland-march_22_compressed.pdf

2015	856,723	4,907	861,630
2016	173,450	3,784	177,234
2017	29,718	6,592	36,310
2018	32,494	18,014	50,508
2019	59,726	14,887	74,613
2020	9,714	5,982	15,696
2021	4,331	4,826	9,157
2022*	9,063	5,169	14,232

Source: UNHCR, *till 13 November.

The population increase of migrant communities in Ioannina follows the general increase of migrant population at the national level during the same period. As in other parts of the country, migration to Ioannina is mainly explained by the prevalence of specific economic sectors such as construction activities and tourism and the presence of a large informal economy where migrants have been employed as flexible, cheap and undocumented labour.⁷ The city's proximity to the northern border of Greece is also a factor of attraction, especially for immigrants from Albania and other Balkan countries.

1.2.2 Civil society and migrant-led organisations in the municipality

Certain migrant communities are already represented in the local Municipality Integration Council. Most notably, these include some recent communities originating from Syria, Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan which were more easily reached due to the relative spatial concentration of their members in organised accommodation and the dense provision of services devoted especially to them. However, there is a general lack of official migrant associations in the city, preventing the representation of diverse migrant communities in the local MIC. The local civil society also includes several NGOs that focus specifically on services provided to refugees and asylum seekers, especially since the 'refugee crisis' of 2015-16. Usually these are local branches of NGOs active at the national level.

⁷ King, R. (2000) 'Southern Europe in the changing global map of migration', In: King, R., Lazaridis, G., Tsardanidis Ch. (eds) *Eldorado or Fortress? Migration in Southern Europe*, London: Macmillan Press, pp. 1-26. Maroukis, T., Iglicka, K. and Gmaj, K. (2011) 'Irregular migration and informal economy in Southern and Central-Eastern Europe: Breaking the vicious cycle', *International Migration* 49 (5): 129-156.

2 THE LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND MIGRATION AND DIVERSITY POLICY

2.1 Governance structure and local decision-making powers

According to the Greek Constitution (2020 revision), article 102, the structure of the local governance, composed by 13 Regions and 332 Municipalities, has the authority of managing the so-called “local affairs”. A crucial aspect, defined also by the Constitution, is that both Regions and Municipalities have an administrative and financial autonomy vis à vis the central state, while the central state can interfere only in a legality check of policies and measures implemented, and cannot interfere with the decision-making process.⁸

The authorities of the Municipalities are elected every 5 years, through a universal and secret ballot, according to the latest Law 4804/2021. Each Municipality is managed by the municipal council, an economic committee, a committee for the quality of life, an executive committee and the mayor. Moreover, Central Union of Municipalities of Greece (KEDE) plays an important role for the coordination of local authorities with the central state.⁹

A crucial administrative transition, in line with the EU multilevel governance approach, was enacted by the Law 3852/2010 (Kallikratis) which aimed at transferring competences, as well as resources, to the local governance bodies. By adopting the principles of proximity and subsidiarity, the main policy areas of local authorities lay under the following categories: 1) Development; 2) Environment; 3) Quality of life of citizens and orderly operation of cities; 4) Employment; 5) Social protection and solidarity; 6) Education, Culture and Sports; and 7) Civil protection (law 3463/2006, article 75 and law 3852/2010, article 94). While the transfer of an important range of competences has theoretically been completed with the adoption of the 2010 above-mentioned reform, the lack of transfer of financial resources as well as the overall political and economic context, marked by the 2008-2010 economic recession, did not allow its full implementation.¹⁰

2.2. Migration and integration policy

Municipalities in Greece possess a range of competencies that directly as well as indirectly affect the social position and integration of migrants. Most of them fall in the broad category of social services. Municipalities establish and/or operate nurseries, care centres, centres of entertainment for the elderly and other services. They design social

⁸ Greek Constitution (2020 revision), article 102 “Local Government Organisations”. Accessible online <https://www.hellenicparliament.gr/Vouli-ton-Ellinon/To-Politevma/Syntagma/> (20/11/22).

⁹ Law 4804/2021 “ Election of Municipal and Regional Authorities and other provisions”. Accessible online https://www.et.gr/api/Download_Small/?fek_pdf=20210100090 (20/11/22).

¹⁰ Law 3852/2010 “New Architecture of Self-Government and Decentralised Administration - Kallikratis Project”. Accessible online https://www.et.gr/api/Download_Small/?fek_pdf=20100100087 (20/11/2022). Anagnostou, D., and Skleparis, D. (2016) Integration of migrants and local governance in Greece: Athens, Thessaloniki, Iraklio and Patra. Athens: ELIAMEP.

programmes to deal with issues of social exclusion and marginalisation of various groups such as the poor, the Roma, migrants and refugees.¹¹

Since 2010, the role of the Municipalities regarding the promotion of political representation and civic participation has also been recognized, as indicated especially by the establishment of the Migrant Integration Councils (hereby MICs) which aim to operate as local consultative bodies to raise awareness on migrants' integration, to assist migrants in getting access to local services, to suggest relevant policy measures and to support collaboration between the authorities and migrants' associations. According to Law 3852, enacted in 2010, each municipality can establish a MIC on a voluntary basis, after a decision of the municipal council.¹² In 2018, MICs were renamed to Migrant *and Refugee* Integration Councils to include both migrants and refugees.¹³

Today, there are 18 MICs in the 332 Municipalities of the country, including however the biggest ones. Each MIC is composed by 11 members, 6 of them being members of the municipal council and the rest members of civil society organisations, active in integration policies, as well as representatives chosen by the migrants who reside permanently in the relevant Municipality. Accordingly, migrants and refugees are represented by their associations and do not participate individually. Meetings are chaired by one of the 6 members of the municipal council who is designated as president¹⁴.

The establishment of MICs in municipalities was a step towards the political representation of migrants at the local government level, as it institutionalized the civic, cultural and political participation of Third Country Nationals and their associations. However, the real impact of MICs on integration and civic participation has been low and their intervention in the life of local communities has been characterized as 'lethargic' and 'anemic'.¹⁵ The main reasons for that are the lack of adequate resources (MICs do not have a devoted budget), the limited interest from migrant associations since MICs have only consultative competences and in several cases the lack of official migrant associations.¹⁶ Moreover, it is important to underline that the overall policy for migrants'

¹¹ Anagnostou, D., and Skleparis, D. (2016) Integration of migrants and local governance in Greece: Athens, Thessaloniki, Iraklio and Patra. Athens: ELIAMEP.

¹² Law 3852/2010 "New Architecture of Self-Government and Decentralized Administration - Kallikratis Project". Accessible online https://www.et.gr/api/Download_Small/?fek_pdf=20100100087 (20/11/2022).

¹³ Ministry of Migration and Asylum, Department of Social Integration, "Councils for the Integration of Immigrants and Refugees. Institutional framework, operation and their role in the integration of third countries citizens", May 2022. <https://migration.gov.gr/migration-policy/integration/draseis-koinonikis-entaxis-se-ethniko-epipedo/symmetochi-sta-koina/> (20/11/2022)

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Fouskas, T. (2013) 'Representing the unrepresented? Operation and representativeness of Migrant Integration Councils in Greece', *Social Cohesion and Development* 8(2): 127-150. Skamnakis, C., and Polyzoidis, P. (2013) 'Migrant Integration Councils (MICs): The incomplete functioning of an important institution for the local government', *Social Cohesion and Development* 8(2): 165-176.

¹⁶ Papakonstantis, M. (2013) 'Migrant Integration Councils and social inclusion policy of third country nationals', *Social Cohesion and Development*, 8(2): 107-126.

integration remains a central government competence, under the Ministry of Migration and Asylum.¹⁷

In the current elected authority of Mol, there is a specific vice-mayor of social protection and migration policy that has the authority to supervise the Social Protection Directorate, as well as to coordinate actions related to migration policy. The Directorate is responsible for three main policy areas: the design and implementation of social policy, the protection and promotion of public health, as well as the promotion of employment. Furthermore, the Directorate is composed by four distinct sections that implement the above-mentioned policies, namely the sections for Social Work, Social Protection, Protection of Public Health, and Supervision and Control.

The Ioannina MIC was established recently, in 2021. Before that, an Urban Working Group had been launched in 2017, as an ad hoc discussion forum to bring together all services and bodies that deal with refugee issues at the local level. In comparison with MIC, the Urban Working Group works more as a forum of exchange and coordination of activities among active practitioners from MOI, international organisations and NGOs.

While there is no single dedicated department within the municipality having migration and integration under its exclusive authority, the above-mentioned Social Protection Directorate and, especially the sections of Social Work and Social Protection do have under their authority the population of third country nationals, among other vulnerable groups such as the elderly, people with disabilities and Roma.

While the municipality has the authority to design, implement and participate in several programmes concerning migrant integration, the overall policy approach and directions are centrally designed by the Ministry of Migration and Asylum. Thus, the dominant model of integration governance can be mostly characterized as a centralist one. At the same time, as it will be argued in other parts of the report, a certain lack of coordination between the national and local level and the multiplicity of local actors introduce elements of a decoupled model.¹⁸

As a response to the management of refugee flows towards the EU, the ESTIA programme (The Emergency Support to Integration & Accommodation) was designed in order to accommodate vulnerable asylum seekers and asylum seekers in the country, as well as to ensure an economic support through a pre-paid card system, during the period 2015-2021. The programme was designed and funded by the EU (AMIF) and implemented by UNCHR Greece. It was implemented in collaboration with the central state, as well as a

¹⁷ National Framework for migrants integration, 2021. Accessible online <https://migration.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/%CE%95%CE%B8%CE%BD%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE-%CE%A3%CF%84%CF%81%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B7%CE%B3%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE-%CE%B3%CE%B9%CE%B1-%CF%84%CE%B7%CE%BD-%CE%88%CE%BD%CF%84%CE%B1%CE%BE%CE%B7-%CE%99%CE%B1%CE%BD%CE%BF%CF%85%CE%AC%CF%81%CE%B9%CE%BF%CF%82-2022.pdf> (20/11/2022)

¹⁸ Garcés-Mascreñas, B. and R. Penninx (2016) *Integration Processes and Policies in Europe: Contexts, Levels and Actors*, London: Springer Open.

number of municipalities and NGOs. In 2016, Ioannina was among the first municipalities to participate, by operating the open accommodation structure of Agia Eleni.¹⁹

Mol participates in the 2020-2022 AMIF-funded 'European Platform of Integrating Cities (EPIC)' project²⁰ that aims at improving the integration of migrants at the local level by creating a network of local authorities and in the 2020-2023 project 'Raising Capacity for Inclusive People engaged in private sponsorship' (RaCIP),²¹ both funded by AMIF. Since January 2022, Mol has been implementing the 'Empowering Migrants to Be Representative Actors in Community Engagement' project (EMBRACE), also funded by AMIF.

Mol's participation in such projects aims at improving the integration prospects for migrants and refugees mainly by identifying local needs and priorities, by exchanging experiences with other localities in Europe, studying good practices, addressing negative narratives and building capacity for organizations that support integration in the local society. The impact of these project can be measured mainly in terms of promoting local expertise among the administration staff; creating positive narratives; implementing innovative tools for consultation; and funding certain integration initiatives, such as enhancing access of third-country nationals in the labour market through training seminars. However, the project-based character of these initiatives raises questions about the sustainability of their impact. For example one of the activities of EPIC has been to provide accounting services and tax assistance to newcomers and this has been very helpful for several individuals and families but the question is what happens after the termination of the project and whether the beneficiaries of this activity have acquired the skills to go on on their own. This is a concern shared by local experts in the local authorities and other stakeholders.

The city of Ioannina has also established a centre to provide information, support and counselling for asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants. The opening of the Intercultural Centre for Social Integration ("Akadimia") which is funded by the Open Society Foundation aims at supporting the improvement of migrant communities' living conditions through collaboration with municipal services. The Centre provides assistance in accessing social protection programmes, interpretation services/cultural mediation for all the municipal services and their corporate bodies, and organises social and cultural events and other intercultural activities. Promotional leaflets are translated into 7 languages. In the same context, a helpline was created, and through cooperation with the 'Help at Home' programme, provisions such as food and medicinal products, were available to vulnerable citizens without a supportive framework, both natives and migrants.

Moreover, Mol participates in the 'Cities Network for Integration' (CNI)²² that launched its operation in January 2018, with other 13 Greek local authorities. Through the 'Needs

¹⁹ <https://migration.gov.gr/en/ris2/filoxenia-aitoynton-asylo/>

²⁰ <https://www.ioannina.gr/epic/>

²¹ <https://www.ioannina.gr/raising-capacity-for-inclusive-people-engaged-in-private-sponsorship/>

²² <https://www.cnigreece.gr/>

Assessment’ process that was completed in June 2020, the CNI team identified a number of key priority areas where municipalities are in need of support in order to effectively implement integration initiatives. The priorities which emerged are the following: the need to strengthen municipal structures and services, the need for education activities and for further empowerment of refugees for their successful integration into the labour market, the need to raise awareness, share information and promote active participation among local communities, and the need for CNI to play a role in the promotion of institutional reform. Since April 2020, the operations of the Network have been strengthened, with the support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Greece. A bilateral Memorandum of Cooperation between UNHCR and Mol was signed in 2020²³ and another Memorandum of Understanding was signed between IOM Greece, Mol and eight more Greek Municipalities.²⁴

Mol has in its administrative structure one related department that addresses issues of equality – The Directorate of Education, Lifelong Learning, Equality and Culture. In 2021, Mol was also funded by the Council of Europe in the context of the project ‘Mediterranean Intercultural Cities Network: Sport-Youth-Inclusion’. The aim of this project is to promote tolerance and acceptance of diversity through youth and sport activities.²⁵

The ‘Ioannina Operational Program 2020-2023’²⁶ lists measures about migrants, refugees and minority groups among the objectives of the city’s social policy priorities. The specific targets and activities are summarized in table 3 (emphasis added):

Table 3 Ioannina Operational Program 2020-2023 – relevant targets and activities

Target	Activities
Effective management of migrant, refugee and minority issues	Supporting the infrastructure and operation of accommodation centres . Elaboration of local integration plan . Combating racism and discrimination and raising awareness . Elaboration of coordination plan for local agencies. Activities for labor market integration .

²³ <https://www.unhcr.org/gr/en/14737-ioannina-municipality-and-unhcr-strengthen-their-cooperation-on-refugee-integration.html>

²⁴ <https://greece.iom.int/supporting-cities-network-integration>

²⁵ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/-/limassol-haifa-and-ioannina-engaged-in-the-development-of-a-mediterranean-intercultural-cities-community-through-sport-and-youth>

²⁶ <https://www.ioannina.gr/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/%CE%95%CF%80%CE%B9%CF%87%CE%B5%CE%B9%CF%81%CE%B7%CF%83%CE%B9%CE%B1%CE%BA%CF%8C-%CE%A0%CF%81%CF%8C%CE%B3%CF%81%CE%B1%CE%BC%CE%BC%CE%B1-%CE%94%CE%AE%CE%BC%CE%BF%CF%85-%CE%99%CF%89%CE%B1%CE%BD%CE%BD%CE%B9%CF%84%CF%8E%CE%BD-2020-2023-%CE%A3%CF%84%CF%81%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B7%CE%B3%CE%B9%CE%BA%CF%8C%CF%82-%CE%A3%CF%87%CE%B5%CE%B4%CE%B9%CE%B1%CF%83%CE%BC%CF%8C%CF%82.pdf>

	Cultural activities.
Fund raising for project development	Collaboration with international organisations . Receiving technical assistance .
Participation in national and international integration networks	Collaboration with the Intercultural Network of Cities (Council of Europe) . Collaboration with the Cities Network for Integration .
Effective operation of the (municipal) Migrants' Integration Council	Promoting communities' representation .
Development of an integrated system for reception, communication and protection	Establishment of migrants' and refugees' integration centre . Greek language classes. Exploitation of funding resources .

Most of the proposed activities reflect existing collaborations with various local, national and international actors and projects in which Mol participates. Their variety is indicative of the Municipality's active involvement in exploiting existing opportunities and its commitment in developing integration initiatives. Since the rationale behind the targets and activities is not specified in the document and some of the activities are less specific than others, the overall structure of local integration policy remains a challenge for the authorities. This has to be the subject of the proposed Local Integration Plan which remains in progress.

Migration policy is one of the main concerns of Mol administration. The Social Protection Directorate is equal among others in the administrative hierarchy. Its internal influence is indicated by the participation of Mol in European projects focusing on migrant integration and related networks. However, the influence of MIC is rather questionable, since there is no concrete mechanism to ensure that discussions that take place there have an impact on specific municipal policies. To some extent, it seems that the political intentions and priorities of the incumbent mayor at any time is significant in making sure that an agenda on migrant integration and participation is promoted.

2.3 Diversity and equality policy

According to most participants in the focus groups carried out as part of this project, ethnic diversity is nowadays recognized as an asset for the city, both by Mol administration and large parts of the civil society. This perception has been consistently communicated by the current Mayor. One year after the signature of a Memorandum of Cooperation between UNHCR and Mol, a UNHCR representative "praised the achievements of the [city] in ensuring that refugees and asylum seekers residing in the Ioannina area and the wider Ipeiros Region are effectively included in host communities".²⁷

²⁷ UNHCR (2021) 'UNHCR recognises Ioannina's commitment to effective inclusion of refugees', 27 April 2021, Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/gr/en/19719-unhcr-recognises-ioanninas-commitment-effective-inclusion-of-refugees.html>

Various actions express the political willingness of Mol to reinforce migrant/refugee's participation and access to the available services (administrative, social, health services, and others). One of them is the organisation of training seminars for the Municipality's permanent frontline personnel regarding the reception and behaviour towards third country nationals, regarding diversity and particular cultural differences rules. Additionally, the Municipality was set as a focal point in cooperation with the UNHCR and the Racist Violence Incident Reporting Network to report all the incidents of racist violence occurring in the city. The Network undertook the task to inform and train journalists on local media channels about hate speech and the use of racist language. Both these actions were implemented on a voluntary basis.

On the other hand, in 2022, there is no explicit strategy dedicated to diversity and equal opportunities in the city. The 'Ioannina Strategic Plan for Sustainable Urban Development' (ISPSUD)²⁸ was published by the Municipality in 2017 in order to identify the city's strategic goals until 2023, in accordance with the Operational Plan of the Region of Ipeiros (2014-2020). Among the special challenges that ISPSUD identifies, one finds the promotion of social integration and poverty alleviation. The city of Ioannina is recognized as an important centre of attraction for migrants especially due to its position on the migration route from Albania. Apart from a passage for migrants, Ioannina is a place of settlement mainly for people coming from Southern Albania who enjoy the proximity with their places of origin and keep travelling back and forth for professional and personal reasons. However, direct references to migrants and refugees are only sporadic in the document. The enhancement of participative procedures of all residents in local decision making is included among the Plan's principles, but there are no specific measures addressed to the participation of migrant and refugee communities.

The various dimensions of inequality in the city are addressed by the Social Protection Department which is responsible for the planning and the implementation policy in the most general sense. On the website of Mol, one can find specific reference to the Department's duty to protect public health and promote local employment. However, a specific intersectional approach on diversity and inequality is still missing. Nevertheless, most officials and stakeholders that were interviewed or participated in the focus groups were conscious of the additional challenges and obstacles that a range of parameters such as ethnicity, gender and disabilities bring about. Their references to the needs of specific migrant and refugee groups, especially women, reveal a high level of awareness but specific initiatives are still requested.

²⁸<https://www.ioannina.gr/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/%CE%A3%CF%84%CF%81%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B7%CE%B3%CE%B9%CE%BA%CF%8C-%CE%A3%CF%87%CE%AD%CE%B4%CE%B9%CE%BF-%CE%B3%CE%B9%CE%B1-%CF%84%CE%B7-%CE%92%CE%B9%CF%8E%CF%83%CE%B9%CE%BC%CE%B7-%CE%91%CF%83%CF%84%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE-%CE%91%CE%BD%CE%AC%CF%80%CF%84%CF%85%CE%BE%CE%B7.pdf>

3 THE EVOLUTION OF INCLUSIVITY OF MIGRANTS IN POLICY MAKING

3.1 Migrant inclusion in local policy making

Traditionally a country of emigration, since at least the early 1990s, Greece started to receive important inflows of mostly undocumented migrants, at first, mainly from Eastern European countries, and later, from various more distant areas of the world, especially from the Middle East, Africa and Asia. For quite some time, issues of migrants' integration were hardly an issue in the political agenda, since the dominant perception had it that these were temporary migratory movements and migrants would not (or even could not) integrate in the Greek society. The first integration measures appeared in the late 1990s but any step towards a comprehensive integration strategy did not come up before the late 2000s.²⁹

Migration policy in Greece, including integration, is primarily a competence of the national government and especially its Ministry of Migration and Asylum. The first National Strategy on Integration of Third Country Nationals was adopted in 2013. It focused especially on integration measures for long-term legal migrants, having in mind an approach of 'selective quality immigration'.³⁰ It is a document characterised by a general fear of diversity and its main concern is to describe ways towards migrant assimilation in Greek culture. The second National Strategy on Integration was adopted in 2019³¹ after the massive increase of refugee arrivals in 2015-2016. In comparison with the first one, this National Strategy puts greater emphasis on interculturality and on the role of local governments in integration. In 2021, a new Strategy on Social Integration of Asylum Seekers and Beneficiaries of International Protection was presented.³² This is a surprisingly poor document mostly containing the titles of various suggested activities and focusing on filtering out those who do not 'deserve' protection.

Prior to 2010, the competence of local authorities (the Municipalities) regarding migration policy in general were very limited and practically restricted to the typical implementation

²⁹ Triantafyllidou, A. (2013) 'Migration in Greece: People, Policies and Practices'. Athens: ELIAMEP and EUI.

³⁰ <https://migration.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/%CE%927.-%CE%95%CE%B8%CE%BD%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE-%CE%A3%CF%84%CF%81%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B7%CE%B3%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE-2013.pdf>. Accessed 18/11/2022.

³¹ <https://migration.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/%CE%926.-%CE%95%CE%B8%CE%BD%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE-%CE%A3%CF%84%CF%81%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B7%CE%B3%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE-2019.pdf>. Accessed 18/11/2022.

³² <https://migration.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/%CE%95%CE%B8%CE%BD%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE-%CE%A3%CF%84%CF%81%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B7%CE%B3%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE-%CE%B3%CE%B9%CE%B1-%CF%84%CE%B7%CE%BD-%CE%88%CE%BD%CF%84%CE%B1%CE%BE%CE%B7-%CE%A4%CE%B5%CE%BB%CE%B9%CE%BA%CF%8C-%CE%BC%CE%B5-%CE%9C%CE%BF%CF%81%CF%86%CE%BF%CF%80%CE%BF%CE%AF%CE%B7%CF%83%CE%B7.pdf>. Accessed 18/11/2022.

of national measures.³³ Thus, the Municipalities had to receive individual applications for residence permits for the national ‘regularisation programs’ that were addressed to the large numbers of undocumented migrants and to forward them to the national authorities that were responsible for their examination.

In 2010, an administrative reform (‘Kalikratis’) reduced the number of the Municipalities in the country in order to achieve economies of scale and increased their competencies, especially in the field of social policy. With this reform, the Municipalities undertook more responsibilities concerning social policy, including for groups considered vulnerable, such as migrants and refugees. Moreover, the same reform adopted local (Municipal) Migrant Integration Councils (MICs) as an innovative tool to promote integration.

MICs’ mission is to inform the municipal authorities about the problems that the migrant residents face, to make suggestions / proposals for actions and activities aimed at the integration of migrants in the local government and policy-making structures, and to assist migrants in accessing municipal services. They can do so by undertaking a variety of tasks, such as mapping out immigrant communities and their associations, involving them in local government structures and policy-making, and identifying and probing into integration problems. However, MICs have no decision-making powers and this has proved to render them less attractive for migrant communities (see section 2.2).³⁴ Granting decisive powers to MICs might also enhance community self-organisation, as more migrant communities would be interested to organise in order to send representatives that would make their voice heard.

A renewed interest in local migration policies emerged after the so-called ‘refugee crisis’ in 2015-2016. The Greek government accelerated the effort to establish new accommodation facilities in Athens and in other parts of the country, in order to “decongest” informal accommodation sites.³⁵ This strategy to disperse refugees across the national space brought about new spaces of accommodation either in camp-like facilities or in urban apartments of the devoted accommodation scheme (‘ESTIA’), funded by the EU and operated by UNHCR. Several Municipalities, including MoI found themselves in a new situation, having to accommodate and later integrate new populations of asylum seekers and refugees, in close collaboration with new actors: local representatives of international organisations, international NGOs, local NGOs and initiatives from their civil societies.

³³ Lazaridis, G., and J. Poyago-Theotoky (1999) ‘Undocumented Migrants in Greece: Issues of Regularisation’, *International Migration* 37 (4): 715–740. Anagnostou, D., Kontogianni, A., Skleparis, D. and Tzogopoulos, G. (2016) *Local Government and Migrant Integration in Greece*. Athens: ELIAMEP.

³⁴ Anagnostou, D., Kontogianni, A., Skleparis, D. and Tzogopoulos, G. (2016) *Local Government and Migrant Integration in Greece*. Athens: ELIAMEP.

³⁵ Afouxenidis, A., Petrou, M., Kandylis, G. Tramountanis, A. and Giannaki, D. (2017) ‘Dealing with a Humanitarian Crisis: Refugees on the Eastern EU Border of the Island of Lesbos’, *Journal of Applied Security Research* 12(1): 7-39.

The two parallel accommodation systems differ a lot in several aspects, including living conditions for residents and spatial segregation from local communities. Today the urban accommodation program which was mainly addressed to the most vulnerable is about to come to an end.³⁶ The main declared objective of the national policy today is to reduce the population of asylum seekers in the country.³⁷ A less declared but quite evident objective is to concentrate the population of asylum seekers and to some extent that of recognized beneficiaries of international protection in massive camp-like accommodation facilities, situated mainly at the outskirts of urban areas. Since the outburst of the CoViD pandemic certain measures were implemented to make the camps more closed and restrictive, especially with the construction of new concrete fences and the imposition of time restrictions to enter and exit the camps. In Ioannina we have today the camp in Katsikas which according to the latest data accommodates about 700 people, most of them from Afghanistan but also from the DRC, Iraq, Syria and other countries. The accommodation is provided in containers and the camp is situated 5 km from the city center. There is also another facility with about 200 people next to the city airport which has better housing conditions as it consists of regular buildings.

The key local, national and global events over the past decade, including relevant policies and their impact on the inclusion of migrants in local decision making are summarised in Table 4.

³⁶ <https://greece.iom.int/supporting-cities-network-integration>

³⁷ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/-/limassol-haifa-and-ioannina-engaged-in-the-development-of-a-mediterranean-intercultural-cities-community-through-sport-and-youth>

Table 4 Migrant inclusion in policy making: timeline of progress in the municipality of Ioannina

When	Global event	National event	Local event	Impact
2010		Kalikratis Administrative Reform in Greece. In 2010, an administrative reform ('Kalikratis') reduced the number of municipalities in Greece in order to achieve economies of scale and to increase the competencies of municipalities, especially in the field of social policy. ³⁸		Increasing local responsibilities for social policy. Following the Kalikratis reforms, the Municipalities of Greece undertake more responsibilities for social policy. This covers responsibility for groups considered vulnerable, including migrants and refugees. The same reform introduces the idea of a Migrant Integration Council (MIC), a local consultative body that seeks to promote integration and participation of migrants at the municipal level. ³⁹ The Ioannina Migrant Integration Council is created in 2021.
2010		Creating Migrant Integration Councils. The aim of Migrant Integration Councils (MICs) is		Steps towards migrants' political participation. In 2022, there are 18 MICs in the 332 Municipalities

³⁸ Law 3852/2010 "New Architecture of Self-Government and Decentralized Administration - Kallikratis Project". Accessible online https://www.et.gr/api/Download_Small/?fek_pdf=20100100087 (20/11/2022).

³⁹ Anagnostou, D., and Skleparis, D. (2016) Integration of migrants and local governance in Greece: Athens, Thessaloniki, Iraklio and Patra. Athens: ELIAMEP.

		to operate as local consultative bodies to raise awareness of integration, to assist migrants in getting access to local services, to suggest relevant policy measures and to support collaboration between the authorities and migrants' associations. Each municipality can establish a MIC on a voluntary basis. ⁴⁰		of Greece. Each MIC is composed by 11 members, including council representatives, civil society organisations active on integration and representatives of migrants who are permanent residents. MICs are a step towards migrants' political representation, as they institutionalized the civic, cultural and political participation of TCNs and their associations. But the impact of MICs has been rather low ⁴¹ due to the lack of adequate resources and powers, and the limited interest and / or lack of migrant associations. ⁴²
2013		Introducing strategy on migrant integration. The National Strategy on Integration of Third Country Nationals (TCNs) was adopted in 2013. The strategy focuses		Integration or assimilation? This strategy document is characterised by a general fear of diversity and its main concern is to describe ways towards migrant assimilation in Greek culture

⁴⁰ Anagnostou, D. and Skleparis, D. (2016) *Integration of migrants and local governance in Greece: Athens, Thessaloniki, Iraklio and Patra*. Athens: ELIAMEP.

⁴¹ Fouskas, T. (2013) 'Representing the unrepresented? Operation and representativeness of Migrant Integration Councils in Greece', *Social Cohesion and Development* 8(2): 127-150. Skamnakis, C., and Polyzoidis, P. (2013) 'Migrant Integration Councils (MICs): The incomplete functioning of an important institution for the local government', *Social Cohesion and Development* 8(2): 165-176.

⁴² Papakonstantis, M. (2013) 'Migrant Integration Councils and social inclusion policy of third country nationals', *Social Cohesion and Development* 8(2): 107-126.

		especially on integration measures for long-term legal migrants, having in mind an approach of 'selective quality immigration'. ⁴³		rather than diverse participation and integration. ⁴⁴
2015	The 'refugee crisis' in Europe. A significantly increased movement of refugees and asylum seekers, arriving at the European borders in 2015 was generally understood and managed as a crisis. ⁴⁵			Responding to 'refugee crisis'. The refugee crisis led to a significant increase in the arrival of refugees and asylum seekers to Greece, resulting in a crisis of the reception system. A new accommodation system, including emergency shelters and subsidised rentals in urban apartments, is created in Athens and other parts of the country. Municipalities like Ioannina work with civil society and international NGOs to accommodate and

⁴³ Ministry of the Interior, General Secretary of Population and Social Cohesion (2013) 'National Strategy on the Integration of TCNs', Available at: <https://migration.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/%CE%927.-%CE%95%CE%B8%CE%BD%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE-%CE%A3%CF%84%CF%81%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B7%CE%B3%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE-2013.pdf>. [Accessed on 18/11/2022]

⁴⁴ Tramountanis, A. (2021) 'Integration policy for migrants, asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection in Greece: Assessment, challenges, perspectives'. In: Varouxi, C., Kakepaki, M., Sarris, N., Tramountanis, A. and Tsekeris, C. (eds) *The Political Portrait of Greece I: Stakes and Challenges*. Athens: EKKE. [In Greek]. Available at: https://www.ekke.gr/publication_files/i-politiki-gia-tin-entaxi-metanaston-kai-aitounton-dikaiouchon-diethnous-prostasias-stin-ellada-istoriki-apotimisi-proklisis-prooptikes-1. [Accessed on 28/11/2022]

⁴⁵ Bojadžijev, M. and Mezzadra, S. (2015) "Refugee crisis" or crisis of European migration policies? FocaalBlog post series on migration and the refugee crisis. Available at: [https://syllabus.pirate.care/_preview/library/Manuela%20Bojadzijeve/Refugee%20crisis_%20or%20crisis%20of%20European%20migration%20policies_%20\(465\)/Refugee%20crisis_%20or%20crisis%20of%20European%20mig%20-%20Manuela%20Bojadzijeve.pdf](https://syllabus.pirate.care/_preview/library/Manuela%20Bojadzijeve/Refugee%20crisis_%20or%20crisis%20of%20European%20migration%20policies_%20(465)/Refugee%20crisis_%20or%20crisis%20of%20European%20mig%20-%20Manuela%20Bojadzijeve.pdf). [Accessed on: 14/12/2022]

				integrate newcomers. ⁴⁶
2016	Border closures prevent refugee movement. In 2016, the journeys of refugees and asylum seekers to other destinations in northern Europe are violently interrupted and thousands of people are 'trapped' in Greece as Balkan countries close their borders. ⁴⁷			Refugees stranded in Greece. The accommodation system for refugees and asylum seekers expands and gets dispersed across the country. 'Hotspot' facilities are used to deter migration to central and northern European countries. ⁴⁸
2016			Establishing a new accommodation system. A new Open Accommodation Facility close to the city of Ioannina is established in 2016 and another one in 2017. The ESTIA programme (Emergency Support to Integration &	Accommodating asylum seekers in Ioannina. More than 1,000 asylum seekers mainly of Syrian and Afghan origin settle in Katsikas. The facility consists of containers and is located 8km from the city centre of Ioannina. Another smaller facility consisting of regular buildings is established

⁴⁶ Afouxenidis, A., Petrou, M., Kandylis, G. Tramountanis, A. and Giannaki, D. (2017) 'Dealing with a Humanitarian Crisis: Refugees on the Eastern EU Border of the Island of Lesbos', *Journal of Applied Security Research* 12(1): 7-39. Kourachanis, N. (2018) 'Asylum Seekers, Hotspot Approach and Anti-Social Policy Responses in Greece (2015–2017)', *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 19(4): 1153–1167.

⁴⁷ Kingsley, P. (2016) 'Balkan countries shut borders as attention turns to new refugee routes', *The Guardian*, 9 March 2016, Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/09/balkans-refugee-route-closed-say-european-leaders> [Accessed on 16/12/2022]

⁴⁸ Kourachanis, N. (2018) 'Asylum Seekers, Hotspot Approach and Anti-Social Policy Responses in Greece (2015–2017)', *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 19(4), 1153–1167.

			Accommodation) is designed to accommodate vulnerable asylum seekers in the private rented sector and to ensure economic support through a pre-paid card system, during the period 2015-2021. ⁴⁹	soon after in the Agia Eleni old boarding school, belonging to the nearby Municipality of Zitsa. It accommodated about 260 people mainly from Afghanistan and Iraq. The population of both facilities decreased in later years.
2017			Launching the Urban Working Group. The Urban Working Group is an initiative of the Municipality of Ioannina, in collaboration with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The group provides an ad hoc discussion forum to bring together all services and bodies that deal with refugee issues at the local level. ⁵⁰	Coordinating migrant integration activities. The Urban Working Group acts as a forum of knowledge exchange and coordination of activities among active practitioners from the municipality of Ioannina, international organisations and NGOs. The group has been effective in ensuring exchange and common understanding on migrant integration among its participants.
2018		Migrant Integration Councils include refugees. In 2018, the Migrant Integration Councils (MICs) are renamed to Migrant		Improving refugee representation and participation. The inclusion of refugees in Migrant Integration

⁴⁹ IOM Greece (2021) 'Supporting the Greek Authorities in Managing the National Reception System for Asylum Seekers and Vulnerable Migrants (SMS)', IOM Greece Factsheets, March 2022. Available at: https://greece.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd11086/files/documents/_merged-mainland-march_22_compressed.pdf. [Accessed on 14/12/2022]

⁵⁰ Source: Interview with the Municipality of Ioannina appointee, 29 July 2022.

		<i>and Refugee</i> Integration Councils to include both migrants and refugees. ⁵¹		Councils (MICs) reflects the recognition of their increased numbers among migrant population in Greece. In practice, several refugee representatives participate in existing MICs, including that of Ioannina. Due to their recent arrival, refugees are prone to collective representation but several challenges remain, including their intense spatial mobility and difficulties in attracting representatives among specific groups, such as women and those with low education qualifications. ⁵²
2019		A new strategy on migrant integration. A new National Strategy on Integration is adopted in 2019 following a significant increase of refugee arrivals in 2015-2016. ⁵³		Increasing integration role of local governments. This new National Strategy defines three target groups, namely asylum seekers, beneficiaries of international protection and

⁵¹ Ministry of Migration and Asylum, Department of Social Integration (2022) 'Councils for the Integration of Immigrants and Refugees. Institutional framework, operation and their role in the integration of third countries citizens', May 2022, Available at: <https://migration.gov.gr/migration-policy/integration/draseis-koinonikis-entaxis-se-ethniko-epipedo/symmetochi-sta-koina/>. [Accessed on 20/11/2022]

⁵² Source: Interview with the Municipality of Ioannina appointee, 29 July 2022.

⁵³ Ministry of Migration Policy (2019) 'National Strategy of Integration', Available at: <https://migration.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/%CE%926-%CE%95%CE%B8%CE%BD%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE-%CE%A3%CF%84%CF%81%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B7%CE%B3%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE-2019.pdf>. [Accessed on 18/11/2022]

				resident migrants. It distinguishes between two levels of intervention, one concerning 'reception' and one concerning 'integration'. In comparison with the previous 2013 strategy, this 2019 strategy puts greater emphasis on interculturalism while recognising the integration role of local governments and the importance of raising awareness and participation in the local communities. ⁵⁴
2020			<p>Participating in integration projects and networks. Since 2020, the Municipality of Ioannina participates in various integration projects including the 'European Platform of Integrating Cities' (EPIC)⁵⁵, the 'Raising Capacity for Inclusive People engaged in private sponsorship'</p>	<p>Strengthening integration expertise, consultation and capacity. The impact of these integration projects can be measured mainly in terms of promoting local expertise among the administration staff, creating positive narratives about migration, implementing innovative tools for consultation, building the capacity of</p>

⁵⁴ Tramountanis, A. (2021) 'Integration policy for migrants, asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection in Greece: Assessment, challenges, perspectives'. In: Varouxi, C., Kakepaki, M., Sarris, N., Tramountanis, A. and Tsekeris, C. (eds) *The Political Portrait of Greece I: Stakes and Challenges*. Athens: EKKE. [In Greek]. Available at: https://www.ekke.gr/publication_files/i-politiki-gia-tin-entaxi-metanaston-kai-aitounton-dikaiouchon-diethnous-prostasias-stin-ellada-istoriki-apotimisi-proklisis-prooptikes-1. [Accessed on 28/11/2022]

⁵⁵ <https://epicamif.eu/> [Accessed on 14/12/2022]

			(RaCIP) ⁵⁶ , and the 'Cities Network for Integration' (CNI). ⁵⁷	organisations that support integration, and funding certain integration initiatives, such as enhancing access of third-country nationals in the labour market through training. However, the project-based character of these initiatives raises questions about the sustainability of their impact.
2021		Introducing social integration strategy. A new Strategy on Social Integration of Asylum Seekers and Beneficiaries of International Protection is introduced in 2021. ⁵⁸		Shrinking of the integration focus. This new strategy on social integration almost leaves out resident migrants and focuses primarily on asylum seekers, outlining various suggested activities, however, it mainly focuses on filtering out those who do not 'deserve' protection.

⁵⁶ <https://www.racip.eu/> [Accessed on 14/12/2022]

⁵⁷ <https://www.cnigreece.gr/> [Accessed on 14/12/2022]

⁵⁸Ministry of Migration and Asylum (2021) 'National Strategy for Integration', Available at: <https://migration.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/%CE%95%CE%B8%CE%BD%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE-%CE%A3%CF%84%CF%81%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B7%CE%B3%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AE-%CE%B3%CE%B9%CE%B1-%CF%84%CE%B7%CE%BD-%CE%88%CE%BD%CF%84%CE%B1%CE%BE%CE%B7-%CE%A4%CE%B5%CE%BB%CE%B9%CE%BA%CF%8C-%CE%BC%CE%B5-%CE%9C%CE%BF%CF%81%CF%86%CE%BF%CF%80%CE%BF%CE%AF%CE%B7%CF%83%CE%B7.pdf>. [Accessed on 18/11/2022]

2021			Establishing Ioannina Migrant Integration Council. The Ioannina Migrant Integration Council (MIC) is established in 2021. ⁵⁹	Involving migrant representatives in Ioannina politics. The establishment of the Migrant Integration Council in Ioannina led to a partial involvement of migrant representatives in local politics.
2021			Launching Akadimia intercultural centre. In 2021, a new Intercultural Centre for Social Integration (Akadimia), is launched in Ioannina to provide various integration related services, including organising of cultural events. Akadimia is funded by the Open Society Foundation and supervised by the Cultural Centre, an autonomous legal entity of the Ioannina Municipality. ⁶⁰	Strengthening support for migrant integration. Akadimia provides assistance in accessing social protection programmes, interpretation services and cultural mediation for all municipal services and their corporate bodies. It also organises social and cultural events and other intercultural activities. Promotional leaflets are translated into seven languages.
2022			Empowering migrants through community engagement. Since January 2022, the Municipality of	Strengthening migrants' participation in decision-making. The EMBRACE project aims at strengthening the

⁵⁹ Source: Interview with the Municipality of Ioannina appointee, 29 July 2022.

⁶⁰ Source: Interview with the Municipality of Ioannina appointee, 29 July 2022.



			Ioannina has been implementing the 'Empowering Migrants to Be Representative Actors in Community Engagement' project (EMBRACE) ⁶¹ , funded by the EU's AMIF.	participation of migrants in decision-making and policy implementation in host societies. The project activities include developing collaborations between newcomers and policy-makers, training for newcomers and policy-makers, and establishing local groups of newcomers undertaking public leadership internships. ⁶²
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⁶¹ <https://www.embrace-project.com/> [Accessed on 14/12/2022]

⁶² <https://www.embrace-project.com/goals-and-activities/> [Accessed on 14/12/2022]

3.2 Best practice example of migrant inclusion in policy making

Box 1 Akadimia, Intercultural Centre for Social Integration, Ioannina

Target group

Refugees and migrants.

Objectives

- To provide interpreting and intercultural mediation for all related Municipality of Ioannina services.
- To organise social and cultural events and intercultural activities.
- To provide advice.
- To provide information and connect citizens with social protection services and projects.
- To support citizens for their participation and applications for social protection projects.
- To collaborate with other agents in the area of Ioannina and refer requests to them.

Key features

Akadimia was launched in 2021 and is supervised by the Cultural Centre, an autonomous legal entity of the Municipality of Ioannina. Its establishment was funded by the Open Society Foundation. According to the President of the Cultural Centre, the rationale for this initiative is that interculturality is a constant struggle to support those who are not supported and the basic goal is to promote the integration of those who are considered strangers in the local society.⁶³ Akadimia is meant to be an easily accessible institution for migrants and refugees and at the same time a place where practitioners meet to exchange information and ideas.

Results achieved

Akadimia provides assistance in accessing social protection programmes, interpretation services/cultural mediation for all the municipal services and their corporate bodies, and organises social and cultural events and other intercultural activities. Promotional leaflets are translated into 7 languages. Moreover, Akadimia is the workplace for the Municipality of employees in projects related to migrant and refugee integration.

⁶³ <https://www.ioannina.gr/%CF%83%CE%B5-%CE%BB%CE%B5%CE%B9%CF%84%CE%BF%CF%85%CF%81%CE%B3%CE%AF%CE%B1-%CF%84%CE%BF-%CE%B4%CE%B9%CE%B1%CF%80%CE%BF%CE%BB%CE%B9%CF%84%CE%B9%CF%83%CE%BC%CE%B9%CE%BA%CF%8C-%CE%BA%CE%AD%CE%BD%CF%84/> . Accessed 30/11/2022.

Box 2 Urban Working Group (UWG), Ioannina

Target group

Actors and stakeholders involved in the provision of a wide range of services to refugees and asylum seekers located in Ioannina and neighbouring Municipalities.

Objectives

- To develop commonly agreed guiding principles
- To support refugees and asylum seekers in the local integration process
- To monitor the response to the needs of refugees
- To record and evaluate raising issues
- To coordinate all involved stakeholders and their activities
- To provide solutions to emergent situations
- To guarantee the sustainability of initiatives that are already proving to be relevant

Key features

An ad-hoc Urban Working Group (UWG) was created to coordinate the implementation of actions and services of all agencies involved in services to the refugee and migrant population. UWG was launched in 2017 as an initiative of the Municipality of Ioannina, in collaboration with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

UWG includes members from 15-20 different urban actors including representatives of international organisations (UN agencies and NGOs) such as UNHCR, IOM, other NGOs; administrative officials (Police, Hospital Administrators, Child and adolescent mental health centre); elected officials (from Mol, Municipality of Zitsa, Municipality of Ziros, Municipality of Pogoni etc); representatives from civil society organisations (volunteer groups) operating in the area; and representatives of the Mol Social Protection Organisation (OKPAPA) which runs a homeless dormitory and a hostel for women victims of violence. The group meets regularly on a monthly basis.

Results achieved

UWG has been effective in the coordination of participant actors, in making sure that information is circulated and that common understandings on migrant integration are achieved. The most recent intervention of the UWG concerned the coordination of operations to deal with the COVID-19 health crisis such as the education of children who were not allowed to move to schools in the camps, the coordination of the operation of hospitals after informing the hospital administrators about the problems of managing the pandemic, coordination for civil protection, and vaccinations.

4 ENGAGEMENT OF MIGRANT COMMUNITIES IN POLICY MAKING

4.1 City strategy for local participation

4.1.1 Does the city have an explicitly written strategy to promote participation by residents in public decision making irrespective of their nationality / background?

Citizens' participation in local affairs was mainly introduced with the law 3463, enacted in 2006.⁶⁴ It explicitly stated that local authorities may consult with residents and collectives in the decision-making process, while local authorities have also the responsibility to inform residents regarding their actions. It was a few years later with the Kallikratis reform in 2010 that civic participation in local affairs became more institutionalised.⁶⁵ The reform predicted the active involvement of citizens in local affairs through their participation in two municipal committees (economic committee and quality of life committee), while it also predicted a consultation committee.

Mol does not have an explicit strategy to promote participation of all residents, but it has adopted the above-mentioned provisions of Kallikratis reform and seems to promote civic participation, irrespective of citizen's nationality or background. Specifically, the Municipality has built a consultation platform (<http://www.diavouleusi.eu/#pricing>)⁶⁶ which offers the possibility to its residents to actively participate in several consultations regarding municipal affairs, such as the pedestrianisation of an area or the extension of the controlled parking area of the city.⁶⁷ Moreover, as described later on, the official website of the Municipality promotes a model of open governance; for example, giving access to detailed information about the annual budget and asset statements of the elected members of the municipal committee.

The Operational Programme of Mol for the period 2020-2023 (Section 2.2) includes specific actions aiming at the social integration of migrants and refugees living in the area. According to local stakeholders, this is quite an innovative initiative considering that Mol administration goes beyond its official responsibilities in order to manage and coordinate activities and/or actions related to the refugee and migrant population: an *ad hoc* Urban Working Group was created in order to assist the implementation of specific actions for shelter provision, communication with communities, health services, and others. It is constituted by representatives of international organisations (such as UNHCR, IOM), NGOs, administrative officials, elected officials and representatives from civil society organisations).

⁶⁴ Law 3463/2006 "Code of Municipalities and Communities".

<https://www.eetaa.gr/apps/kodikas/contents.jsp?part=1> [Accessed on 20/11/2022]

⁶⁵ Law 3852/2010 "New Architecture of Self-Government and Decentralized Administration - Kallikratis Project" https://www.et.gr/api/Download_Small/?fek_pdf=20100100087 [Accessed on 20/11/2022]

⁶⁶ The consultation platform was created and co-financed within the framework of the project "Resilient Europe <<http://urbact.eu/resilient-europe>>" of the Territorial Cooperation program URBACT III <<http://urbact.eu/>>.

⁶⁷ Consultation platform of Mol <http://www.diavouleusi.eu/> [Accessed on 27/11/2022]

4.1.2 Does the strategy commit to (1) making this a two-way process of communication; (2) responding to the voice of residents; and (3) giving voice to informal participatory action as well as formal processes such as consultations?

While an explicit strategy couldn't be identified, the official website, as well as the specific platform concerning consultations, operate in a two-way process mode of communication, permitting citizen participation. Citizen participation seems to follow mainly formal processes.

On the other hand, as reported by the special advisor to the Mayor in Mol's Social Service, in her interview, one of the reasons for the implementation of EU funded projects is to become able to understand the way they can empower, sensitise and 'invite' citizens to civic participation. One example is the 'Ioannina Silver Community Action Network'⁶⁸ (EEA Grants) which invites older people to take action and aims at their mobilisation and strengthening of their civic participation, giving opportunities for the promotion of volunteerism, political participation and consultation. Another example is the 'Future for Europe' project⁶⁹ (co-funded by the Europe for Citizens Programme) that aims at encouraging young people to actively participate in decision making and/or democratic processes of the EU. Citizens ('young ambassadors') have been involved in debates on the future of Europe, based on lessons from the past, in order to develop ideas to combat euroscepticism and mental walls/barriers towards the 'others'.

The annual Mol Operational Programme includes a set of actions to strengthen social integration and integration in the labour market, and to promote social cohesion in a diverse local society. It is presented for consultation to representatives of migrant communities / associations and is approved by both the Migrant Integration Council (MIC) and the Municipal Council of Ioannina City.

Informal communication mainly unfolds through the operation of Akadimia as a focal point where migrant representatives get involved in informal discussions with local practitioners. The opportunity for such discussions is usually given in the context of the implementation of related projects. However important this opportunity may be, the question remains whether informal channels of communication are preserved after the end of a project. On the other hand, since the specific projects are implemented directly by Mol, they contribute to the creation of a trained and dedicated personnel in the Municipality.

4.1.3 Does the strategy adopt an intersectional approach seeking to tackle multiple axes of inequality simultaneously to promote local participation? Are some axes of inequality considered as principal?

⁶⁸ www.activecitizensfund.gr

⁶⁹

https://www.comune.gambettola.fc.it/upload/gambettola/documentiallegati/FutureOfEuropeNewsletter-ENG1_13660_21330.pdf

There is no explicit strategy regarding multiple axes of inequality. However, according to migrants' representatives and NGO practitioners in the focus groups, women's participation is an especially challenging issue that needs further coordination of all competent services along with the implementation of focused actions that concern the migrant / refugee community. As it was discussed, the lack of childcare services discourages women from participating in Greek language courses and from joining existing mechanisms of representation. The operation of creative childcare centres (KDAP, mentioned in the Operational Plan, objective 2.1.1) reflects the political willingness of MoI to provide childcare services for the children of the legally residing (including applicants and beneficiaries of international protection). It is worth noting, however, that there is only one social worker to meet the needs and requirements of the entire Region of Ipeiros.

4.1.4 Is the intersectional approach to local participation adopted across different policy spheres?

Issues of education, health, housing and entrepreneurship are often mentioned among policy priorities for migrant and refugee integration in the local society, but hardly associated with methods and tools for political participation. Instead, the main approach is that of service provision to migrants and refugees as beneficiaries of the Municipal administration and the wider system of international organisations and NGOs. Thus, intersectionality does not yet seem to fit into strategic thinking on local participation.

4.1.5 Does the city have any existing structures for political / civic participation of the local migrant population?

The Migrant Integration Council is a municipal consultative institution that provides a forum for discussion between the local elected representatives and legal third country nationals. MIC is a tool for participation and representation of legal foreign residents at the local level, aiming especially at raising awareness on migrants' integration, assisting migrants in getting access to local services, suggesting relevant policy measures and to support collaboration between the authorities and migrants' associations. In order for MIC to function properly, it must be in constant communication with the local elected representatives and foreign residents.

However, there are still significant barriers to overcome: not all migrant associations are sufficiently represented (some of them, such as the Albanians, whose presence in the region dates back to 1990 are not represented at all) for various reasons and the representation of women is particularly low. According to our informants, in 2022, participant representatives are from Iran, Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan as well as from some African countries.

4.2 Leadership, communication and coordination of participation

4.2.1 Do decision makers actively promote participation of residents irrespective of their nationality?

Mol is committed to the promotion of equality and inclusion of immigrants and refugees in the local community. According to the current Mayor, diverse participation fosters social cohesion and enhances democratic institutions. Several recent Mol activities contain this perspective. For example, since January 2022, Mol has been implementing the 'Empowering Migrants to Be Representative Actors in Community Engagement' project (EMBRACE),⁷⁰ funded by the EU's AMIF. The project aims at strengthening the participation of migrants in decision-making and policy implementation in host societies.

4.2.2 Does the city use migrant-specific communication channels to make the case for participation among (and to reach) migrant communities? What communication channels are used to make the case for participation? How are residents informed about the possibility to participate? Does the city use diverse communication methods to inform residents about the possibility to participate?

In accordance with its Memoranda of Understanding with IOM and UNHCR, Mol is working for the creation of a feedback mechanism between the members of the MIC and the members of the communities living in the city, both in the urban area and in the Katsikas accommodation facility. This has been attempted in practice by organizing discussion focus groups with migrants and refugees both in the city of Ioannina and in the Katsikas camp. The overall assessment of this communication channel is positive, despite certain difficulties especially regarding raising awareness among migrants and refugees and making sure that communication persists when participants leave the city.⁷¹ Moreover a TV spot was created by UNHCR Greece and uploaded on YouTube,⁷² in which a member of MIC and the Mayor of Ioannina explain the role and the potential of MIC.

As in all Municipalities in Greece, the meetings of the Municipal Council in Ioannina are open to the public and citizens have also the opportunity to express their view after getting a permission to speak. This right is occasionally exercised by organised interest groups and initiatives.

Today, civic participation in Ioannina is also promoted via communication channels provided in a Mol web platform. Certain consultation on specific policies and initiatives are uploaded and citizens / residents also have the opportunities to submit their own claims.⁷³ This platform was developed under the EU URBACT/ResilientEurope initiative. Three related 'Live Laboratories for Participant Planning' were organized in 2018. However, the available form and content are rather unattractive and non-inviting, and the process seems to have been interrupted after the termination of the Ioannina URBACT project.

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https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUK Ewjs8O64hNf7AhUYVfEDHVanDCUQFnoECA4QAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ioannina.gr%2Fembrace%2F%3Flang%3Den&usg=AOvVaw184LlqnJIGR1k_fErNQOn Accessed 30/11/2022.

⁷¹ Interview with Mol appointee, 29/7/2022.

⁷² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4nS7ysEBNkl>. Accessed: 27/9/2022

⁷³ <http://www.diavouleusi.eu/#>

4.2.3 Is intersectionality considered in communication?

What is more, intersectionality is not a declared concern regarding communication, which is instead characterised by an obsolete one-fits-all approach.

4.2.4 Does the city communicate the results of consultations to residents? How are the results of a consultation process and its responses communicated to residents?

The proceedings of the Municipal Council are available on Mol website. At the same time a specific part of the web platform is devoted to communicating the results of consultations but again the existing content is rather poor.

4.2.5 Does the city produce information about consultations in different languages? Who produces the information and in which languages is it provided?

Mol has created a guide to its social services in 7 languages. However, this leaflet addresses migrants and refugees more as clients of the available social services rather than being a guide on how to access consultations or how to participate in decision-making. On the other hand, consultation results and informative content on Mol web platforms are available only in Greek.

4.2.6 Is there a coordination mechanism in place to ensure that participation of all residents is actively promoted and communicated effectively?

MIC is responsible for discussing all migrant and refugee issues in the city and thus functions as a forum of coordination at the highest (local) political level. Another coordination mechanism is the Urban Working Group in which active practitioners from Mol, international organisations and NGOs have the opportunity to discuss their activities towards participation and to get mutual assistance from each other on practical issues such as interpreting, preparation of meetings with migrants etc, organisation of local events etc.

4.3 Equal access

4.3.1 Does the city use diverse platforms to enable participation? Do all residents have an equal chance to make their voices heard?

Formal consultations on equal access to participation in Ioannina are organised through the official channel of the local Migrant Integration Council which operates as a space where all voices can be heard, at least mediated by the representatives of each migrant group. Apart from the local Migrant Integration Council, the city of Ioannina has developed certain instruments and processes to enable citizens' participation in local affairs. Among them, apart from the above-mentioned web tools, one may mention especially the local Ombudsman, a mediating institution that is responsible to receive and examine citizens' complaints for instances of rights' violations and poor administration and to suggest relevant solutions. At the same time, a specific platform on Mol website is

dedicated to 'Open Governance'.⁷⁴ In it, local citizens have access to the decisions of local administration, economic data about the local budget and its implementation and statements by local representatives.

4.3.2 Can migrants, refugees and asylum seekers access these platforms taking into account their specific circumstances?

The local Ombudsman deals with complaints made by any citizen, no matter their status as local citizen or not. Additionally, even individuals who are not directly involved in a case of poor administration may refer such cases to the Ombudsman. Thus, migrants and refugees are not excluded from the procedures. The 'Open Governance' platform is also open and accessible to everyone via the Municipality's website. However, there are no specific measures dedicated to reducing barriers that migrants and refugees may face, especially those concerning language barriers and limited access to information.

4.3.3 Are these diverse platforms of participation proactively communicated to diverse groups of residents? Is it visible and known to all communities how they can participate? Are their specific concerns considered?

The main local institution that is responsible for communicating existing opportunities for participation to the diverse group of residents is the Migrant Integration Council. Regarding its effectiveness, this institution faces a twofold challenge: how to attract representatives from all the migrant groups of the city and how to ensure that voices from each community are actually represented in practice. According to our informants in the focus groups, some of the communities have not been involved and, interestingly enough, these seem to be some of the most established ones (including the Albanian community). According to some officials and migrant representatives, the Migrant Integration Council would be more attractive for the communities only if it enjoyed greater competences and budget.

Equal opportunities for participation remain a challenge at the local level. Established migrants usually rest on personal life strategies and their collective participation unfolds, if at all, via informal interpersonal networks. The challenge is even greater for some refugee communities, large parts of which were established quite recently in the city while, at the same time, their members continue to be highly mobile and leave the city as soon as they can, since their opportunities for employment remain rather marginal.

4.4 Institutional links and responsiveness

4.4.1 Is there a fully established mechanism in place to ensure that public institutions respond and incorporate the migrant voice in their decision-making processes?

The basic institutional mechanism that is dedicated to controlling public response to migrants' voice is the local Migrant Integration Council, launched in 2021. Its agenda is

⁷⁴ <https://www.ioannina.gr/e-dimos/#>

open, as migrant representatives are free to suggest for discussion any issue they consider relevant. As noted, the main challenge for MIC is the relatively low participation from migrant communities. Additionally, there is no specific mechanism to ensure that even issues that find their way to MIC are actually taken into consideration in making decisions.

4.4.2 Are migrants consulted on key policy spheres such as housing, education, health and employment? On which issues are migrants consulted?

All policy spheres are meant to be discussed in the MIC. Additionally, migrants are also consulted in the Intercultural Centre for Social Integration "Akadimia", in which four related European projects are implemented, focusing on the social inclusion of third country nationals. Especially, the already mentioned project EMBRACE focuses on the activation of migrant communities and the empowerment of their members to participate in democratic processes as a channel for their integration. Another project is 'EPIC - European Platform of Integrating Cities'⁷⁵, which had as its main objective to strengthen the integration of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants at the local level by providing advisory services (translated into English, French, Arabic and Farsi) in dealing with administrative (or other) obstacles that hinder their access to the labour market. Also, Mol implements the project 'RaCIP - Raising Capacity for Inclusive People engaged in private Sponsorship'⁷⁶. Through the implementation of experimental actions for private sponsorships the project aims at providing support and strengthening the capacity of local societies to achieve sustainable solutions regarding the integration of refugees into the European communities, shifting part of the costs of refugee integration from the public sector to the private sector, expanding local networks of social organisations that implement pilot projects of private sponsorships at the national level,

Last, but not least, Mol implements the project 'MILE - Migrants Integration through Locally Designed Experiences'⁷⁷ which concerns the implementation of networking actions of municipal authorities and migrant communities. Some of its goals are: achieving a better understanding of the needs of municipalities and migrant and refugee communities in their local context, facilitating the political participation and leadership of migrants and refugees, and promoting the management of inclusive policy-making in municipalities.

Although participation in the projects is considered quite satisfactory, it is rather early to evaluate their results and the degree of change in attitudes towards participation and consultation. In general, the implementation of such projects for a specific period raises questions about the sustainability of these initiatives.

⁷⁵ <https://epicamif.eu/epic-project>

⁷⁶ <https://www.racip.eu>

⁷⁷ <https://mile-project.eu/>

4.4.3 To what degree are migrants represented in the city's consultative bodies, committees and issue-based groups? Are migrants involved in consultative bodies for key policy spheres?

Generally, as mentioned above, migrants and refugees are represented by their associations and do not participate individually in the MIC. Particularly, in the case of Ioannina, not all associations of migrants are represented in the MIC. The Albanian community for example is absent as they often consider themselves fully integrated. Also, women's participation is considered rather low due to lack of day-care child practices.

The establishment of MIC was preceded by an initiative of the Intercultural Centre for Social Integration, with the cooperation of UNHCR and IOM to organise a special training via focus group discussions with representatives and other members of the communities in the *Katsikas* Open Accommodation Facility. The key issue was how the representatives of the communities would be prepared to transfer issues to the MIC and how a feedback mechanism would be established to state their problems and / or queries to the competent bodies.

4.4.4 Can migrants set their own agenda or are the issues pre-selected by the local authority?

MIC is an important platform where migrants can have their voices heard. However, it seems to be rather difficult to set their own agenda because of the under-representation of some communities and the constant change of its members.

As many third country nationals consider Greece as a step closer to central or northern Europe, they leave the country as soon as they acquire all the necessary legal papers. Consequently, MIC members often change, causing discontinuity in the council's "requests" and concerns, thereby weakening its capacity to be heard. What is more, there is a difficulty of interpretation issues to be managed.

One prerequisite to register to the Migrant Integration Council is to belong to an officially recognized migrant association. Several migrant groups in Mol are not organised in an official association, either because of their small size (e.g. in the case of the African communities in Ioannina) or, according to informants in the focus groups, because some already established communities (e.g. the Albanian one) consider themselves as already integrated in the local society and seem unwilling to participate in MIC. This makes it hard to recruit representatives for MIC.

4.4.5 Are provisions in place to ensure that participation structures, such as consultative bodies, can feed into the mainstream policy process of relevant public authorities and get a considered and timely response?

At the moment, there are no specific institutional provisions to ensure that participation structures feed into the mainstream policy process. Any feedback from migrants' and refugees' participation (most notably in MIC) to relevant public authorities is circulated in a more informal way. This is done mainly through personal networks in the administration in which appointees with migrant integration portfolio play a key role.

4.5 Support for community self-organisation

4.5.1 *Does the city administration work with migrant associations?*

Mol administration works with existing migrant associations mainly in two ways. First, in order to attract representatives to take part in local MIC and, second, in the context of European Union funded projects that include related consultation mechanisms and bodies.

4.5.2 *Does the city administration support the self-organisation of migrant communities?*

The self-organisation of the community is similarly promoted in order to attract migrant representatives to participate in the local MIC and in the context of specific European projects. On the practical level, specific ways to enhance self-organisation are discussed in the Urban Working Group. Apart from direct contacts with (potential) representatives, these include the organisation of social events such as photo exhibitions and cinema festivals, where community members have the opportunity to meet each other in a public environment that is not confined by particular accommodation schemes.

4.5.3 *Are there funds or other support for organisational capacity building targeting migrants? Where does the funding come from and how sustainable are these funds in longer term?*

However, there is no regular funding reserved directly to support self-organisation of migrant associations. Funding from participation in specific projects is used instead.

4.5.4 *Does the city administration support intercultural dialogue and exchange between communities?*

The Intercultural Centre for Social Integration "Akadimia" is a place devoted to intercultural dialogue. It aims at improving living conditions through cooperation with all social services of the municipality and supports the evaluation of social welfare programmes. It also provides interpretation and intercultural mediation services for all the services and institutions of the Municipality and organises social and cultural activities, such as local fests and sports events.

4.6 Monitoring quality of participation schemes

4.6.1 *Does the city work with residents to improve activities promoted by its participation strategy at all levels, and to make it more effective? Is there regular monitoring and evaluation of these participation activities? Are the results of monitoring and evaluation publicised, and do they feed back into the process? What mechanism is in place to check the procedures and impact of participation schemes on a regular basis? How are changes to the participation schemes being decided?*

Migrant participation in Ioannina is monitored and evaluated in various *ad hoc* ways. The aforementioned Urban Working Group has been a forum in which participants from Mol administration, international organisations and local NGOs discuss and assess migrants' responsiveness to their initiatives and activities in an informal way. Activities that are

designed in the context of European projects have their own mechanisms of evaluation, dependent upon the funding schemes and project evaluation procedures. And the inclusion of activities directed to migrants and refugees in the Ioannina Strategic Plan means that these activities are going to be monitored and evaluated as part of the greater evaluation of the Mol Strategic Plan. However, at the moment, there is no comprehensive mechanism or set of regular procedures devoted specifically to the monitoring of the participation schemes as such. As a result, any changes to participation schemes are decided on the basis of emerging priorities, such as the departure of a community representative or the formation of a new collective association.

4.7 Resources for participation

4.7.1 Is the value of participation in public decision making by all communities recognised by the city? Is there adequate budgeting for staff time and training to support and facilitate residents' participation? Are grant programmes used to support residents in creating stable, inclusive activities and structures that can strengthen civic and political participation for the long term? Which resources does the city invest in provisions for participation? Are training opportunities for participants in place? Is there a secretariat or a similar support structure to support participants?

The value of participation in public decision making by all communities is generally recognised by Mol and the current Mayor. As the latter states in his interview for MILE⁷⁸, “the active participation of migrants and refugees in designing and carrying out local strategic planning in view of their social integration has been an added value for the implementation of active integration policies and has enhanced social cohesion”. At the same time, as discussed in the two focus groups that were organised for MILE in Ioannina, the value of diverse participation is also recognized by many actors of the city's civil society, and at least ‘tolerated’ by others. However, there are no explicit references to diverse participation in public decision making in the examined policy documents.

As mentioned above, the Municipality's participation in related European projects has provided the local administration with resources that were used effectively to reach migrant communities and to establish networks of communication and consultation. While this has been a great opportunity for experimentation with the participation of groups that are otherwise excluded from official local politics, the challenge remains whether such funding produces sustainable structures of participation. On the contrary, the regular budget of the Municipality is rather restricted and fiscal scarcity is an obstacle in implementing social policy.

4.8 Commitment to full political rights for all residents

4.8.1 Does the city actively lobby for granting / extending full local voting rights to their migrant population? What channels does the city use to make the case for extended political rights?

⁷⁸ M. Elisaf, Mayor of Ioannina, Interview for MILE project, 22/9/2022.

Full local voting rights to long-standing migrants (those possessing a long-term residence permit) were granted in Greece in 2009 but later cancelled, after a decision of the State Council (i.e. the Supreme Administrative Court) and never granted again.⁷⁹ Today, the Mayor and the administration of Mol are positive towards granting local voting rights to migrant residents of the city. As the Mayor puts it “the participation of migrants in local elections is essential to achieve social osmosis between migrants and local host communities. We cannot spend European funds on achieving the equal social integration of immigrants and at the same time deny them one of the most basic rights, that of voting and being elected”⁸⁰. However, Mol is not at the moment actively lobbying for that, since this issue remains excluded from the migration policy agenda, even during the rule of the previous left-wing government that implemented positive measures regarding migrants’ naturalisation at the national level.

⁷⁹ Kandylis, G. (2017) ‘Urban scenes of citizenship: inventing the possibility of immigrants’ citizenship in Athens’, *Citizenship Studies* 4: 468-482.

⁸⁰ M. Elisaf, Mayor of Ioannina, Interview for MILE project, 22/9/2022.

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Garcés-Masareñas, B. and R. Penninx (2016) *Integration Processes and Policies in Europe: Contexts, Levels and Actors*, Springer Open (eBook)

Igualtats Connect (2019) *Toolkit to incorporate intersectionality into local policies.*

⁸¹ The research conducted as part of this project was informed by these sources, providing a framework for evaluating existing integration, equality, diversity and civic participation policy and practice.

APPENDIX – List of primary data sources

Mayor of Ioannina	Interview
Mol staff members	Interviews (3)
Supervisor/ Mol Social Protection Directorate	Focus Group 1
IOM representative - Helios Programme Focal Point Coordinator	Focus Group 1
Mol Executive, EPIC Project (AMIF)	Focus Group 1
Social Worker in Mol "Housing - Employment" Programme	Focus Group 1
Representative of migrant community in Migrant Integration Council (MIC) / Iranian Community	Focus Group 1
Representative of migrant community in Migrant Integration Council (MIC) / Iranian Community	Focus Group 1
Cultural Mediator - ASB	Focus Group 1
UNHCR Focal Point Coordinator/ Member of the Urban Working Group	Focus Group 2
Mol's Community centre Representative/ "Arsis" Coordinator	Focus Group 2
Project Manager for Mol/RaCIP Project (AMIF)	Focus Group 2
Project Manager for Mol /EMBRACE Project (AMIF) & TEVA Programme	Focus Group 2
Mol's Executive, EPIC Project (AMIF)	Focus Group 2