

How social innovation is shaping migration in the times of COVID-19

HELLO
EUROPE

an initiative by:

ASHOKA

The COVID-19 pandemic has had both a positive and a negative impact on migration, but most importantly it has served as an impetus to rethink and change the way migration policies are designed.

During the first stage of the pandemic, we saw governments around the world closing their borders in an unprecedented way. This has had enormous implications for the processing of asylum applications and refugee resettlement, with both almost coming to a halt for months, putting asylum seekers and refugees in greater danger.

While some governments have used the global pandemic as a pretext to further harden anti-migration policies and bolster nationalist agendas, others have taken a positive approach by reducing the use of detention, improving reception standards, and granting a large number of migrants and refugees rights to work, housing and healthcare.

At the same time, the solidarity shown by citizens around the world has been accompanied by a general realization of the contribution that refugees and migrants make to our societies, including in times of crisis, as many of them have helped address the pandemic as workers in essential services.

As we leave the worst behind us, we will need everyone's contribution to accelerate the pace of the social and economic recovery, while making sure that no one is left behind. Social innovation is playing a key role in devising the solutions that will guide an inclusive, empowering and sustainable recovery.

HELLO EUROPE'S RESPONSE

At the outbreak of the pandemic, Hello Europe gathered its community of social entrepreneurs to work on the design of an innovative collective response to the migration challenges posed by COVID-19. The result has been a multi-faceted blueprint for rethinking and transforming the way migration is managed and conceived based on impactful and proven solutions that address the different phases of the migration journey. A key aspect to all of these solutions is the aim to recognize and further activate migrants and citizens as changemakers, with the confidence and tools to create and lead change in their communities.

Over the past year, we have worked with the most relevant [solutions](#) translating them into policy recommendations. Additionally, we have connected their leaders with

policymakers and other key stakeholders through policy salons in order to co-create policies that build on those solutions to achieve meaningful, long term change. Below, we summarize the outcome and impact of these conversations in building a new framework for migration where collaboration and innovation lie at the heart of policy change.

REINVENTING THE MASS ACCOMMODATION APPROACH

SOCIAL INNOVATORS LEADING THE CONVERSATION: Daniel Kerber, Ashoka Fellow and founder of More than Shelters, and Inge Missmahl, Ashoka Fellow and founder of Ipso.

POLICY SALON: Reinventing the mass accommodation paradigm: how to build inclusive and dignified reception centers? held on 26 May 2020.

POLICY ACTION: Turning mass accommodation settings into innovative hubs that address the psycho-social needs of refugees and asylum seekers while fostering their self-development.

Currently, 80 million people are forcibly displaced worldwide, half of which have crossed an international border to find safety in another country. Refugees often live a precarious existence at the margins of society staying in a limbo state for generations, at the cost of their self-development potential and psychosocial well-being. The public health crisis has made their situation even more desperate with prospects for resettlement reaching historic limits and border violence becoming normalized.

Those who have been placed in a refugee shelter during COVID-19 have faced particular difficulties to uphold the public health guidelines for the pandemic. The living conditions most refugees and asylum seekers are exposed to in mass accommodation already lacked decent standards before the spread of the virus. But now, the virtually non-existent privacy, overcrowded capacity, lack of proper hygiene and limited access to adequate healthcare has disproportionately increased their risk of contagion.

The pandemic has once again reminded us of the need to [transform the way mass accommodation centers are conceived and implemented](#) while ensuring the psychosocial health of refugees. At the heart of the

problem lies in an outdated approach to how mass accommodation works. It was originally designed with the intention of being a temporary shelter to accommodate people on the move for less than 12 months. Currently, however, many refugees ended up staying in them for years and even decades with direly limited prospects for a new life. Alternative models, like that of Ashoka Fellow and founder of [More than Shelters](#) [Daniel Kerber](#), are transforming shelters into places of opportunity. These models provide a human-centered accommodation approach that promotes the talents and skills of refugees, encouraging their self-agency and integration in their current living environment. One of Kerber's innovative approaches, known as the "Integration Hub", also provides a social and spatial component facilitating refugees' and receiving communities' connection to one another within a neighbourhood.

Since 2004, [Inge Missmahl](#), another Ashoka Fellow, has been treating mental health cases of people in (post) conflict situations by building a network of psychosocial counselors from diverse cultural backgrounds. The counseling provided by [Ipsa](#) aims to shift the victim mentality into a growth mentality that allows refugees and migrants become active participants in and shapers of society. Despite being mainly active in Afghanistan and Germany, Ipsa e-care was launched in 2014 to offer online psychosocial support in eight languages.

Housing is a key, foundational, element of a promising integration process. Addressing the physical and psychosocial needs of refugees and asylum seekers will facilitate their successful integration in the host community. This is essential to maximizing the opportunities of legal migration and making the most of the contributions that immigration can provide for EU development. The blueprint for changing how accommodation is provided to newcomers is ready; it just needs to be applied.

A ROADMAP TO LOCAL INCLUSION IN THE AGE OF COVID-19

SOCIAL INNOVATOR LEADING THE

CONVERSATION: David Lubell, Ashoka Fellow and founding director of Welcoming International.

POLICY SALON: Re-build better: Helping European towns and cities reinvent themselves into more inclusive and socially cohesive places held on 25 June 2020.

POLICY ACTION: Rebuilding European towns and cities into more inclusive and socially cohesive places.

As the coronavirus pandemic spread across Europe in the first half of 2020, many cities had to drastically readjust services to the needs of their population, and especially those in the most vulnerable situations, many of whom have a migrant background. A successful COVID-19 recovery will largely depend on how inclusive the response will be. As key integration stakeholders, cities must develop forward-looking integration policies that take into account the diversity of their local populations. Failing to do so will result in greater economic inequalities and squandered human potential.

The recipe for a more prosperous and resilient recovery requires an inclusive response to address the barriers that migrants, refugees and other marginalized communities are facing during these times. The International Welcoming movement led by Ashoka Fellow [David Lubell](#) has been laying down the [foundations of this response](#), helping cities across Europe and other parts of the world re-design themselves into more inclusive, socially cohesive places. Together with the OECD, the Migration Policy Group, and the Council of Europe/Intercultural Cities, they have developed the [Local Inclusion Action Tool](#) (LIAT) conceived as a guide and impact measurement tool to enact inclusion policies and practices in cities and local communities.

The LIAT contributes to achieving the goals of the Global Compact on Migration, as well as the [EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion](#), by providing policymakers and other stakeholders at the local level with action-oriented recommendations and metrics to measure them with, in order to put in practice inclusive policies, ensuring that all people arriving and living in the EU have the opportunity to build a dignified life and to actively participate in society. This tool has already been used as a resource by various cities across the world, and it is now also being used by researchers involved in [Whole-COMM](#), an EU funded project that promotes scientific knowledge about the dynamics and causal mechanisms that influence the complex relationship between integration policies and Community cohesion.

To achieve a successful recovery, these actions need to be accompanied by a new strategy on social cohesion, which can build upon the sentiments of solidarity experienced during the initial stages of the COVID-19 outbreak, especially towards those who stood at the forefront, carrying out essential work and caring for the most affected. The mass protest-movements that took place last year around the world remind us that racism and inequalities continue to pervade our societies. Acknowledging this as a structural problem and taking an intersectional approach to address its root causes, while mainstreaming anti-racism across all EU policy domains, including migration, will constitute a necessary step towards building welcoming and inclusive communities.

A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY TO EXPAND LEGAL AND LABOUR MIGRATION

SOCIAL INNOVATOR LEADING THE

CONVERSATION: Gonzalo Fanjul, Ashoka Fellow and co-founder of porCausa.

POLICY SALONS: [Migration Reset: COVID-19, migrants' regularization, and the future of international labour mobility](#) held on 16 September 2020 and [Expanding Labour Migration to Europe: a multi-stakeholder vision](#) held on 17 February 2021.

POLICY ACTION: Seizing the opportunity that labour migration brings to our societies by investing in regular channels for migration.

International mobility has been one of the main casualties

of the pandemic. At the same time, mobility is one of the essential building blocks of the recovery and growth of our economy. As Europe sees its population ageing dramatically, a comprehensive labor market reform that attracts immigrants from all skill levels has become more urgent than ever. As Ashoka Fellow and [porCausa](#) co-founder, [Gonzalo Fanjul](#) foretells, [a window of opportunity to fix our labor markets opens now](#).

Having been at the forefront of the pandemic response providing services and care, the COVID-19 crisis has deepened our understanding of migrants' essential roles and contribution to society. On average [13% of workers](#) in key occupations in the EU, in both low and high-skilled jobs, are immigrants. During the pandemic, some countries decided to grant temporary work permits to undocumented migrants in sectors where labour is needed or specific skills are in demand, while others are considering to introduce similar measures in the future. In fact, as a [recent study reveals](#), fully integrating migrants into the labour market could generate large economic gains for our societies.

This should be the starting point of a more ambitious policy reform process where innovative models for human mobility and labor migration are designed and implemented. The [EU Pact on Migration and Asylum](#) includes sections on increasing labour migration from third countries to plug skills gaps across Europe and create regular pathways for migration. This presents an opportunity to shift from a deterrence-focused approach to one that builds on the benefits of legal migration to meet Europe's demographic needs. In coalition with key organizations and allies, Hello Europe is contributing to lay down the [foundations of the new institutional architecture](#) that the EU needs to build to develop legal pathways and promote migrant integration.

MIGRANT ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

SOCIAL INNOVATORS LEADING THE CONVERSATION: Nicolai Strøm-Olsen and Maria Amelie, co-founders of Startup Migrants.

POLICY WORKSHOP: Ongoing conversation to create a Migrant Entrepreneurship Cluster to support scaling throughout Europe.

POLICY ACTION: Addressing barriers to migrant entrepreneurship by developing talent pipelines to scale for growth.

As unemployment has surged globally due to the pandemic, migrant entrepreneurs are set to play a key role in the recovery of the economy and society by building companies and creating jobs. As our Hellopreneur organization [Startup Migrants](#) shows, in most European countries [migrants are often more entrepreneurial than local entrepreneurs](#). Many of them find in entrepreneurship their only way of making a living. Despite managing to succeed in most cases, the road to entrepreneurship is not an easy one.

The entrepreneurial rate among migrants in Europe

changes significantly from country to country. During the pandemic, countries where starting a business is easy have seen a rise in entrepreneurship levels, such as in the UK, Norway and Sweden, whereas it has fallen in Germany, Denmark and The Netherlands. In this regard, countries where the local entrepreneurial ecosystem is well established are also likely to see a larger number of migrant founders. But there is another more important element that explains this correlation. Countries with higher migrant entrepreneurship success tend to also have an above average talent discovery pipeline, which identifies and connects talent to the business community.

A number of organizations in our network are providing solutions to enable migrants to increase value to their communities and helping municipalities and governments identify talent to boost business creation. However, the fragmentation of Europe's entrepreneurial ecosystem limits the potential of faster and more dynamic economic growth. The EU should financially support the scaling-up and replication of these type of initiatives as a source of business talent and drive new policies that make entrepreneurship more accessible for migrants. This, in turn, will contribute to a more nuanced and positive perception of migrants by showing the powerful contributions they can make in our communities.

DEVELOPING INNOVATIVE CROSS-SECTORAL PARTNERSHIPS

SOCIAL INNOVATORS LEADING THE CONVERSATION: David Lubell, Ashoka Fellow and founding director of Welcoming International, and Daniel Kerber, Ashoka Fellow and founder of More than Shelters.

POLICY WORKSHOP: Creating positive change in the field of migration through cross-sectoral collaboration held on 17 December 2020 in collaboration with GRSI.

POLICY ACTION: Inspiring cross-sectoral collaborations to help refugees (re)settle in a welcoming and inclusive society.

Long-term solutions often require cross-sectoral multi-stakeholder collaborations. In particular, public-private partnerships between government, civil society and the private sector have the potential to be catalysts for change when modeled on social innovation.

Together with the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (GRSI), Hello Europe has been exploring such partnerships and modalities of collaboration aimed at proposing innovative solutions on refugee protection and inclusion. While experimenting at the intersection of community sponsorship and social entrepreneurship, we found that empowering local communities and increasing local capacity building is key to scale community sponsorship while creating positive societal narratives.

Ashoka fellow David Lubell is showing how social entrepreneurship can contribute to create community sponsorship models that build on local welcoming policies. Lubell is pioneering a project which aims to connect the welcoming and refugee sponsorship movements by engaging its leaders in the design of a

cross-sector collaborative initiative that builds capacity for institutionalizing sponsorship and welcoming policies at the local level. Other powerful initiatives within Hello Europe's network, like Daniel Kerber's "[Integration Hub](#)", are also implementing multi-stakeholder collaborative tools to advance the inclusion of migrants and refugees, maximising the mutually beneficial value of these type of non-traditional partnerships.

CHANGEMAKING AS A DRIVER FOR A NEW MIGRATION PARADIGM

As seen during the pandemic, migrants and refugees can become change agents that contribute to the recovery process. At Hello Europe, we are building the [next generation of leaders](#) with migrant and minority backgrounds. However, barriers to their leadership are still very present. To lower these barriers, we need a mindset shift that acknowledges and unleashes the potential of migration and migrant communities.

When supported by appropriate policies, migration can contribute to address the main challenges faced by our societies, from the demographic decline and labour shortage to rising inequalities and social injustice. The social innovation initiatives pioneered by Hello Europe show that a different migration paradigm is possible.

We are building this new paradigm on the basis of our growing [portfolio of solutions](#) developed by our community of social entrepreneurs. We have started a co-creation process with policymakers and different stakeholders across sectors to translate these solutions into policy initiatives. We are beginning to see the initial results and we are excited about the potential that social innovation can bring into designing more effective and welcoming migration policies.

Changing the paradigm will require time but as our societies adapt to the changes brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, we should use this window to revisit migration policies and align them with its untapped potential.

What is Hello Europe?

Hello Europe is an Ashoka initiative that aims to become the collective voice of innovative, empowering citizen solutions in the field of migration. We strive to provide a vision of the kind of work happening in Europe and around the globe which is creating a better society for people on the move as well as for those who meet them. We work in three main areas:

SCALING: Identifying and spreading proven impactful citizen solutions to regions most in need.

POLICY: Bridging the gap between social entrepreneurs and the public and policy sector.

NARRATIVE: Changing the narrative by ensuring that migrants and their stories are at the centre of the conversations.

During COVID-19, we quickly pivoted our strategy. In addition to providing direct support to the solutions we work with across Europe and shifting our ongoing accelerator programs (in Greece and Poland) to meet the needs of solutions, we focused on three additional goals:

- 1. Policy change:** we gathered our community and identified key needs and opportunities to improve the lives of migrants, and gathered policy makers and other key stakeholders around them to co-create solutions. This is what we summarize above.
- 2. Empowering leaders from a migrant background:** many of the most impactful solutions during COVID-19 came from leaders within migrant communities. Thus, we jumpstarted a pilot program called [Changemakers for Migration](#) in Spain to map out, select and support changemakers and early stage social entrepreneurs with a migrant background to activate them as change leaders within their communities as well as to increase their visibility and access to resources in the social entrepreneurship ecosystem. This community now consists of 30 leaders in Spain, and we are currently fundraising to launch a Europe-wide initiative to do the same.
- 3. Scaling the model:** We adapted and replicated Hello Europe's model, aimed at selecting, presenting and scaling citizen-sector solutions to COVID-19 related problems. Ashoka launched the [Changemakers United](#) initiative in Europe, which was quickly replicated in Latin America, Africa and Asia, to directly support and help scale successful innovations around COVID-19. We also scaled a Hello Europe accelerator to Latin America by launching [Hola Argentina](#), which is now becoming a continent-wide program to identify, select and scale solutions around migration.

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Hello Europe's policy unit in numbers

We have created new spaces and resources for social entrepreneurs to take the driver's seat and engage with policymakers to co-design policy.



14
countries of
implementation



100
solutions selected to
take part in Hello Europe

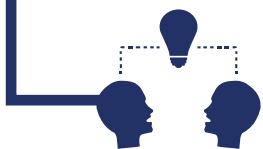
✦ We have taken part in key consultations on the future of EU migration and integration policies.

✦ We have produced key recommendations and solutions to Covid-19 impact on migration and inclusion.

✦ We have become members of central expert working groups of the EU institutions on migration policy.

WE HAVE ORGANIZED

1 EXCLUSIVE HIGH-LEVEL POLICYMAKERS SALON &
4 PUBLIC POLICY SALONS.



OVER
500

Policymakers and other stakeholders have been reached and we have started to co-create policy with them.



We have built coalitions and partnerships across sectors and established collaborative policy projects.

Concrete policy proposals have emerged and been taken up institutionally to shape new narratives around migration.

Concepts like "changemakers" & "social innovation" are now being recognized and used by other stakeholders and policymakers in the migration space.