



## Deliverable

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### **D6.5 Final report on stakeholders’ engagement and communication effectiveness**

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# 1. Introduction

The MUST-a-Lab project aims to establish a new approach for the systemic and sustainable involvement of migrants and asylum seekers in policy making by creating Policy Labs in six partner cities across six different European countries. The project addresses the need to bring together stakeholders and migrants in order to design innovative policy strategies for effective social and cultural integration at the local level. To pursue its goals, MUST-a-Lab adopts the Policy Lab methodology to foster a long-term involvement of migrants in participatory democratic initiatives. Each Policy Lab (PL) concentrates on specific challenges identified by each of the municipalities on the basis of a common discussion during the early stages of the PL lifecycle. The whole dialogic and experimental process is guided by a responsive evaluation, while a substantial communication and dissemination activity is put in action to generate attention and enable systematisation and replication of the PLs methodology at the local and European levels.

MUST-a-Lab had a duration of 36 months and foresaw the participation of the city of Mechelen in Belgium (coordinator of the project), the city of Vienna in Austria, the Koinofelis Epicheirisi Dimou of Livadia in Greece, the Ayuntamiento de Fuenlabrada in Spain, the Grenoble Alpes Métropole in France and the city of Modena in Italy. The Karel de Grote Hogeschool (Belgium), the University of Modena and Reggio-Emilia (Italy), the International Institute of Humanitarian Law (Italy) and the Forum des Régions Europeennes pour la Recherche en Education et Formation (France) were also part of the consortium as support for the methodology development and implementation.

The *Final report on stakeholders' engagement and communication effectiveness* is a deliverable aimed at illustrating the activities implemented within the International Stakeholders Reference Group (ISRG) and the six Local Stakeholders Reference Groups (LSRGs), along with the ones directed at communicating and promoting the project approach, objectives, principles and concrete actions carried out by the consortium. Furthermore, the report's intent is also to reflect on the perceived impact of these activities within the partnership, in order to explore possible ways of improvement. The report naturally builds on the insights and observations of the Mid-term report (D6.4).

The report therefore starts with a thorough analysis of the collaboration between the partners and the different LSRGs (section 2.1), thus elaborating an overall reflection on the role of these bodies from the partners' perspectives through a section (2.2) devoted to a set of questions directly posed to them by the WP6 coordinator IIHL. Moving from the local level to the transnational one, Chapter 3 of the present report then illustrates the preliminary steps undertaken by the consortium to consolidate the ISRG and integrate its presence into the overall operational framework of the project (sections 3.1 and 3.2).

Chapter 4 finally shifts the focus of the report to the communication activities, carried out by the consortium under the coordination of the DCE (Dissemination, Communication and Exploitation) Working Group. Following a first analysis of the dissemination actions run by the partnership during the first half of the project, specific paragraphs are eventually dedicated to the partners' views of the ongoing dissemination effort, collected by the International

Institute of Humanitarian Law through a further list of direct

questions.

The document ends with substantial conclusions on the state-of-the-art of the WP6-related activities, resuming the most important elements of the report, paving the way for ameliorations in the collaboration among partners and describing the next developments envisaged by the project in terms of stakeholders' engagement and communication activities.

## **2. The Local Stakeholders Reference Groups: composition and role in MUST-a-Lab**

The successful implementation of the Policy Labs (PL) approach hinges on the key principles of active involvement of stakeholders, fostering collaboration and co-creation of ideas, and thorough understanding of others' perspectives. All these elements are exemplified by the **Local Stakeholders Reference Group (LSRG)**, a collective of local stakeholders who play a pivotal role in the PL process by actively contributing to their implementation through the provision of ideas, expertise, and insights at the local level. The PL approach itself indeed is a methodology designed to address policy challenges through a participatory process, serving as a platform for stakeholders to engage in dialogue, exchange of ideas, and collective formulation of policy proposals by taking advantage of diverse viewpoints and experiences. As they were described in the project proposal, the LSRGs constitute the **stakeholders' pools from which the participants of the Policy Labs are identified, as well as the natural groups in which the Policy Lab participants check the feasibility of the new solutions drafted during the PL sessions**. They serve, in this latter sense, as a "second circle" around the Policy Labs, facilitating the experimentation of new solutions and the validation of success criteria for the proposed innovations through both substantial support and technical analysis.

As envisaged by Task 6.5, all six local partners identified and engaged the selected members of the LSRGs, previously listed in Deliverable 6.3 within the Local Plan for Stakeholders Involvement, while five of them (with the exception of Grenoble Alpes Métropole) gathered the members twice between March and May 2023. As for Grenoble Alpes Métropole, the members of the LSRG were identified and the group is about to be gathered at the moment of writing the present report (the meeting is expected to take place in summer/late summer 2023). In this regards, it is relevant to stress that the proactive efforts of the French project team were remarkable in addressing the natural timing issues of late involvement in the project and ensuring the necessary arrangements were made to catch up with the other partners' common timeline. Thanks to such shared efforts, it appears clear how the project can continue to progress smoothly and maintain a strong foundation for stakeholder involvement and collaboration.

The members of the LSRGs demonstrated in the majority of local contexts their commitment to the PL approach through their active participation, by engaging in various activities, facilitating the recruitment of participants, offering feedback, and proposing collaborative initiatives. Their contributions proved invaluable as they helped shaping methodologies and provided suggestions for the effective transitioning from the experimental projects to the actual policy implementation. Although there might have been initial challenges in engaging certain important institutions, those who did participate at the local levels demonstrated in all the countries an active commitment to the participatory process, showing their firm willingness to address the concerns raised by migrant individuals.

It is moreover relevant to highlight how the work of the LSRGs is interwoven with the PLs' cycles. For instance, in the Austrian context in Vienna, a two-group approach was

implemented, separating the Policy Lab participants from the LSRG. This approach allowed a wide range of stakeholders to be involved while accommodating the time constraints faced by civil servants. Grassroots stakeholders, NGOs, associations, experts, and other relevant parties were invited to the respective groups, ensuring a balanced representation and fostering inclusivity.

Another example comes from Fuenlabrada (Spain), where active stakeholders with a history of policy review were emphasised. Although these stakeholders may not be accustomed to a PL approach (and its specific rules of procedure), the LSRGs easily adapted to the project concept and provided valuable contributions from their unique and multi-layered perspective.

The above-mentioned examples are just two of many highlighting the importance of structured stakeholders' involvement and collaboration in MUST-a-Lab, which is key for the successful implementation of the PL approach. The active participation of the LSRGs, their relevance to the participatory process, and their contributions indeed are instrumental to ensuring the effectiveness and inclusivity of the PL methodology.

## **2.1. The first two LSRGs' meetings in Mechelen, Vienna, Modena, Livadia and Fuenlabrada**

Section 2.1 aims at providing the reader with an overview of the LSRG-related activities implemented by the different partners at the local levels. While the next paragraphs' main objective is to stress some of the most important features of the work carried out with local stakeholders, more detailed information concerning the individual sessions is available in Annex 1.

### **Mechelen**

The **first gathering of the LSRG** in Mechelen took place on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March 2023 and saw the participation of 10 people, mainly from civil society associations but diverse in terms of age-range and cultural background. The facilitators of the Policy Labs consulted the group about their decision not to provide scientific insights on diversity and education in the first Lab. The aim was to encourage independent idea generation. However, in the second Lab, the LSRG expressed interest in integrating scientific knowledge with their conclusions.

The LSRG cautioned against an excessive emphasis on innovation, suggesting a balance with practical and recognizable approaches. Innovative approaches to engaging parents with a migration background were discussed, emphasising the importance of a welcoming environment in schools and genuine connection, safety, and individual interest in all parents. The meeting also addressed creating diversity among teachers, fostering authenticity in supporting students and considering students' home situations. Strategies included culturally sensitive policies, support for interns and teachers, and avoiding a patronising approach. Ideas such as study days, training sessions, and collaboration with existing projects were proposed. The LSRG also suggested involving a regional coordinator for education at a later stage.

The **second meeting of LSRG in Mechelen** was attended by seven of its members and was split into two dates: the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup> of June 2023. The LSRG was consulted about the results of the second PL, held on March 30th, and the selected experiments for the project were discussed. The experiments include various activities such as establishing a **buddy system for**

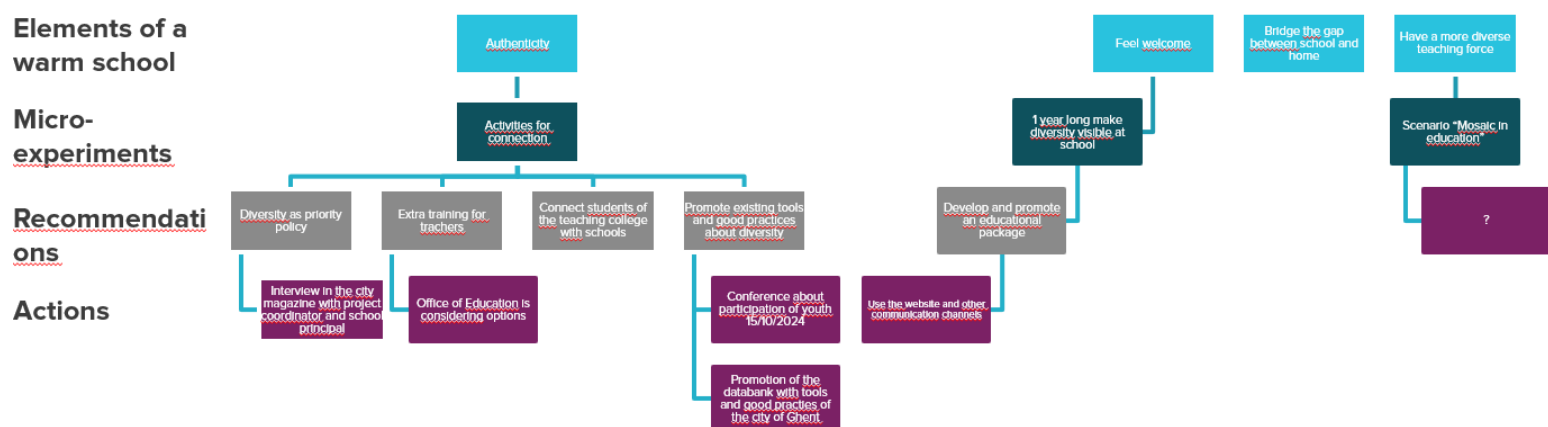
**parents**, making diversity visible in the classroom throughout the year, organising a talent day where pupils showcase their skills to teachers, facilitating **joint learning activities** for parents and children, creating a Facebook group for parents, and using Tik Tok videos to promote the teaching profession. Feedback on the experiments revealed that schools are currently working independently on their respective experiments, with the project Coordinator providing support when needed. Participants acknowledged that this autonomy can be beneficial, allowing experiments to develop organically within each school. However, it was also noted that this approach might result in the experiments taking on a life of their own and potentially deviating from the project's overall goals.

The experiments were praised for their inclusive nature and focus on prevention. However, concerns were raised that the absence of explicit mention of racism and discrimination might hinder the ability to address these issues effectively. The importance of naming and addressing such challenges was emphasised, while recognizing that the experiments aimed to work on conditions that prevent racism and discrimination rather than solely focusing on remediation. The meeting addressed the transition from experiments to policy, recognizing the challenges of determining when an experiment can be considered successful and how to implement successful experiments on a broader scale.

**The third meeting of the LSRG** took place on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2023, and in it participants discussed three micro-experiments conducted.

Finally, a **fourth gathering of the LSRG** took place on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2024 to present an overview of the project up to that point and to answer any clarifying questions from the members of the LSRG.

Overall, the meetings provided a platform for valuable discussions and insights into the ongoing experiments and their potential impact on policy development.



## Vienna

The **first LSRG** meeting in Vienna focused on key topics such as **"majority society" and "marginalised groups," human rights awareness, and the fields of action for the LSRG project.** Participants emphasised the need for an intersectional perspective when considering target groups, taking into account factors like ethnicity, gender, age, poverty, and single parenthood. They advocated for solidarity and inclusivity in society.

Empowerment and the creation of inclusive social spaces were identified as crucial for



marginalised groups, with participants stressing the importance of providing services for all community members rather than solely focusing on ethnic backgrounds. The meeting also highlighted the significance of practical approaches to human rights awareness and education, such as workshops for teachers and discussions on diversity, migration, and inclusion in schools. Successful projects like school social work and mobile care at schools were shared as examples. The meeting identified combined offers as an area requiring further development, suggesting the integration of various topics and complementary approaches to address existing gaps. Challenges related to funding and resources were discussed, emphasising the need for continuity and sustainability in project implementation.

The **second LSRG meeting** featured feedback on **three micro experiments**: "open school café," "social media campaign on human rights," and "job perspectives for young people." Recommendations for the open school café project included defining specific and measurable goals, involving role models, promoting contact between school and parents, and incorporating children in organising events. Attention to cultural diversity in the food offerings and involvement of parents' associations were also suggested.

For the social media campaign on human rights, outsourcing implementation to a PR agency with input from the policy lab members was recommended. Inclusive role models and direct engagement with the target group, especially young people, were emphasised. The project's scope was questioned, suggesting a focus on the local context and collaboration with experts in human rights. Regarding the job perspectives project, addressing occupational restrictions faced by specific groups and including individuals with difficult backgrounds, such as those who have been to prison, was recommended. Raising awareness of exclusionary application procedures and involving employers, vocational schools, and job fairs were also highlighted. The project was seen as an opportunity to create a shared platform and establish connections for young people.

The outcomes and possibilities for continuation were presented at the 3<sup>rd</sup> policy lab on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2023, with the participation of project partners, expert panels, and city officials.

The **third LSRG meeting** was held on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2024, to summarise progress up to that point and to discuss the three micro-experiments. The activities of the open school café were deemed successful and continuation of the format was encouraged, following new recommendations such as organising a roundtable with the relevant districts and departments of the City of Vienna, and approaching a carrier organisation and teacher training institutions to implement school cafés in their contexts. For the social media campaign, recommendations focused on exploring new possibilities for cooperation which would ensure a diverse coverage and the use of different media platforms to reach all target groups; possible partners included the Children's Rights Network, Vienna's youth centres, the department for youth and education, the ZIB channel and the PolEdu association. It was also recommended to offer further training courses on media skills and human rights for youth and social workers, via the Institute for Leisure Education. For the experiment on job perspectives, it was strongly advised to promote the results of the project to decisionmakers and potential partners such as the Chamber of Commerce, employment centres and companies within the district.

## **Modena**

The **LSRG first meeting**, held on March 3, 2023, had a diverse range of participants, including councillors, representatives from various offices and organisations, facilitators, and project

coordinators. The main goals of the Policy Labs were highlighted, focusing on listening to the needs of young migrants and ensuring equal participation for everyone involved. The Municipality of Modena suggested three specific topics for young people: orientation and training for employment, participation in voluntary associations, and using sports as an inclusion tool. The results of the first Policy Lab were presented, identifying several problems such as the lack of Italian language skills among newcomers, limited knowledge of labour laws, long waiting times for legal documents, and a lack of effective communication and information services for migrants. During the meeting, the LSRG members raised questions, suggestions, and expressed their willingness to collaborate. These discussions showcased the active engagement and commitment of the LSRG members to address integration challenges and improve the support and opportunities available to young migrants in Modena.

The **second meeting**, held on March 12, 2023, focused on the results of Policy Lab 2, highlighting the priorities chosen by the participants, including communication and information, Italian language acquisition, labour law knowledge, job opportunities for students, and the marginal role of voluntary work and sports. The participants faced difficulties in finding concrete solutions during PL2, leading to Italian stakeholders taking over and some micro-experiments targeting Italian operators instead of young people with migratory backgrounds. The training of volunteers was discussed, acknowledging the challenges involved. A recent partnership between CPIA and voluntary associations was established to teach Italian to migrants, and the need for training volunteers was expressed. Effective communication and information dissemination were emphasised, with suggestions to allocate a significant portion of the budget to communication efforts and use infographics and maps for better outreach. Simplified training sessions on labour law basics were proposed, with unions expressing their willingness to collaborate. The creation of an online notice board for job offers, including under qualified jobs suitable for students, was suggested. The meetings reinforced the commitment of LSRG members to address integration challenges and improve the support available to young migrants in Modena.

The **third meeting of the LSRG** was held on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2024. The micro-experiments carried out previously were presented: the training on labour and migration law was considered useful and interesting but had a low turnout, demanding a reflection on how to increase participation; on the other hand, the training for volunteers to teach Italian to migrants was a success with twice as many registrations as available places and positive feedback from participants. Overall, the importance and effectiveness of policy labs was highlighted, especially noting that the topics initially proposed by the Sport and Youth Office (job orientation, volunteering and sport) were set aside by the participants with a migrant background, who instead brought to light more urgent issues such as communication and access to services, knowledge of the Italian language and labour law: this demonstrated the importance of listening and participation in decision making to effectively address citizens' problems.

**Livadia**

The **first LSRG meeting**, held on March 15, 2023, began with the Mayor expressing gratitude for participants' involvement and highlighting the municipality's participation in the MUST-a-Lab project. The concept of Policy Labs, focusing on Health, Education, Employment, and Access to Public Services, was discussed. Deficiencies and proposals identified in the first Policy Lab were presented, including communication problems, lack of nursing staff, limited job opportunities, and issues with migrants' certificates and documents.

Proposed solutions included feedback and cooperation between public and health services, translation of medical documents, needs for a mapping of employers, preparatory Greek lessons for migrants, and recruiting mediators/translators. The meeting concluded with an agreement on the need for a mediation office, recruitment of mediators/translators, and cooperation between organisations. The importance of Education in integration programs was emphasised, and the results were documented, setting the stage for the 2<sup>nd</sup> LSRG Meeting on May 29, 2023. The **second meeting** welcomed nine participants, including the Mayor and key stakeholders. The Project Coordinator provided an update, mentioning the analysis of proposals from the first Lab and the introduction of micro-experiments. The micro-experiment planned for Livadia aimed to enhance communication between stakeholders and migrants. Proposals and good practices from the second Policy Lab were presented, emphasising the need for an office with specialised personnel for migrants and improved communication channels.

A Communication Strategy using social media, specifically a Facebook page/group, was introduced to disseminate information and foster interaction. The strategy would be implemented as a pilot project, featuring activities such as information uploads, live discussions, and voting polls. Suggestions were made regarding group administration, expanding participation, and promoting the project on the Municipality's website. The need for digital technology courses for migrants and the suggestion of a Job Fair involving stakeholders were also discussed.

The meeting concluded with various ideas, including the Communication Strategy, voluntary digital courses, and the Job Fair, to be explored further in upcoming project team meetings.

The **third LSRG meeting** took place on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2023. Project partners presented the suggestions raised with micro-experiments: it was recommended to enhance the social media presence of public services and to maintain the project's Facebook group, making information easily accessible to all. Several proposals addressed developing courses and information sessions for migrants and third-country nationals, especially on citizenship exams and enrolment in schools. Finally, it was recommended to improve the range and distribution of local services by having specialised Citizens' Service Centres, registry offices and information points.

A **fourth meeting** was held on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2024 to present progress made in the previous months. Digital communication was an important topic: the project's Facebook group proved to be successful, raising interest from both migrants and local stakeholders, and it was recommended that the Municipality assist with maintaining and disseminating the group's activity. Other plans included revamping the Municipality's website to share information more easily and creating a digital brochure on public services for migrants and third-country nationals. A point was made on support to vulnerable groups for housing, establishing a connection with the "KALIPSI" programme for rent subsidies. A tech course for migrants was completed with success, but continuation is at risk due to lack of qualified teachers and staff, and appropriate equipment: it is essential to obtain funding for this course. The Education and Lifelong

Learning Department launched several non-formal education programs to empower vulnerable groups, migrants and third-country nationals, and established a Centre for Creative Activities of Children with the aim to enhance the inclusion of children with a migrant background.

Overall, these meetings provided a platform for fruitful discussions and the Municipality's commitment to engaging stakeholders and civil society for improving quality of life and social integration strategies was evident throughout the meetings.

### **Fuenlabrada**

The **first LSRG** meeting in Fuenlabrada took place on May 4, 2023, from 7 to 9 pm. Various organisations and representatives were present, including the Islamic Cultural Center, Al UMMA Youth Association, Dominican Association, Diversity Policing Team, Fuenlabrada City Council, Scout Youth Association, and more. Some organisations were absent from the meeting. The agenda included a presentation of the conclusions and achievements of PL1 and PL2, and a discussion of the next steps. The objective of the Policy Lab was also reiterated. A police officer from GEDISPOL inquired about the representation of migrants in the Policy Lab, and it was clarified that more than 50% of the group members were local youths of migrant descent. The main challenges identified by young people in the Policy Lab were presented. These challenges included barriers in communication between young people and the administration, a sense of distance from the administration, the importance of fostering a common identity among young people of different backgrounds, and economic challenges such as employment, training, and financial independence. PL1 focused on analysing the elements that influence access to participation and delimiting the scope of action within micro-experimentation, while PL2 involved analysing the needs identified as barriers to participation and evaluating different actions. The outcomes of PL2 included the creation of an intermediate group between the administration and youth, collaboration in the implementation of debate laboratories and the youth plenary session, preparation of a survey to collect proposals from young people on youth participation, and the collection and analysis of youth participation proposals for future policy incorporation.

The **second LSRG meeting** took place on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2023, discussing two micro-experiments conducted within the project. The group worked to involve young people with a migrant background in the development of Debate Labs with the Fuenlabrada Table of coexistence, addressing issues of identity and cultural barriers, with particular attention given to the online dissemination of these activities. The group also worked to improve Fuenlabrada's campaign for the collection of youth proposals, with contributions from the stakeholders to define specific objectives and questions to improve the campaign's survey.

### **Grenoble**

Grenoble held a LSRG meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2023, to present the recommendations emerging from previous Policy Labs. The city of Grenoble joined the project with a focus on improving the reception of newly arrived migrants and connecting them with elected representatives and public departments. The ideas formulated in the Labs included mentoring and supporting refugees and refugee candidates on access to employment, training public service employees and organising initiatives for housing and language learning.

## **2.2. Local administrations' insights on the LSRGs contribution to the project**

In order to better understand the operational relationship established between the partners and the LSRGs during the first half of the project lifecycle, as well as to reflect on how to improve such a collaboration, IIHL decided to pose a few specific and qualitative questions to the city partners. The results of this consultation were collected, elaborated and resumed in the next sections.

***Were the members of the LSRG in your local context actively participating in implementing the PL approach? Was their contribution relevant to the participatory process as a whole?***

The general opinion reported was that all members of the LSRG were helpful at various stages of the participatory process and actively participated in implementing the Policy Labs approach. They expressed their ideas about the local context and ways of ensuring the implementation of the PL approach. Additionally, they assisted with mapping and identifying the participants for the PLs, and they were open to dialogue.

In Mechelen, the LSRG members assisted in recruiting schools, children, and youth for the PLs, and provided valuable input as experts in diversity in education. They also offered feedback on the methodology, particularly regarding the presentation of scientific findings to the policy lab group. Moreover, the LSRG contributed to shaping the transition from experiments to policy.

In Modena, in the initial phase, they faced challenges in engaging many important institutions to participate in the PLs. Nevertheless, the most important institutions were involved in the participatory process and proved to be receptive to suggestions and issues raised by migrant individuals.

Vienna adopted a two-group approach, with the PLs participants and the LSRG serving as a sounding or advisory board. This decision aimed to involve a broad range of stakeholders and gather diverse perspectives on policy challenges. Due to the time-consuming nature of the Policy Lab, many civil servants were unable to participate fully, but they contributed their experiences and expertise within the LSRG. Grassroots stakeholders, NGOs, associations, experts from the city administration, universities, and international associations and companies were invited to the respective groups. This approach ensured a balanced representation in the policy lab while allowing the involvement of city experts without overwhelming their schedules.

In Fuenlabrada, while stakeholders were not familiar with participating in a PL that had more limited rules, the LSRG adapted to the PL approach and made contributions from that standpoint.

### ***Were the members of the LSRG helpful in identifying the participants to the PLs?***

The majority of the partners acknowledged that the LSRG played a significant role in identifying relevant participants for the PLs. They actively contacted potential participants, shared their ideas on who should be involved, and provided suggestions on the best approach. In Mechelen they facilitated access to schools, youth organisations, and specific individuals who had valuable contributions to offer.

Fuenlabrada stressed the importance of prioritising younger individuals, particularly young migrants and those with a racialized or migrant background, and this emphasis on inclusivity was recognized by the LSRG.

In Modena the experience was slightly different, as the majority of LSRG members were selected after the 1st Policy Lab, once the participants were already chosen. The focus then shifted on identifying stakeholders associated with the main challenges identified during the Policy Lab. While some local stakeholders assisted in finding PL participants, not all of them joined the LSRG.

### ***Was the role of the LSRG relevant in identifying your policy challenges?***

In this regard, the experiences of local administrations resulted to be differentiated: while some emphasised the importance of the LSRGs in identifying policy challenges, thanks to the positions of power and the participation in decision-making procedures of their members, others pointed out that the policy challenge was predetermined before the project began and was focused on well-known challenges in education. For instance, Modena explained that initially, the policy challenges for the Policy Labs were identified by the Youth and Sport Office of the Municipality based on their usual topics of focus. However, during the PLs, participants suggested urgent topics related to individuals with migratory backgrounds that were not initially considered. The LSRG showed interest in these topics and played a role in confirming the challenges rather than identifying them.

In Vienna, experts were invited to the second PL based on questions raised in the first one, which deepened participants' knowledge of the respective topics.

Fuenlabrada, on the other hand, acknowledged that local entities are concerned about the lack of active civic participation among the young population. They emphasised the need for youth

to take an active role. The challenge to be addressed in Fuenlabrada was evident to both the local authorities and the technical team of the Municipality.

***Was the role of the LSRG relevant in selecting the initial proposals coming from the PLs?***

In some cases, like in Livadia and in Modena, the LSRG members expressed their viewpoints on the feasibility of proposals and even put forth their own proposals to increase the available options and shared information about past projects or actions that were similar to their micro-experimentation concept. Livadia also mentioned that the LSRG played a role in enhancing existing local integration strategies in diverse and innovative ways. Specifically, Modena mentioned that the LSRG, along with a few PL participants, redesigned the Italian course for volunteers to make it more acceptable for the volunteer Italian teachers based on past experiences that lacked successful participation.

Different experiences were reported by Mechelen, Vienna and Fuenlabrada, where the Policy Lab group was responsible and autonomous for deciding on the proposals. Mechelen believed that this would foster a stronger sense of ownership over the experiments, which turned out to be true. Vienna reported that the second PL resulted in three clear ideas for micro-experimentation and identified stakeholders who were willing to work on those topics. Therefore, there was no need for further selection.

In Fuenlabrada, the LSRG's main focus was not on selecting the initial proposals but rather on ensuring that young individuals felt genuinely represented. The LSRG group requested that young people with racialized migrant backgrounds play a primary role in the Policy Labs. They demanded that these individuals not only feel comfortable with the decisions made regarding the micro experimentation but actively contribute to them, ensuring their representation in the proposed solutions.

***Are LSRG members taking part in the implementation of M-Es? In which role?***

The cities where the LSRGs played a more active role in the M-Es implementation were Modena and Livadia. In Modena, some LSRG members actively participated in the micro-experiments (M-Es). For instance, the two labour unions, CISL and CGIL, collaborated in planning the M-E called "Diritti per tutti," which focused on training sessions about labour law. The training topics were chosen jointly, and the labour unions would provide experts to speak to the audience. Additionally, stakeholders involved in teaching Italian to migrants, including both LSRG members and Policy Lab participants, collaborated in planning the M-E named "FormAzione." This M-E aimed to train volunteers teaching the Italian language to newly arrived migrants. CSV, a member of the LSRG, contributed by assisting in recruiting new volunteers through course promotion. Modena also mentioned that other LSRG members expressed their willingness to cooperate in promoting and disseminating the M-Es. In Livadia, the members of the LSRG were informed about the Communication Strategy aimed at enhancing dialogue between stakeholders and migrants. Livadia stated that the LSRG members expressed their willingness to assist with the creation and promotion of a Facebook page/group and other related activities. They agreed to upload posts, make comments, and invite more stakeholders and migrants to participate.

On the other hand, some cities adopted a more independent approach to M-Es: in fact, Mechelen provided a negative response to this question, as the city focused on designing the M-E within the Policy Lab without thoroughly involving the LSRG in their definition. Also Fuenlabrada indicated that the LSRG members were not involved so far. However, they would actively participate in dissemination and communication activities aimed at reaching a wider audience for the M-Es.

In Vienna, some LSRG members were invited to the working group meetings established by the participants to further develop the three M-Es during the summer. However, it was too early to determine whether they would provide input or actively participate in the working groups and the implementation of the M-Es.



### 3. The International Stakeholders Reference Group: composition and contribution to MUST-a-Lab

The project's *Dissemination, Communication and Engagement Plan* envisaged to identify and provide support to stakeholders willing to help the project to reach new geographic areas and potentially interested parties. Among this wide network of international stakeholders, **the ISRG constituted the most important transnational and systematised body directly linked to the consortium and its activities.** Composed of representatives of relevant international networks and organisations, the body has been operational since the second year of the project (2023) and assumed both an advisory role and an impact-maximisation function in the different project development phases. The ISRG actively contributed to project communication efforts, promoting the MUST-a-Lab approach as a participatory decision-making process and highlighting its innovative elements in social integration strategies. Several support actions were assigned to the ISRG, including providing inputs for the project's activities and aiding the DCE WG (Dissemination, Communication, and Engagement Working Group) and the partnership in enhancing the project's visibility, especially by showcasing its innovative approach to policy-making. Additionally, the ISRG is responsible for disseminating and sharing the project's results and outcomes within their respective national, European, and international networks.

In light of all the above-mentioned functions, all the project partners were invited to suggest prominent practitioners working in the field of migration, integration and social inclusion on an international scope, while IIHL proceeded to contact them in order to verify their availability and to confirm their commitment to the project. At a preliminary stage after having collected all the suggested names, the members of the body were selected by IIHL based on their different fields of activity, paying particular attention to the representation of all the categories of stakeholders and target groups of the MUST-a-Lab project.

The process resulted in a list of nine professionals based in Greece, Spain, Belgium, United States (California), Croatia and The Netherlands:

NAME	ROLE & ORGANISATION	COUNTRY
Dionysia Lambiri	Project Coordinator of Athens Coordination Center for Migrant and Refugee Issues (ACCMR)	Greece
Pantelis Dimitriou	Monitor, Evaluation & Quality Control of HELIOS Programme in Livadia, International Organization for Migration	Greece
Razan Ismail	Founder and director of Asociation Kudwa in Barcelona and member of the European Coalition of Refugees and Migrants	Spain
Ona Schyvens	PhD – Hannah Arendt Instituut	Belgium
Sophie Van Haasen	Coordinator - GFMD Mayors Mechanism	USA

Adrijana Višnjić-Jevtić	OMEP (children’s rights world organisation)	Croatia
Michael Fanizadeh	VIDC Global Dialogue, Vienna Institute for International Dialogue and Cooperation (VIDC)	Austria
Bernhard Perchinig	International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)	Austria
Mary Tupan-Wenno	Executive director of ECHO, Center for Diversity Policy in Utrecht	The Netherlands

Four different meetings were planned with the ISRG experts, specifically:

- An **online Introductory Workshop**, that took place on two different occasions in March and May 2023 for issues of availability of the members, between the first and the third workshops of the Policy Labs, in order to bring to its members, the testimonies of PLs' Facilitators and local stakeholders representatives, as well as to let them familiarise with the project. On this occasion, the project partners asked the ISRG members to provide feedback on the chosen approach and policy challenges and to share their perspectives on the Policy Labs development.
- The **second online meeting of the ISRG** took place in February 2024, in order for stakeholders to be informed of the running of the micro- experiments developed and designed during the second workshop of the Policy Labs and express their views on the potential of these latter.
- A **third online meeting of the ISRG** in September 2024 was dedicated to commenting on the lessons learnt by the partners and the best practices collected through the Policy Labs, as well as supporting the follow-up phase of the project in Year 3.
- Lastly, the ISRG members were invited to contribute to the **MUST-a-Lab Final Conference**.

### 3.1. Report on the two Introductory Workshops

All the selected members of the ISRG were invited to join an online Introductory Workshop, aimed at presenting the MUST-a-Lab project, the first-hand experience of Policy Labs' facilitators and the perspective of the local stakeholders’ representatives, as well as at collecting their first feedback on the project approach, methodology and objectives. The meetings foreseen for the ISRG serve multiple purposes: first of all, they provide an opportunity for the project partners to establish direct relationships with the ISRG experts.

The first meeting took place online on March 27, from 2.00 to 4.00 pm and saw the participation of four out of the nine members of the body, with the addition of George Azzi, colleague of the designated member Razan Ismail from the migrant-led organisation Kudwa: Dionysia Lambiri, Adrijana Višnjić-Jevtić, Bernhard Perchinig, Mary Tupan-Wenno.

While the original plan of the consortium was to provide the missing members with the meeting’s recording and the pertaining report, during the Transnational Project Meeting of

Livadia, held in April 2023, the partners agreed on a new strategy, deemed more appropriate for engaging on a personal and long-term basis the whole ISRG. In fact, the partners decided that every single member of the ISRG should attend the Introductory Workshop and receive the same introduction to the project general information, to the Policy Labs approach and to their role. To achieve a homogeneous preparation of the ISRG, a second Introductory Workshop was scheduled according to the availability expressed by the highest number of participants (among partners and ISRG members) for the 14<sup>th</sup> of June 2023, from 4.00 to 5.00 pm, so that the meeting could more easily meet the needs of the busiest participants. The second Introductory Workshop was attended by two more members: Razan Ismail and Sophie Van Haasen.

The Introductory Workshop followed the same agenda on both dates, with just a slight shortening of the interventions on the second occasion. The Workshop started with a presentation of the MUST-a-Lab project, reporting the specifics about its development timeline, from January 2022 to December 2024, the consortium set-up, the different phases of the Policy Labs process, the importance of transnational cooperation and sustainability. The members of the ISRG were informed, as well, about the policy challenges addressed by each local administration related to integration, inclusion, and diversity with innovative participatory methodologies. The presentation highlighted the role of the international Stakeholders Reference Group in supporting the project's development, in involving international stakeholders in shaping policies and in disseminating the project methodology and the recommendations that will result at the end of the Policy Lab cycle. Specific attention was paid to explaining the nature of micro-experiments, scheduled from May to November 2023, aimed at answering the policy challenges and necessitating future feedback and review from stakeholders at every level.

The third and final Policy Lab collected the results of the micro-experiments and generated policy recommendations to which the ISRG members were asked to give visibility outside the territories already touched by the Policy Labs. In 2024, during the project's implementation and embedding phase, the local administrations aimed to develop implementation plans for the recommendations, integrate the Policy Lab methodology into participatory practices, and explore other policy challenges for similar approaches. The project also sought to expand transnational cooperation and share its outcomes with other local administrations.

The presentation provided an example of the PL model in action, where different entities within the same city collaborated to establish a system for exploring potential solutions jointly. This collaborative approach was testified by the PLs Facilitators, who talked with the ISRG's experts about their experience.

It was stressed how the MUST-a-Lab project stands out from other Policy Labs organised at regional or national levels, since it is initiated by local authorities, demonstrating their strong commitment to the project. The project's sustainability is another distinguishing feature, as it dedicates a full year to implementing recommendations and ensuring follow-up actions are taken. The presentation also highlighted the preparatory activities conducted in the past year,

including stakeholder mapping, capacity-building workshops, and engagement with migrant representatives and grassroots stakeholders.

IIHL also described the Policy Lab approach, which follows a double diamond paradigm, with two cycles of divergence and convergence: the initial cycle focuses on the preparation and discovering stakeholders' perspectives, while the second cycle involves defining proposals, conducting micro-experiments, and generating recommendations. The effective functioning of a Policy Lab requires considering factors such as selecting acknowledged challenges and proposing realistic solutions, maintaining an informal and participatory atmosphere, using equal voices, and discussing evaluation criteria for experiments.

After this initial module, the Introductory Workshop gave the Policy Lab's Facilitators, the project staff and the ISRG members the opportunity to express their opinion on the approach adopted so far and to have an open dialogue on the more relevant issues that emerged, that could be summarised as follows:

- Varying decision-making powers of cities in migration integration policies: moving from a question of the ISRG about the differences in decision-making powers among cities, it was highlighted how cities like Vienna and Mechelen have greater autonomy. The response from the partners acknowledged that the project engages cities based on their preparedness and authority to address policy challenges. The extent of a city's authority may vary depending on its political system and context.
- Approaches and levels of addressing policy challenges: the participants discussed different approaches taken by cities in addressing policy challenges. Modena had a well-defined challenge, while Vienna refined it through stakeholder collaboration. Mechelen focused on fostering a sense of belonging among school children. The group chose to concentrate on areas where they have more influence, and recommendations can be made for higher authorities.
- Involvement of regional and national authorities: even if cities cannot change policies directly, they can invite regional and national authorities to participate in PLs to listen and report. This invites higher authorities with relevant competencies to be involved in the discussions.
- Incorporating the voices of those affected by policies: Mary Tupan-Wenno emphasised the importance of including marginalised voices and organisations familiar with difficult contexts and networks among migrant and refugee communities. The participants clarified that the PLs' participation list consisted of migrants and representatives from policy-making agencies and organisations, ensuring representation of a wide range of societal actors.
- Challenges and outcomes of PLs: the Facilitators shared their experiences from different cities' Policy Labs. Difficulties in translating problems into concrete actions were highlighted, but progress was made in identifying challenges and planning small group activities to find solutions. Specific outcomes and action fields were identified, such as enhancing social cohesion in schools, establishing mentoring systems, and empowering migrants.

- Fostering a sense of belonging among school children: Mechelen focused on creating a welcoming school environment where all children, particularly those with a migration background, feel included. Key elements identified were authenticity, a welcoming atmosphere, diversity among teachers, and considering each student's home situation.
- Participation of young people with migrant backgrounds: in Fuenlabrada, the involvement of young people with migrant backgrounds was limited to cultural associations. The project aimed at creating a platform for participants to discuss their needs and develop experimental solutions. The challenge was to strike a balance between free expression and achieving specific outcomes, and establishing trust among participants was important.
- Translating perspectives into concrete actions: it was emphasised that collecting perspectives and challenges is crucial, but the real challenge lies in translating them into concrete activities and policies. The intention to develop new policies should consider migrants' perspectives and not treat migrant communities solely as a solution to labour market shortages or political problems.
- Bridging the implementation gap: it was discussed that improving the implementation of existing policies is as important as introducing new ideas. Engaging city administration and stakeholders early on can help address the implementation gap and politicisation of migration issues.
- Levering international platforms for the multiplication of new experiences branching from MUST-a-Lab: Sophie Van Haasen, Coordinator of the GFMD Mayors Mechanism offered precious suggestions on international events and platform through which the project partners - especially local administrations - could disseminate the project. Among the others, the International Migration Review Forum, 2023 Global Refugee Forum, and the annual Global Forum on Migration and Development were mentioned.

These topics and discussions reflect the importance of involving various stakeholders, considering migrants' perspectives, and translating insights into actionable policies for effective integration of migrants in cities.

### **3.2. Additional introductory meetings: bilateral interviews with individual members**

Within the scope of Work Package 6 (WP6), partners addressed (under the coordination of IIHL) a few organisational challenges, particularly emerged in the preliminary process of involving all the selected members of the International Stakeholders Reference Group (ISRG) following the establishment of the initial contacts. The difficulties primarily referred to the scheduling of online meetings between such members, project partners and Policy Labs' Facilitators, largely due to the busy schedules and quantity of commitments of the selected ISRG members. In light of this, the partners decided to put into practice proactive countermeasures to address these issues and ensure effective engagement and collaboration. More specifically, additional meetings were scheduled, including bilateral discussions, with some of the ISRG members, namely:

- On July 13, 2023, with Ona Schyvens;
- On July 14, 2023, with Michael Fanizadeh.

Contacts have been established with Pantelis Dimitriou, who has not expressed his availability for a meeting yet, in spite of confirming his interest and participation in the ISRG on many occasions.

By interacting on an individual basis, the partners could foster a deeper understanding of the expertise, perspectives, and recommendations of each ISRG member. This personalised engagement, moreover, not only facilitated productive exchanges of views but also fostered a sense of trust between the project partners and the ISRG, enhancing a feeling of mutual interest and understanding.

Against this background, the additional meetings with some of the ISRG members allowed the project partners to seek valuable suggestions and overall support, even enriching their view of the project relevance. Given the considerable experience of the ISRG experts, in fact, the provided insights and guidelines proved instrumental in steering the project activities in the best and most effective way, particularly at the local administrations' level. By tapping into the expertise of the ISRG, the project partners gained access to valuable advice, best practices, and innovative ideas, ultimately finetuning the project's outcomes and strengthening its impact.

By promptly recognising the risks and immediately designing measures to minimise them, the project consortium demonstrated a good level of adaptability, resilience, and commitment to the collaborative effort. Consequently, the initial direct engagement of ISRG members eventually facilitated a significant exchange of expertise, consolidating a robust framework that will allow the project to benefit from the support of high-level representatives of the most relevant categories of stakeholders throughout its lifecycle.

### **3.3. ISRG virtual meetings**

A **second virtual meeting with the ISRG** took place on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2024, to review the results of the Policy Lab cycle and reflect on future developments. The cities presented their respective focus areas and the recommendations and challenges which emerged from each city's Policy Lab. Fuenlabrada works on youth participation and co-governance mechanisms, including voices not typically involved in policy discussions such as those of minorities and frontline service providers. Grenoble focuses on orientation and training for public officers dealing with migrants, and Mechelen on the topic of diversity in schools. Vienna concentrates on youth participation and experimented with open schools, social media campaigns and human rights initiatives. Livadia addresses migrants representation and integrating migrants more structurally into city services and opportunities. Modena works on services fostering integration, such as language courses, sports activities or legal information sessions. The stakeholders were invited to share their thoughts on the recommendations, considering the overlap and alignment across different cities. The grouping of recommendations was perceived as covering a wide range of migrant-related challenges, reflecting the diverse needs and experiences of migrant populations. The stakeholders recognized the value of promoting cross-

city adoption of successful initiatives and emphasized the importance of ongoing collaboration and knowledge-sharing among cities. The discussion delved into the nuanced approaches adopted by different cities in addressing migrant integration challenges, reflecting their unique contexts and priorities. Stakeholders emphasized the importance of tailoring interventions to specific city dynamics while also recognizing common themes across cities. There was a recognition of the need for sustainable change rather than just short-term solutions to migrant-related issues. Stakeholders highlighted the importance of co-creation and community engagement in developing initiatives that foster long-term integration and inclusion.

A **third ISRG Meeting** was held on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2024: as the end of the project was drawing near, the partners presented its results, stressing the importance of research elements and reflecting on ways to ensure the continuity of the project's outputs. It was noted that recommendations are already being implemented in the cities and that the methodology is being embedded in several contexts. Partners of the University of Modena and Reggio Emilia highlighted that, according to their reporting throughout the project, Policy Labs worked very well and provided useful data and recommendations.

The results were praised by the ISRG, with particular enthusiasm for the involvement of parents throughout different parts of the project and the activities targeting youth. Attention should be paid to younger children in the future, as there are gaps in integration approaches when it comes to young children with a migrant background. It was also suggested to organise a webinar to spread awareness, including researches as well as cities to share concrete experiences.

### **3.4. International stakeholders engagement in the final conference**

The final conference took place on 28<sup>th</sup> November in Brussels. The achievements and results of the project were presented and the event saw an active participation of different stakeholders. This was also an occasion to forge or consolidate relations with stakeholders such as the Joint Research Centre, the European Committee of the Regions, networks such as ALDA, ANVITA and PLACE, and several municipalities across Europe. These new opportunities for collaboration will contribute to the sustainability and dissemination of the project's approach; the transferability of the method was recognised and met with particular interest by local administrations and by organisations working on migrant integration at a local level. When finalising this report, less than one month after the conference, several invitations to present the project approach and results have already been addressed to the Project Coordinators and partners, showing a high level of interest by interlocutors within and outside the EU, who learned about the project also through the stakeholders network.

## 4. Communication activities and mid-term achievements

The activities of Work Package 6 were primarily focused on the design and implementation of the Dissemination, Communication, and Engagement Plan (D6.1) of the project, which ensured the effective dissemination of project-related information, engagement of stakeholders, and fostering of internal and external communication. This encompassed several key components that played a crucial role in effectively reaching out to the general public and to relevant audience, also ensuring their active involvement and participation.

Firstly, the **design, release, and continuous update of the project website** (T6.2, D6.2) served as a central hub for information and communication. The website served as a hub for comprehensive project information, featuring dedicated sections on the project approach, objectives, partnership, updates, outputs, and specific web areas detailing each local administration's approach and activities. To ensure the website remained current and informative, the WP coordinator (IIHL) provided guidelines and instructions to partners regarding publishing relevant local news on the platform. The web portal played a crucial role in promoting transparency and facilitating access to project resources. The constant updating of the website ensured that stakeholders could stay informed about the project's progress and access relevant information whenever needed.

In addition to the website, **informative brochures** (T6.1) were designed in all the national languages of the consortium partner: Italian, German, Dutch, Greek, French, Spanish and English. Each local partner took responsibility for translating and presenting the specific challenges addressed in their respective cities. These brochures served as concise and visually appealing tools to effectively communicate the project's objectives, activities, and outcomes to a local audience. The availability of brochures in different languages aimed to cater to the diverse linguistic needs of stakeholders and foster inclusivity.

Furthermore, to enhance the reach and impact of the project, a comprehensive plan was developed for creating **informative videos** (T6.1) that depicted the Policy Labs' experiences within each local context. The plan included the identification of relevant topics, the development of engaging scenarios, and the creation of visually appealing animations. The informative videos will play a relevant role in sharing insights and promoting understanding and will serve as powerful tools for raising awareness, explaining complex concepts, and showcasing the project's activities and achievements in a compelling manner. Recognising the significance of **social media platforms** (T6.1), official profiles for the project were established on Facebook and LinkedIn. These profiles served as additional channels for disseminating project updates, engaging with stakeholders, and fostering dialogue and collaboration. The presence of the project on these popular social media platforms aimed to reach a broader audience and encourage active participation and engagement.

The partners also drafted a graphic template and defined the contents of the **project Newsletter**, that will be issued every four months and will deepen the practice of Policy Labs and the research findings, with relevant insights from the involved cities. The Newsletter will be uploaded on the project website and then shared with the identified stakeholders by each local administration, with the aim of widening the network built around the project through their collaboration in the dissemination within their own communities. The release of the first issue was scheduled between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 7<sup>th</sup> of July 2023.



Finally, to monitor the production and dissemination of information/awareness-raising materials, a common digital **Journal of Valorization** was created. The dynamic collection grid was designed to document and showcase all the dissemination activities carried out by the project partners at different levels and through different channels (e.g. online and on-site initiatives, meetings and promotional virtual events, social media posts and distribution of paper promotional materials, ecc).

For what concerns the stakeholders engagement, a crucial aspect was the development and implementation of Deliverable 6.3, the **Stakeholders' identification and involvement Roadmap (T6.3)**, which delineated a systematic approach to identify and engage stakeholders, facilitating their active participation throughout the project. In this respect, the roadmap was divided into various stages of implementation, starting with the initial mapping of stakeholders at the local level. Hence, the project team worked on the improvement of the first draft of the mapping, incorporating valuable suggestions from the WP coordinator. The roadmap played a critical role in identifying and engaging stakeholders effectively, thereby (1) facilitating and ensuring collaboration, inclusivity, effective collaboration with stakeholders and (2) maximising the project's impact.

More specifically, the mapping process served multiple purposes, including:

- 1) The identification of influential stakeholders at the international level that would take part in the above-mentioned International Stakeholders Reference Group (T6.4).
- 2) The selection of the members of the Local Stakeholders Reference Groups which played a crucial role in providing insights, perspectives, and feedback on the project activities from the local context. The support provided by the project team in selecting and activating the LSRGs aimed to facilitate their effective functioning and meaningful contribution throughout the project's duration.
- 3) The identification and facilitated selection of the participants of the Policy Labs (PLs). The mapping indeed enabled the project team to identify key stakeholders relevant to each local context and ensure their respective representation in the PLs.

WP6 also included Deliverable 6.4, namely the mid-term report on stakeholders' engagement and communication effectiveness. The preparation of the report, due by the end of June 2023, certainly provided a moment of reflection on the project's progress in the fields of stakeholders' engagement and maximisation of communication strategies. It therefore constituted a valuable tool for the evaluation of the dissemination effort undertaken by the consortium, fostering the identification of areas of improvement.

Finally, WP6 includes the present report, which builds on the work of the intermediary report and uses the progress and reflections which emerged in the last year of the project to create a bridge between the efforts made until now and future possibilities for dissemination and scaling.

Overall, the activities carried out in this WP played an important role in ensuring effective communication, broad stakeholder engagement, and efficient dissemination of information on the project through various channels. The design and implementation of these activities facilitated the creation of a dynamic and inclusive project environment, leading to meaningful

collaboration, knowledge exchange, and the achievement of project goals.

Due to the late integration of Grenoble Alpes Métropole as a full partner in April 2023, the communication activities too, like the LSRG-related ones already described, experienced implementation delays. In this regard, at the moment of writing this report and besides the activities already mentioned in previous sections, the partner is working on Task 6.2, consisting of the finalisation of the city-dedicated website section, and Task 6.4, related to the selection of ISRG members. Nonetheless, the partner undertook several initiatives to address the natural delays and ensured the completion of all the activities according to the shared timeline. Despite the time constraints, Grenoble Alpes Métropole displayed remarkable dedication and efficiency in implementing numerous actions within a relatively short amount of time from the very moment in which it accessed the consortium. With the support of the other project partners, the French dimension of the project will not get lost and its value in this key country will be ensured.

#### **4.1. Feedback from the partners on the impact of communication activities and future perspectives for the improvement of the DCE WG organisation**

The Dissemination Communication and Engagement Working Group (DCE WG), as defined in the *Dissemination, Communication and Engagement Plan*, is the coordinating body for the dissemination, communication and stakeholders' engagement activities. Although the regular members of the working group include IIHL - leading WP6 and serving as coordinator- the City of Mechelen, FREREF, UNIMORE and Karel de Grote University, the DCE WG composition slightly changed throughout the project development. The local administrations took part as well in the majority of the online meetings, being their opinion and participation fundamental for the topics discussed and sharing responsibility for the dissemination activities. The Municipalities - besides Mechelen, Modena, Vienna, Fuenlabrada, Livadia and, from April 2023, GAM - were, in fact, summoned in seven out of the twelve DCE WG meetings scheduled and documented.

For the purpose of this report, IIHL decided to consult all the project partners in order to collect their opinions and suggestions around the DCE WG impact, especially on internal and external communication and work organisation, in order to accurately document the achieved results and target the possible areas of intervention to improve the collaboration and minimise any sort of shortcomings.

##### ***How do you think the DCE WG impacted the project's implementation on a local level?***

In general, the complex steering role of the working group in the phase of stakeholders' mapping was appreciated by the partners. This element was highlighted by Livadia stating that the DCE WG played a crucial role in maximising the project's impact in the local context. The group focused on building a community around the project, sharing news, contents, resources, and events. Through these efforts, an effective network was established, connecting local stakeholders, migrants, policy makers, and other citizens. Livadia emphasised that this network

facilitated dialogic relationships and created a safe environment of trust, enabling the expression and sharing of ideas regarding local integration strategies. Mechelen acknowledged the significance of the DCE WG in mapping stakeholders, finding the feedback received from the group regarding the identification of key categories very valuable. Clear external communication played a crucial role in generating interest in the project and finding a new partner. In terms of weaknesses, Modena mentioned that the DCE WG's impact appeared relatively mild in its context. Communication mainly took place on the local level, as the website, brochure, newsletter, and video were still under development at the moment of the consultation. However, the city expressed conviction that the future impact would increase when all communication tools would be ready and in view of disseminating the results of the Micro-Experiments (M-Es). In the Italian context a few issues related to the imposed limitations and rules regarding the use of social networks and privacy concerns for public institutions were also reported. From the perspective of a non-city partner, UNIMORE believed that the DCE WG had an impact at the local level by building a network through LSRG meetings, stressing how the network not only contributed to the design of relevant micro-experiments but also fostered useful synergies locally. Vienna too expressed the view that the DCE WG significantly impacted the project at the local level. The work on short articles and posts for the project website moreover helped summarising the project's objectives and main results in an understandable manner for both project newcomers and the general public. An interesting element in the Austrian feedback then is the expressed appreciation of the communication strategy, which proved helpful in disseminating the project and establishing connections with local stakeholders. Vienna anticipated that sharing videos on social media, the project website, and the city website will further enhance project visibility, even though producing the videos required considerable effort. Finally, Fuenlabrada stated that the perceived impact of the DCE WG at the local level was still limited. It must be stressed that, in the Spanish context, the city of Fuenlabrada already relied on good connections with many stakeholders. This element becomes very relevant when considering that the city enhanced, through the project, many already-active communication channels.

### ***How much do you think the DCE WG impacted external communication?***

The partners emphasised the importance of the DCE WG in external communication. Its role in facilitating communication with a diverse range of stakeholders, including local stakeholders, policy makers, migrants, and foreigners, was highlighted. The group aimed to expand the project's community and increase its overall impact by reaching new geographical areas and engaging with a wider audience. While some partners expressed in their replies a few uncertainties regarding the impact of external communication (as opposed to the one on the local level), with particular reference to the visibility of social media and use of the website by external users, all of them recognised that a stronger echo at the transnational level would be produced by the activities scheduled for the second half of the project lifecycle and by the related promotional activities.

The Working Group's contributions to efficient communication included the development of a contact list, regular updates on website and social media posts, the coordination between the website and information gathering and the use of Facebook and LinkedIn. Some partners underlined the importance of meetings in coordinating the development of videos, despite the complexity and time-consuming nature of the process.

The impact of the DCE WG on external communication was considered minimal by a partner, at the current stage, with the expectation that it will become more significant in the future, going from local communication in the project's first year to external communication, aiming to explain the methods, processes, and results achieved by each city, particularly during the dissemination of Policy Labs' results and methodology in 2024.

The ISRG and LSRG meetings were acknowledged for generating opportunities for discussion and raising awareness of the project at both local and international levels. The dissemination of information through social media platforms was appreciated as well.

The use of the Journal of Valorisation was mentioned by more than one partner and generally appreciated. One partner expressed uncertainty about the reach of brochures and limitations of the social media campaign, particularly during the main year of Policy Lab actions. The potential of the Newsletter to generate more attention to the website was highlighted, contingent on effective utilisation of partner networks. The impact of the project's videos was questioned, as the current animation did not generate much enthusiasm. Overall, determining the impact of materials was found challenging. The input from the ISRG was acknowledged as interesting, but the assembly of the group was difficult, and reaching out to individual members was appreciated as a strategy.

***What suggestions would you give to improve the work of the DCE WG and to make the project communication strategy more effective?***

Partners put forward suggestions regarding communication strategies for the project, like the importance of utilising multiple communication channels, taking into account the nature and urgency of the information. For instance, it was proposed to leverage LinkedIn for professional engagement, Twitter for direct messaging and informal interactions, and visual aids like infographics to convey information effectively. It was also recommended to adjust the frequency of communication, potentially through regular meetings while maintaining flexibility.

It was suggested that the Working Group should take the lead to achieve a greater impact: in the past, the cities had taken the initiative to post updates on the project website, but a more coordinated approach was deemed necessary for increased effectiveness. A call for clearer goals and tasks assigned to partners on a regular basis was made as well.

The importance of strengthening partners' involvement in sharing project-related news and social media posts was emphasised to enhance communication impact. Additionally, it was suggested to report on communication efforts at the local level, going beyond digital channels, to gain a comprehensive understanding of progress in each location.

In order to effectively communicate the project in all its complexity, it was recommended to use simple language while providing comprehensive details to help stakeholders understand the project's objectives and phases. The proposal was made to implement online communication strategies through various platforms such as social media, newsletters, and engagement with online networks interested in the project.

Feedback was provided on the timing of certain activities within the project: it was mentioned that brochures in different languages would have been beneficial at the outset to engage stakeholders earlier. The importance of regular updates through emails and other platforms for local communication was discussed, and a general appreciation for the project's efforts was expressed.

The linguistic challenge in communication was highlighted, specifically in terms of translation requirements for social media posts and website content, which often resulted in lengthy and less reader-friendly material. It was noted that communication activities had more utility for external rather than internal communication.

Several observations and suggestions were shared, including the need for clarity regarding task division between different entities. It was proposed to bridge the gap between specific project activities and the section on the website dedicated to PL participants' testimonies by incorporating quotes from various sources, such as anonymous observations and semi-structured interviews conducted in different locations.

## 5. Conclusions

In general terms, the development of stakeholders engagement and communication activities can be considered coherent with the activity plan originally proposed and more than satisfactory with respect to initial expectations:

1. The articulation between the methodological guidance of specialised partners and local stakeholders engagement activities conducted by partner cities has worked quite well, thanks to a smooth functioning of the DCE Working Group, created to coordinate all partners in these important horizontal functions;
2. The focus of the first project half has been to prepare favourable local contexts for the launch of the Policy Labs in each of the six partner cities. In particular, Local Stakeholders Reference Groups have been created and have actively contributed to the definition of the local policy challenges, to the identification of the Policy Labs participants, to the feasibility assessment of the micro-experiments to be conducted. This is a very important element to guarantee the relevance and local visibility of the initiative, and constitutes an important precondition for a positive follow-up of the Policy Lab recommendations that will be elaborated at the end of 2023.
3. In spite of the difficulty constituted by the needed substitution of the French Partner City, the participation focus already present in the Grenoble Alpes Metropole has facilitated a quick catch up of preparatory stakeholders engagement activities, thus allowing the start of the Policy Labs cycle in the month of June 23.
4. The International Stakeholders Reference Group was constituted by a strong set of representatives and expert stakeholders. They were involved in different phases of the project, showing enthusiasm and provided several recommendations which were not only useful for the unrolling of the project, but also relevant to ensure a sustainable, transferable and improved implementation of its approach and results after the end of its lifecycle.
5. While the focus of Partner Cities has obviously been on the local level of communication, the specialised partners (IIHL and FREREF) and the academic partners (UNIMORE and KdG) have also prepared the ground for a substantial international dissemination and communication activity, that did progressively take off, as soon as the first policy lab results and the final evaluation reports were made available.
6. In the second half of the project, the focus of the WP6 was on embarking those stakeholders who did find the Policy Lab experience a positive one, as witnesses and supporters of dissemination activities. The key idea is that bottom-up dissemination is at least as important as convincing national and EU policy makers of the validity of the Policy Lab approach to address a complex and frequently controversial issue such as migrants integration in local communities.
7. The ISRG was the main complement to the centralised project communication activities (website, newsletters, social media, conferences) to reach international stakeholders networks and relevant policy making entities beyond the local contexts of

the partner cities, following the same action principle of progressively engaging stakeholders as partners (co-owners of the Policy Lab experience) in the dissemination and in the development of sustainable innovation.

8. Finally, it has to be reminded that the project has sustainability ambitions not only for the specific measures that will be proposed -through the micro experimentation and the recommendations- to improve integration and inclusion local policies, but also for the proposed Policy Labs approach and the related working process. This concretely means, in the partners' intentions, that the evaluation process and the institutionalisation path analysis in the six cities produced very significant results usable to increase the current knowledge base and methodological know-how regarding the practice of Policy Lab as an instrument of participatory democracy and user-centred co-creation of innovative policy elements.

