FROM THE SEA TO THE CITY

Ideas, good practices and next steps for a welcoming Europe

– From the Sea to the City –
A conference of cities for a welcoming Europe

CONTENTS

0. INTRODUCTION

FROM THE SEA TO THE CITY
A CITY CONFERENCE FOR A WELCOMING EUROPE

Born on World Refugee Day 2020 (June 20th), the From the Sea to the City Consortium launched a campaign to demand that cities, civic initiatives and governments address the human and political tragedy unfolding every single minute in Europe.
2020 is also a year that is witnessing a health crisis caused by a pandemic, the release of the European New Pact on Migration and Asylum and unrelenting tragedies faced by many people on migration. Indeed, during this year, 94,950 human beings have reached Europe, while 1,166[1] lost their lives trying: the perilous journeys to cross borders by land and by sea have been intensifying. Between January and May 2020, the number of people setting off from the Tunisian coast headed to Europe has increased more than four-fold with respect to the same period in 2019,[2] with the Mediterranean being the stage of incessant tragic losses.[3]
On land, the camps where refugees and asylum seekers live are killing their occupants, in Moria as much as in Bosnia. On the 9th of September, over 12,000 people were suddenly displaced as a result of a blaze that raged through the Moria camp, an overcrowded hell for children, women and men of any age, who have been forced into inhumane living conditions while they wait to enter Europe. In Bosnia, freezing temperatures put at serious risk the lives of people who hope to make it through the border but sleep in tents that are wholly unsuitable shelters in wintery weather.
All across Europe, emergency accommodations are inadequate; in fact, due to a lack of available places in the reception system, they are no longer used as a temporary solution. Instead, they have become the default form of accommodation for certain categories of asylum seekers, for instance people applying under the Dublin procedure who do not have the right to access accommodation centres for asylum seekers.[4]
In many cities, such as Barcelona[5] and Paris[6], available data indicate a widespread increase in the proportion of homeless people who originate from third countries, with the access to dignified housing conditions hindered by abuses of the Dublin Regulation, the tightening of national legislations and the spread of discriminatory practices.[7]
Adequate reception systems and housing save lives during a pandemic. COVID19 has indeed worsened already hard living conditions, severely depleting the physical and mental health of migrant people.
At the same time, Europe introduced the New pact on Migration and Asylum, which is aimed at setting out a proper single cohesive migration policy. Presented as the tool for “solving the conundrum of the bloc’s long-criticised migration policies”[8], it is instead erasing the expectations for an open and

human rights-based welcoming system in Europe; it introduces a more complex Dublin system and 'return sponsorship', and it expands the use of border procedures (including toughened detention), whilst allowing Member States to adopt discretionary and flexible procedures in their reception systems.[9]
For those who want and are ready to push for change by refusing this status quo, From the Sea to the City mobilises mayors, city representatives, civil society initiatives, social movements, unions, organisations and institutions from all over Europe.
The Consortium was born out of the Palermo Charter Process, an initiative of independent organisations that met in Palermo in May 2018. This meeting took place shortly before the 11th of June 2018, the day when the Italian government closed its ports to the NGO ship Aquarius carrying more than 600 migrants rescued at sea. This was one of the many effects of the criminalisation process, which has since resulted in the seizure of rescue ships, the levelling of accusations of people-smuggling against their crews as well as some of the rescued people, and even to the imprisonment of human rights defenders. All of this while a ruthless deterrence policy and agreements between the EU and dictatorial allies in Libya, Turkey and elsewhere were being drawn up and implemented.
In 2020, the Consortium launched a series of online conferences around five demands.[10] These online events are the first step in a process aimed at creating a European network of cities and

communities whose initiatives and actions will be part of a joint campaign advocating for better European migration policies.
The process to select the demands and organise the online conferences has been based on weekly exchanges that took place over the period of one year with representatives of all the organisations that are part of the Consortium.[11]
This report is the account of the four conferences held over the course of 2020.
The first chapter looks at Demand 1, dedicated to the collaboration between cities and civil society organisations working together for a radical change in European Union (EU) migration policy design and decision-making. Cities' representatives joining the conference have stated that "mayors have a very important role to play in educating people. Our message is always against racism!" (Leoluca Orlando). They have also stressed that it is thanks to progressive cities that migration policies in the EU might take a better direction with the support of NGOs (e.g., the collaboration between the city of Barcelona and the NGO Open Arms). Although a unified EU network of cities in solidarity does not currently exist, initiatives such as the French ANVITA, the German-speaking Seebrücke or the UK sanctuary cities indicate a new path toward achieving a common vision and coordinated actions, expanding the community of small and medium-sized cities.
A long-term comprehensive mechanism for arrival and reception with European municipalities at its centre requires new

strategies to create legal corridors towards and across Europe. **Demand 4 presented in Chapter 2 explains the functioning of the humanitarian corridor, a model adopted by the Project Mediterranean Hope and proposed for dissemination.** The debate provides a comprehensive overview of the challenges that need to be met to counteract the "devastating" situation in the Mediterranean (Maurice Stierl, Alarm Phone) and the externalisation of migration policies (Filippo Furri, MIgreurop). The first priority of the new coalition of cities should be to fight all together against the criminalisation of solidarity.

Ensure an active role for cities and civil society organisations in the management of EU funds is covered in Chapter 3, which tackles Demand 3. Several EU-wide organisations, Eurocities among them, have long been pushing for cities to have direct access to EU funding. Although this is only possible through *ad hoc* projects (like the one presented at the conference by the city of Utrecht) the Humboldt-Viadrina Governance Platform promotes the creation of a new fund intended for just and inclusive cities. The main purpose of an EU Migration and Development fund is to reimburse cities for the costs incurred for receiving and including refugees in the community, as well as to provide additional resources for the development of the cities' municipal infrastructures.

The pandemic required emergency measures to be put in place in defence of human rights-based policies on health, housing, education and labour, which are topics covered in the fourth chapter, focusing on Demands 2 and 5. The cities speaking at the online panels organised throughout 2020 shed light on the two sides of the coin: how a city can organise its public policies around welcoming newcomers, as is the case with Villeurbanne (France), and how it can suffer from the lack of capacity to ensure a human rights-based reception, as is the case with Mogan (Spain). While these two cases are not representative of all EU cities, the panel focused on the need to build alliances and "a coalition of the willing" among cities, organised civic society and at EU level to advocate for fundamental rights.

[1] https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean
[2] https://reliefweb.int/report/tunisia/unhcr-saddened-tragic-loss-lives-tunisian-coast-concerned-rise-sea-departures
[3] https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/6/12/death-toll-from-tunisia-migrant-shipwreck-rises-to-54
[4] FEANTSA 2020 Annual Housing Exclusion report.
[5] https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-55257608
[6] https://www.leparisien.fr/societe/logement-et-racisme-la-ville-de-paris-met-en-garde-les-agences-immobilieres-09-05-2019-8069031.php
[7] https://urbact.eu/engaging-cities-reject-housing-exclusion-%E2%80%-98fact-life%E2%80%99
[8] https://www.euronews.com/2020/09/24/what-is-the-eu-s-new-migration-pact-and-how-has-it-been-received
[9] https://eumigrationlawblog.eu/the-new-pact-on-migration-and-asylum-what-it-is-not-and-what-it-could-have-been/
[10] https://fromseatocity.eu/#demands
[11] ANVITA, European Alternatives, Open Arms, Emergency, Mediterranea Saving Humans, Viadrina Governance Platform, Tesserae Urban social research/ INURA, Sea-Watch, Europe Must Act

1. SOLIDARITY CITIES OF EUROPE

DEMAND 1

Create a network of cities and CSO's:

Promote new initiatives and strengthen existing ones between cities and civil society organizations on European Migration policy.

The first online panel of the year was organised around Demand 1 of *From the Sea to the City*:

"Take coordinated action to strengthen and promote existing and future initiatives of collaboration between cities and civil society organisations on European migration policy".

This demand is the starting point of the overall campaign; it is a precondition for the other demands to be successfully implemented. It aims to show that progressive municipal and civil society perspectives on migration have many things in common: both seek a profound change in European Union (EU) migration policy design and decision-making, and both need their voices to be finally heard by EU policy-makers. This discussion was designed based on the conviction that activists and institutions need to express the necessity to work together in order to mutually reinforce their shared agenda. Cities must push to acquire more jurisdiction at EU level, and civil society must support this effort on the streets.

With this idea in mind, *From the Sea to the City* is calling for the creation of a European alliance of cities, municipalities, civil society initiatives, social movements, unions, organisations and institutions with the goal of advocating for an active role

of cities and civil society organisations in EU decisions on migration policy.
The panel brought together speakers with a clear conviction and desire to lay the foundation for the creation of an active network of cities, municipalities, EU representatives and civil society, working together for a change in EU migration policy. Moderated by *From the Sea to the City* consortium member **Alina Lyapina** (Seebrücke), it involved the participation of **Leoluca Orlando** (Mayor of the City of Palermo), **Léa Enon-Baron** (coordinator of ANVITA, France), **Marc Serra** (representative of the City Council of Barcelona) and **Massimiliana Odorizzi** (representative of the network Europe Must Act, Focus on Greece).

The idea of the creation of an active network at the European level comes from sea rescue and civil society organisations, who have been witnessing for years the European approach of doubling down on migration deterrence at any cost. As these policies are being implemented, an increasing number of cities across Europe have become agents of change for a Europe based on solidarity, taking responsibility for the protection of human lives.

While the European Commission and the Member States have been working on the new Asylum and Migration Pact in 2020, serious concerns have been raised about the narrative that increasingly links migration with border management.

SIMILAR EXISTING EUROPEAN NETWORKS OF CITIES AND/OR CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

EUROCITIES
Eurocities is a network of large cities in Europe established in 1986 to further the economic, political and social development of its members. Today, Eurocities includes local governments of over 140 of Europe's major cities from 39 countries, which altogether comprise a population of 130 million people.

ANVITA,
Association Nationale
des villes-territoires-accueillant
ANVITA is the largest municipal network in France active in the field of migration. Notably, it has accumulated first-hand experience in building alliances between local political actors and civil society.

City of Sanctuary
City of Sanctuary UK holds the vision that the UK will be a welcoming place of safety for all and proud to offer sanctuary to people fleeing violence and persecution. In order to realise this vision, City of Sanctuary UK sup-

ports a network of groups, including villages, towns, cities and regions across the UK as well as other entities engaged in Streams of Sanctuary, Sanctuary Awards and activities intended to welcome people seeking sanctuary.

Safe Harbors Network
Safe Harbors Network is a charity dedicated to creating bed capacity for immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees. It recruits, screens and trains congregations, individuals, organisations and homes who partner with Safe Harbors to provide temporary emergency shelter beds for the said groups of people.

ICORN,
International Cities
of Refuge Network
ICORN is an independent organisation of cities and regions offering shelter to writers and artists at risk, advancing freedom of expression, defending democratic values and promoting international solidarity.

Working towards building a more secure society means leaving no one behind. This goal can be achieved promoting synergies among all actors committed to creating an inclusive and humane environment for everyone. This was precisely the key focus of our first online panel.

DEBATE ON THE CREATION OF AN ACTIVE NETWORK OF CITIES, MUNICIPALITIES, EU REPRESENTATIVES AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Cities are increasingly taking a stance against far-right parties across Europe. Based on the results of in-depth research work conducted by Seebrücke[1], we can affirm that no less than 598 cities across Europe have expressed their willingness to welcome migrants in their municipalities. In this context, how can we translate our inspiration into policy making? The discussion in this panel shed some light on the topic.
A general consensus existed among speakers that a fundamental shift in EU migration policy is needed. EU member states are blocking this shift, and cities across Europe cannot achieve it separately on their own. They need a common platform of support from which to stand up for themselves, united by a common vision, address the EU institutions with clear demands (which

already exist); civil society, on the other hand, will stand by their side and support their efforts in such a campaign launched in June 2020 and led by *From the Sea to the City*.

The City of Palermo has supported *From the Sea to the City* and its goals since the beginning of our initiative with the Palermo Charter Process Platform (PCPP), and Leoluca Orlando, the mayor of Palermo, has been one of the most vocal critics of the right-wing fear-mongering; he has also been advocating for a paradigm shift in EU migration policy. In Palermo, the cultural change started with the respect of the law, but unfortunately in many cases state laws end up being in contrast with human rights. For Orlando, in those cases, respecting human rights has to be the absolute priority, because we are living in terrible times in which human rights are violated on a grand scale by lawmakers. He provocatively affirms that Palermo can be considered totally illegal with respect to state laws, but it is definitely legal with respect to the International Declaration of Human Rights. The City has always shown its willingness to welcome migrants and refugees as equal citizens and to render everyone visible.

During the discussion, the Mayor of Palermo elaborated further on the topic: on the one hand, Palermo must be strengthened as a city welcoming migrants and refugees; on the other, it must become part of a network that we have already started to build.

> "I simply ask the EU to respect human rights. We have nothing to do with the EU if they do not respect human rights.
> We are geographically European, but we are Mediterranean–Africans in reality" (Leoluca Orlando)

The Mayor also brought up the possibility of forming ties with the Global Parliament of Mayors, an established platform that works to facilitate the dialogue among mayors, national governments and international organisations, with the aim of driving systematic action to take on global and national challenges and seize opportunities to achieve political change on a global scale. The discussion highlighted the necessity for Mayors to take on a leadership role in tackling the global challenges they face on a local level, including the challenges associated with migration. Mayors are freer than prime ministers, as, for instance, they don't have an army or have to worry about a national currency, so they can use their freedom to improve the respect of human rights, and that's why their role is so important.

The City of Barcelona was the second city on board of the *From the Sea to the City* process. Marc Serra, migration policy representative of the city, also highlighted during the panel the importance of establishing an alliance between cities and civil society. In the current political context, more and more cities across

"No human being can be illegal. Palermo is the safest city in Italy just respecting human beings. Mayors have a very important role to play in educating people. Our message is always against racism!" (Leoluca Orlando)

Europe are confronting EU's isolationist and far-right narratives on migration (the Sanctuary Cities, Safe Harbours in Germany, or Cities of Refuge) at the local level, trying to improve their reception and integration policies. The counter-narrative of reshaping migration policy from below enjoys very strong support from movements and initiatives such as Seebrücke, Open Arms and Mediterranea, as well as from a number of City Councils across Europe. In this context, what steps should municipalities take to influence the EU decision-making process concerning the refugee crisis from a local and regional standpoint?
In order to answer this question, Marc Serra reminded that it is thanks to cities that migration policies in the EU are taking a better direction. In addition, he underlined that the creation of such a network would push forward a migration policy that puts human rights at its centre. In fact, in April 2020, the mayors of Barcelona and nine other cities sent the European Commission, the European Parliament and the European Council a letter whereby they offered to house unaccompanied migrant children currently living in refugee camps in Greece. In the letter, Ada Colau, mayor of the Catalan capital, together with the mayors of Ghent, Leipzig, Nuremberg, Amersfoort, Amsterdam, Arnhem, Utrecht, Tilburg and Groningen — all members of the Eurocities network — lament the "deplorable" conditions in these camps and state that their cities "are prepared to receive them." "The humanitarian crisis is worsening rapidly," the letter continues, echoing the European Parliament president David Sassoli March 22 statement calling for "solidarity with children in desperate need."

According to Serra, the conditions are now more favourable to work on policies that place human rights at their centre, making the context more conducive to NGOs, cities and civil society working together on useful and impactful campaigns. In this sense, he emphasised the commitment of the City of Barcelona to a bottom–up vision of migration policy and confirmed that the Spanish city is determined to continue the struggle together with civil society and with EU decision-makers. Moreover, Barcelona is already working closely with one of the organisations in the Consortium, Open Arms.

"NGOs are the ones with specific experience and expertise in different fields. The same goes for Open Arms: as the City of Barcelona, we have funded them for their activities, because they are those who are being active on the ground" (Marc Serra)

Barcelona has long been one of the heralds of the idea of creating municipal networks and has co-launched and led several city networks and Mayors' initiatives. For instance, Ada Colau was the initiator of the Rome Manifesto on migration: an appeal to European cities. The text of this manifesto, published in February 2019, was also signed by the mayors of Madrid, Zaragoza, Valencia, Naples, Palermo, Syracuse, Milan, Latina and Bologna. What can we learn from previous experiences? What lessons can we draw for our future strategy? Answering these questions, the city representative of Barcelona explained that this was a highly 'Southern Europe' alliance, as it included cities from Spain and Italy, two countries that are traditionally interested and willing to engage in EU migration policy discussions. He highlighted the importance of involving cities from other European countries, particularly Germany and other countries in Northern Europe.

At the end of his contribution, Marc Serra insisted that investing economic resources in the development of human rights policies must be one of the key demands of a common European city alliance, adding that EU funds must not be solely earmarked for economic policies. As his final remark, he made an impassioned appeal for a common effort in requesting more EU funds.

On the side of civil society organisations, Massimiliana Odorizzi recounted the experience of Europe Must Act (EMA). EMA is a growing movement of grassroots NGOs and civil society that is very active on the Greek islands. It works in the camps trying to improve the living conditions and to increase awareness across the EU about the dramatic situation in the Greek camps; as Massimiliana points out, people live in tents with rats and snakes, dealing with mental health issues due to all the difficulties they are facing. Witnessing such serious violations of human rights, EMA is actively involved in advocating for fundamental changes in EU migration policies. EMA asks for the Aegean Islands to be immediately decongested through the fair relocation of people across Member States, for the EU–Turkey Agreement to be replaced with a fair and humane EU policy on migration and for dignified and legal conditions for reception to be created across Europe.

EMA stresses that it is unacceptable for EU politicians to ignore the reality on the ground and not do anything to change it. In order to achieve its goals, EMA intends to work with cities and mayors to expand the network of welcoming cities. They already have involved 45 cities. The inspiring message Massimiliana gives is that many cities are ready to welcome migrants and refugees in their territories and that there are a lot of examples of cities that became stronger through migration: an important potential alternative and better approach to migration.

Cities may not have the legislative power to directly relocate refugees themselves, but they can send a powerful message of solidarity that governments and the EU cannot ignore. On the 30th of March, the Mayor and citizens of Berlin pledged to take in[2] 1,500 refugees. EMA is now asking cities and towns across Europe to join Berlin in offering sanctuary to refugees living in overcrowded camps on the Greek mainland and islands with the campaign **#CitiesMustAct.**
At the end of her speech, Massimiliana affirmed that EMA and herself, as an Italian citizen, are ready to support every institution and mayor willing to pursue a better policy on migration. EMA will carry on its work to put an end to the shameful policies that plunge so many people into misery.

"We don't have to help refugees, they are citizens who can help our society" (Massimiliana Odorizzi)

As the last panellist, Léa Enon-Baron presented the experience of **ANVITA**, the French National Association of welcoming cities and territories, the largest municipal network in France active in the field of migration. ANVITA's first line of action is to defend the notion of unconditional welcome, a commitment to indiscriminately welcome anyone in need, with a strong belief in the right to mobility and people's freedom of movement and installation. In France, as in other European countries, the fundamental rights of migrants continue to be restricted, forcing thousands of people to live in shameful and inhumane conditions due to lack of action and confusing policies. Local governments and civil society are very unsatisfied with the national policies. The fight of associations to protect and assert these rights is an inspiring example.

The creation of ANVITA in 2018 was driven by the urge to share local innovative practices and replicate them at a national level. Today ANVITA comprises 31 cities, three regions, 2 departments and 20 elected representatives. The first lesson learnt by ANVITA is that local and regional governments can't do it alone, especially when facing the negligence of the States. ANVITA recently created a Migration Alliance with the Organisation

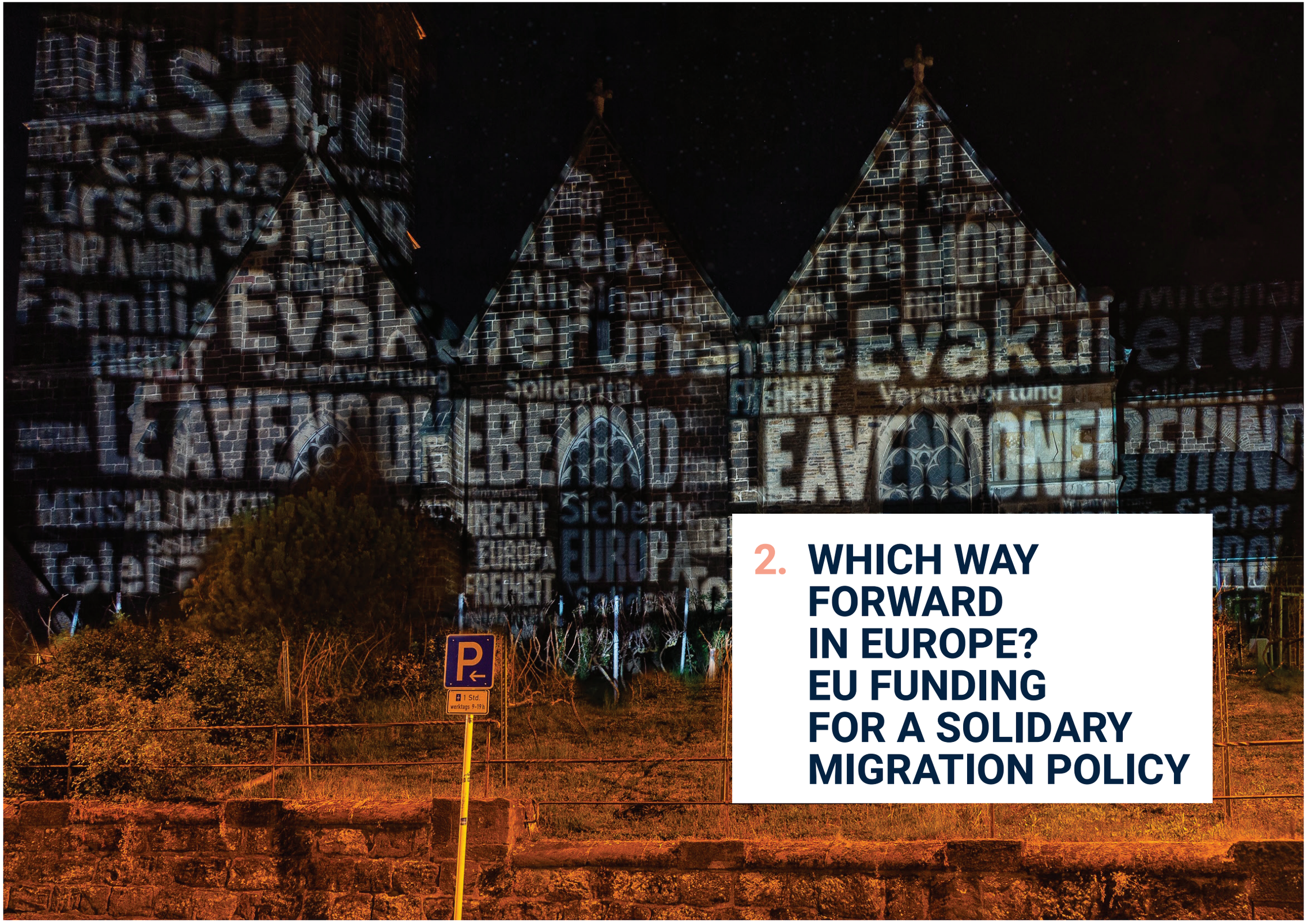
for a Universal Citizenship (OCU) to boost the action of local governments. ANVITA and OCU decided to launch this new civil society–local authority alliance to promote and support good welcoming practices led by local authorities and social movements. An alliance to defend, from the local perspective and on an international scale, a migration policy based on dignified reception and respect for fundamental human rights is part of its global vision of citizenship. The Migration Alliance is ready to participate in other campaigns and initiatives, such as *From the Sea to the City*, to implement these policies, because, as Léa says, united we are stronger to reach the EU level.

We have discussed possible ways of establishing a new actor in European migration politics, promising approaches and what needs to be done. Going back to the very first EMA contribution: we all agreed that the cooperation between cities and grassroots movements stands a good chance in the future. If we pledge to promote this cooperation, what should be the next steps in such a campaign?

[1] The report will be released in 2021.
[2] https://euobserver.com/coronavirus/147944

LESSONS LEARNED & NEXT STEPS

- Members of an established active network must work together towards a clearly set common vision. For this purpose, the priorities of the different members of such a network need to be evaluated.
- Given the highly operational nature of the process, it is key to have city administrations involved in the construction of new initiatives, along with civil society.
- Coordinated actions for common visibility are fundamental: press and social media strategies need to be designed and implemented.
- Communication with cities in countries like Spain, Italy, Greece and, in general, countries in Southern Europe is already easy. We should aim to expand the community of cities with which communication is facile and straightforward to other EU countries. Germany could play a leading role in this specific undertaking.
- Small cities should also be involved. As we grow as a movement, we can show that towns of any size can make a difference in advocating for a human rights-based migration policy.
- Call for a simplified access to and an increase in EU funds for municipalities: we need the cities to have a stronger role in managing and accessing EU funding.



2. WHICH WAY FORWARD IN EUROPE? EU FUNDING FOR A SOLIDARY MIGRATION POLICY

DEMAND 3

Access to the management of EU funds:

Active role of cities and civil society organisations in the management of EU-funds for migration policies.

This panel was organised around Demand 3 of *From the Sea to the City*:

"Ensure an active role for cities and civil society organisations in the management of EU funds".

The promoters of the initiative are convinced that a stronger involvement of cities and civil society organisations in European Union (EU) funding decision-making is an essential part of an EU migration policy that is more strongly shaped by the needs and demands of cities. A growing number of cities and municipalities all over Europe have already declared their readiness to welcome migrants and refugees. What these cities need are the resources to finance reception, housing and inclusion; moreover, they also need additional investments into community building. The panel brought together speakers from four different countries with proven expertise in EU funding for refugee reception and inclusion. Moderated by From the Sea to the City consortium member **Malisa Zobel** (HUMBOLDT-VIADRINA Governance Platform), the discussion involving **Rossella Nicoletti** (Eurocities), **Carlos Mascarell Vilar** (Council of European Municipalities and Regions), **Jan Braat & Niene Oepkes** (City of Utrecht) and **Gesine Schwan** (HUMBOLDT-VIADRINA Governance Platform) focussed on the obstacles that cities are currently facing

with respect to EU funding; the panellists also shared novel proposals and best practice examples for a concrete strategy for the future. In the paragraphs that follow we present a brief introduction on EU funding and a summary of the main points of the debate.

The issue of cities and civil society organisations having an active role in EU funding is a complex and often contentious one. Most EU funding is under shared management, meaning that the EU Commission and EU Member States share responsibility for deciding on funding priorities and allocation. Recently, cities and civil society organisations have been faced with situations whereby access to EU funding had been blocked by national governments, even when funds were in principle available. These experiences contributed to the decision of the mayors of the Visegrád capitals (Warsaw, Bratislava, Budapest and Prague)[1] to sign the Pact of the Free Cities cooperation agreement and to lobby for direct access to EU funding[2], although this initiative was not centred on asylum and migration issues. Negotiations on the multiannual financial framework (MFF), the so-called EU budget, were concluded by the end of 2020[3]. With regard to migration issues, the new MFF has a focus on returns, and, for the first time, it includes an external dimension of migration.[4] The Council of the EU also committed "to fund up to 10,000 border guards at the disposal of the European

Border and Coast Guard Agency by 2027" (Council of the EU, Press Release, December 17, 2020). The MFF provides a total volume of €8,705 billion for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, with the bulk of it reserved for border management.[5]

DEBATE ON CITIES' ACCESS TO DIRECT FUNDING

For many years, Eurocities has been advocating for a stronger involvement of cities in the design and implementation of relevant EU funding. Rosella Nicoletti explained that Eurocities believes that cities need to have direct access to EU funding, because they face the two-fold challenge of a rising demand of social services and falling local revenues. Eurocities is a network of cities from across Europe that works with local authorities on different issues, for instance on the integration of migrants and refugees. In fact, despite the challenge that integration represents for local governments, a growing number of cities have declared their readiness to welcome refugees. In 2016, Eurocities launched the "Solidarity Cities" initiative[8]. In 2020, in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, this initiative called on EU member states to relocate unaccompanied minors from the Greek islands to its member cities, which were ready to welcome them. Eurocities has

TWO MAIN TYPES OF EU FUNDING:

"Shared management"[6](80%) e. g., Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (DG Home)
The management of funds is shared between the EU and the Member States. The EU Commission entrusts the Member States with implementing programmes at a national level. Member States allocate these funds to end-recipients and have primary responsibility for setting up a management and control system of these funds.

"Direct management"[7] e. g., Urban Innovative Action (DG Regio)
EU funds are managed centrally/directly by the EU Commission and via its departments. The direct management of funds includes awarding grants, transferring funds, monitoring activities, selecting contractors, etc.

also coordinated several projects financed by the EU, like the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). In addition to direct access, cities ask for more flexibility in the use of EU funds. For example, the flexibility introduced in the growth and stability pact[9] (at the beginning of 2020) has proven to be a good tool to support local authorities.

"Eurocities believe that cities have a lot to say with respect to building a more equal and inclusive society, and they contribute to (...) a migration policy based on solidarity and human rights, because (...) integration happens at the local level" (Rosella Nicoletti)

The HUMBOLDT-VIADRINA Governance Platform (HVGP) does not only propose access to direct funding but also the introduction of a new fund dedicated to a just and inclusive municipal development. Gesine Schwan explained in detail the policy proposal of the HVGP. The main idea of an EU Migration and Development fund is to reimburse cities for the costs incurred for receiving and including refugees in the community, as well as to provide additional resources that can be used for the development of the cities' municipal infrastructure (see HVGP-Manifesto[10] & Conference Report[11] "Relaunching Europe Bottom-Up"). Using additional funds to focus on the entire local community contributes to a just and inclusive society, thereby mitigating the grievances of already residing locals. This goal is an important one, because right-wing populists often try to exploit these grievances to mobilise residents against the admission of refugees. Gesine Schwan also stressed that the Pandemic could be a chance to institutionalise the participation of municipalities at national and European levels. In order to ensure a broad accep-

tance by local communities, the decision of receiving refugees should not only be made by the mayor but by a municipal development council[12], which comprises representatives of the local administration, citizens, companies and NGOs.

"It is (...) important that there are so many active municipalities, which show — in public — that there is much room and much interest in Europe to receive and to welcome refugees and asylum seekers" (Gesine Schwan)

Carlos Mascarell Vilar from the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) argued that the EU discussion is focusing on returns, relocation, resettlement and asylum, but that small and mid sized cities want to move the debate towards integration. CEMR gathers the views of the association of municipalities and regional governments to represent their interests at the European level and tries to influence EU legislation in all the issues that have an impact at the local level (e. g., The Action Plan on the integration of third-country nationals[13] & New Pact on Migration and Asylum[14] are currently being negotiated).

Moreover, CEMR also works as a platform for the exchange of knowledge among cities. Many CEMR projects have the objective to find effective solutions at the local level and then bring these successful examples to the EU level to assess EU legislation and argue for the implementation of good practices. Due to increased advocacy and lobby efforts at the EU level, cities are now more at the centre of the debate and of the attention of the EU Commission. With respect to the question of access to EU funding, Carlos Mascarell Vilar emphasised three points: First, improving access to EU funding, especially by small and medium-sized cities. Second, increasing cities' capability to apply for EU funding. In this regard, the training of staff is very important. Third, aiming to influence EU legislation, so that it suits better the needs of cities.

"Our role also as cities (...) is to push central governments and the EU (...) to have a better framework for cities and a more welcoming framework — both from the financial perspective (...) and also from the regulatory perspective" (Carlos Mascarell Vilar)

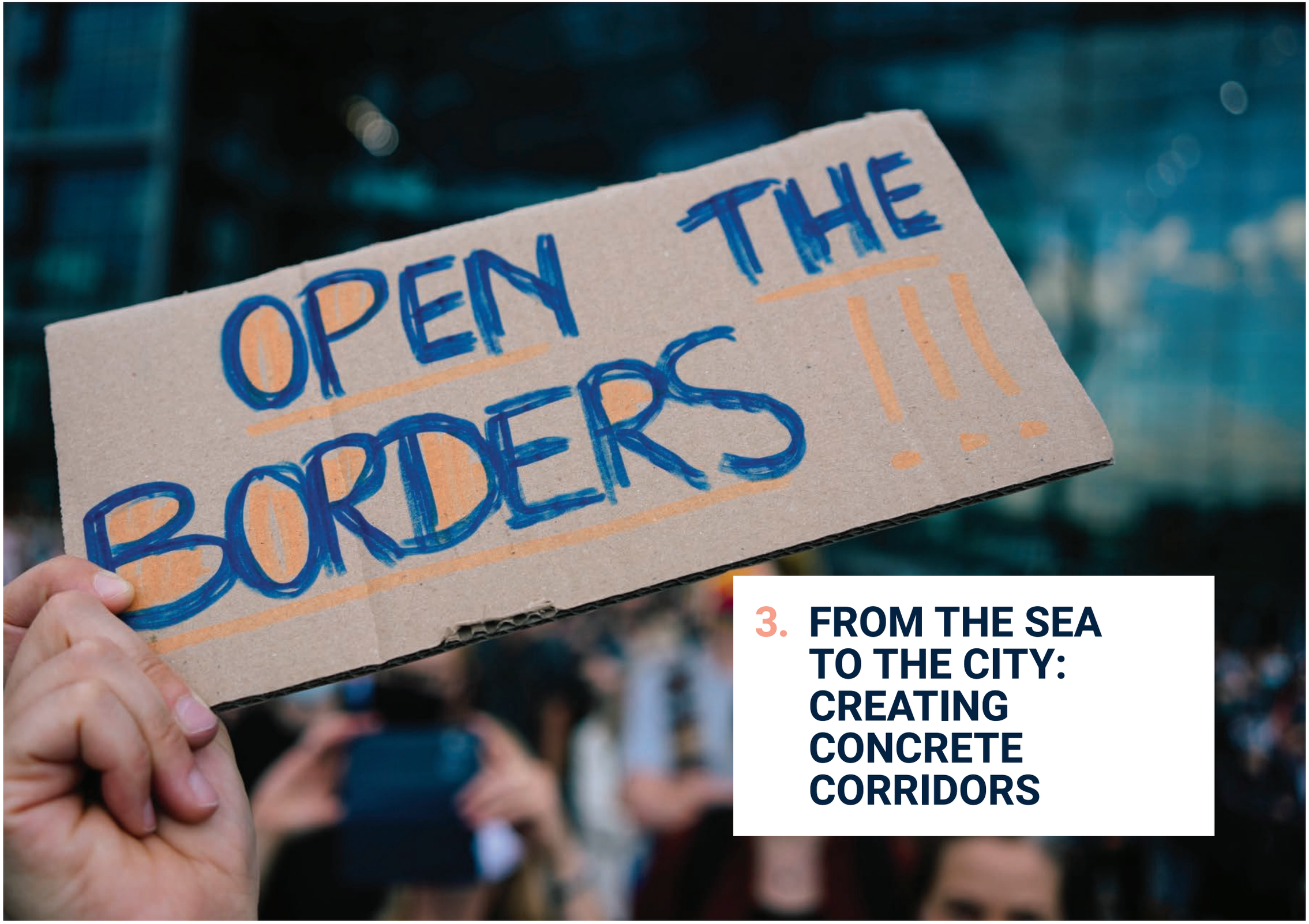
Although most EU funding is indeed under shared management of the EU Commission and member states, the programme dubbed Urban Innovative Action (UIA)[15]. is an example of cities' direct access to EU funding. UIA is a European Union initiative enabling selected urban areas to test new and unproven solutions to address urban challenges. The City of Utrecht participated in the UIA program (2015/2016) to realise the project "Plan Einstein"[16]. Jan Braat and Niene Oepkes, both of whom work for the city of Utrecht, explained that their city got frustrated with funding being allocated via the national level only, because all its proposals were denied. Together with Eurocities, the City of Utrecht lobbied to have direct access to funding, and it was successful with its proposal for an inclusive asylum centre in the highly competitive UIA programme calls. The background was that Utrecht had experienced a range of problems in asylum centres, because of the high numbers of refugees and low social acceptance in the city's neighbourhoods. The inclusive asylum centre offered practical courses that refugees could attend; but at the same time it was a very comprehensive educational package that was also open to the local community of Utrecht, which also faced the challenges of unemployment and social exclusion. The asylum centre provided affordable housing for 400 asylum seekers and 40 local youths. The project was later continued by the City of Utrecht, thereby securing its success and sustainability. This experience provides strong evidence that refugee reception can be beneficial to locals as well. Moreover, this example of good practice was disseminated widely across the Netherlands.

"This project also helped create the powerful counter-narrative that it is possible to have inclusive social centres in city neighbourhoods. Without direct funding, this wouldn't have been possible" (Jan Braat)

[1] See also Politico, Central Europe mayors pitch for EU cash to fight populism, 11.02.2020
[2] An open letter supporting the demands of the position paper was also signed by 15 European Mayors from the four Visegrád capitals, Kos•ice, Tallinn, Riga, Vilnius, Athens, Milan, Vienna, The Hague, Strasbourg, Frankfurt am Main and Berlin. For the position paper and open letter see: https://budapest.hu/sites/english/Documents/Direct_European_Funding_for_Cities_final.pdf 2020 https://www.berlin.de/rbmskzl/aktuelles/pressemitteilungen/2020/pressemitteilung.894534.php
[3] See Website from the European Parliament, Legislative Train Schedule
[4] See Euromed Rights on „EU MIGRATION BUDGET: MORE BORDER MANAGEMENT, LESS RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS"
[5] Council of the European Union, Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027 and Next Generation EU, p. 2
[6] More information at EU-COM Glossary, shared management
[7] More information at EU-COM Website, Management of EU funding
[8] "Solidarity Cities is an initiative on the management of the refugee crisis proposed by the Mayor of Athens and launched in the framework of the EUROCITIES network. It aims to constitute the framework under which all cities actions and initiatives are presented highlighting the political leadership of cities in addressing this challenge." (https://solidaritycities.eu/about)
[9] More on the Website from the European Commission, https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/eu-economic-governance-monitoring-prevention-correction/stability-and-growth-pact_en
[10] See HVGP, Manifesto Relaunching Europe Bottom-Up, 18.08.2017
[11] See HVGP, Conference Report "Relaunching Europe Bottom-Up", 18.08.2017
[12] Find more information at HVGP-Website, Municipal Development Council, https://www.governance-platform.org/en/initiativen/midi-2/municipal-development-councils/?_thumbnail_id=7963&cn-reloaded=1p
[13] See EU Commission, The Action Plan on the integration of third-country nationals
[14] See EU Commission, The New Pact on Migration and Asylum
[15] More information at UIA-Website, https://uia-initiative.eu/en
[16] More information here: https://uia-initiative.eu/en/uia-cities/utrecht

LESSONS LEARNED & NEXT STEPS

- Show how projects for refugee inclusion can also benefit other disadvantaged groups.
- Implement more advocacy and concerted lobby efforts to put the perspective of cities more at the centre of EU budget negotiations.
- Push for more direct funding.
- Make sure that local authorities and national associations of local and regional governments are included in the definition of priorities in national programs.
- Ensure the dissemination of projects results as a very important tool to show what works, so as to render projects sustainable.
- Build on already achieved progress, e.g., the role of local authorities is recognised in the EU Commission's action plan against racism.
- Strengthen strategic alliances and coordinate among existing networks (e.g., Solidarity Cities and "Sichere Häfen" Alliance, and reach out to networks beyond Europe).



3. FROM THE SEA TO THE CITY: CREATING CONCRETE CORRIDORS

DEMAND 4

Create corridors of solidarity towards Europe:

Legal arrivals to Europe and solidarity corridors from Libya.

The third online panel of the year was organised around Demand 4 of *From the Sea to the City*:

"Create safe, efficient, continuous and legal corridors towards and across Europe ('corridors of solidarity') by setting up a long-term comprehensive mechanism for arrival and reception with European municipalities at its centre."

This demand includes advocating for an immediate improvement of conditions — on the Greek islands in particular, while monitoring the situation in Turkey, as well as in Libya, a country to which migrants and refugees are illegally turned back. While rescue organisations try to improve their coordination at a daily operational level at sea, a wide spectrum of civil society actors push and lobby for the relocation and evacuation of refugees and migrants to welcoming cities. Against the background of an escalated EU border regime, the idea of corridors of solidarity is at the same time a practice and a vision.

The Mediterranean area is a contested space, with the moving migrants and refugees as the protagonists of an intense struggle. Against an escalated border regime, the cooperation at sea and between cities developed further, "safe passages, safe harbours and safe transit to a dignified life at the places

of arrival" remain our common goals, which also were the focus of the third online event.

In this online panel, we wanted to re-discuss with members of various networks, cities and organisations their experiences and limits, their challenges and perspectives in their struggle for an open Europe and for the right to move in safe passages.

The speakers of the panel were **Eleonora de Majo** (City Councillor for Culture and Tourism of the Municipality of Naples), **Filippo Furri** (Member of Migreurop and researcher on "solidarity cities"), **Fiona Kendall** (European and Legal Affairs Advisor for Mediterranean Hope Project), **Maurice Stierl** (WatchTheMed Alarm Phone) and **Rikko Voorberg** ("Let's bring them here" project). The moderator was **Hagen Kopp** (No One is Illegal and a member of From the Sea to the City).

CORRIDORS OF SOLIDARITY AND RELOCATION: ONGOING EXPERIENCES

C-MRCC, Civil Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre: as the official MRCC became dysfunctional, C-MRCC was devised as a 'creative' way to counter the horrific events taking place in the Mediterranean Sea. C-MRCC, which is an integral part of the Palermo Charter Platform Process, is both a practice and a vision against the non-assistance and illegal push-backs put in place by EU member states. With their own ships and planes and the hotline of the Alarm Phone, civil society networks create their own chain of practical support and rescue of people in distress, improving on the ongoing cooperation between search-and-rescue actors that has existed since 2014. C-MRCC also aims to document grave human rights violations and uncovered shipwrecks.

Humanitarian corridors, an initiative part of the "Mediterranean Hope" project of the Federation of Evangelical Churches in Italy (FCEI): It is carried out together with the Waldensian Table and the Community of Sant'Egidio. This project focusses mainly on corridors between Lebanon and Italy. Through the signing of biennial protocols with

the Italian government, they have launched a mechanism for bringing people safely and legally to Italy using article 25 of the "Community Visa code" (EU member states can grant at their own discretion visas with limited territorial validity for humanitarian reasons). With the first protocol (valid from 2015 to 2017) 1,000 visas were issued (to people from Morocco and Lebanon). The eligibility criteria are *prima facie* international protection cases or proven vulnerability (age, health and/or personal circumstances). The second protocol was signed in 2017, and the next one, the third, will have a wider geographical outreach. New corridors have also been started from Ethiopia and Jordan to France, Belgium and Andorra.

OPENING THE DEBATE: CREATING CONCRETE CORRIDORS OF SOLIDARITY

Opening the list of contributions, Maurice Stierl offered a clear overview of the current situation in the Mediterranean Sea. He rightly called it "devastating", as ever increasing numbers of shipwrecks and deaths occurring at sea with very low media visibility. Instead of preventing mass deaths by creating legal migrations corridors and guaranteeing ports of safety, the EU

proposes even more restrictive policies and is organising illegal pull-backs and push-backs through Frontex air surveillance and collaboration with Libyan forces. Within the Maltese SAR zone, the Armed Forces of Malta (AFM) sabotage boats and conduct push-backs using secret ships, while Malta's MRCC emergency centre is very often unreachable. The Italian MRCC and Coastguard have withdrawn from SAR engagement and reject responsibility for SAR operations and for assigning ports of safety. Moreover, an intense effort is ongoing for the criminalisation of sea rescue NGOs. Filippo Furri highlighted that the freedom of movement should be a common ideal and political goal; he also referred to the big issue of the externalisation of migration policies — both in terms of control and asylum — and the need to fight all together against the criminalisation of solidarity. Eleonora de Majo emphasised the importance of linking the debate on the social effects of Covid-19 pandemic to the debate on European migration policies, while keeping in mind the growth of far-right movements across Europe.

Fiona Kendall explained that the model of humanitarian corridors in Italy is working and that the Mediterranean Hope Project is willing to disseminate it and to ask others to get on board, as it is flexible and adaptable, and it can be scaled-up across Europe involving cities and other EU member states.

"In December 2019, we addressed a proposal to the EU Parliament for the opening of corridors not only from Libya but through all the central Mediterranean routes, and for the next two years we have a simple but ambitious goal: bringing 50.000 people from North Africa to Europe (...) We want to involve EU cities, NGOs and activists to welcome and receive people, lobby national governments to grant visas and bring people to Europe, and EU policymakers to provide funds. We are looking for partners: the more people are involved in the project the more feasible it becomes" (Fiona Kendall)

With respect to new "corridors of solidarity", Rikko Voorberg talked about the initiative "Let's bring them here". As Dutch civil society groups, they have been working to promote relocations to Holland since 2016, given that they did not just want to sign petitions or send aid but do something different. In 2018, they organised a mobilisation asking their government to welcome the 8,000 migrants from Greece and Italy it had promised to accept as part of the EU relocation program (2015–2016), and, as a collective concrete action, they went to Athens in December 2018. They have always wanted to put relocation in the political agenda, and in 2019 they decided to rent a plane to send it to Lesvos. The aircraft took off on October 5, but it was forced to land in Athens; eventually "Let's bring them here" staged a big protest demonstration in Lesvos. After this event, and after the fire in Moria, for 4/5 weeks a large public debate took place in Holland about relocation.

"Migrant people we met in Lesvos told us that, since their arrival in Europe, they had never been welcomed and their rights had not been respected, so they were surprised to see people who wanted to help and welcome them"
(Rikko Voorberg)

Rikko clarified that they are all aware that the responsibility for what is happening does not rest just with Greece, but with all EU member states; at the same time, a relevant section of Dutch society is open to migrants, and he saw and interesting parallelism: when the borders were open (particularly in 2015 and 2016) also the people in Holland were more opened to migrants. As part of Dutch civil society, members of the "Let's bring them here" initiative want their government to take its share of responsibility, and they want to emphasise that relocation "can happen, has happened and it's happening", despite it being an emergency solution that can be fairer.

"We saw how much pressure the Greek government felt from just a plane; we could clearly imagine also other planes flying with the aim to display in a visual and physical way that we won't wait for the decisions of governments and politicians. Even if that plane never takes off, we can send the visual message of a movement of citizens who want to do something concrete. We can connect with each other and if we get some mayors or cardinals on board maybe we'll find a way to fly again" (Rikko Voorberg)

In reference to the "Humanitarian corridors" project, in the second round of contributions, the moderator raised the issue of ambivalences and contradictions inside the Italian governments, which is at the same time putting in place humanitarian corridors and agreements with Libya (like the memorandum and pull-back collaboration). Fiona Kendall answered by saying that contradictions exist both at political and social levels. In her opinion, Italy seems a welcoming society, but there is a feeling of being 'abandoned' by the EU, and the Italian government reflects the paradox within Italian society, so in that sense it's not so strange that there are at the same time externalisation and welcoming policies. The main positives — emphasised Fiona — are, on the one hand, that the humanitarian corridor project survives, and it has been welcomed not only by governments but also by many Italians and, on the other hand, that there are good chances also for other EU countries to get involved in these corridors.

Filippo Furri commented on this issue highlighting that humanitarian corridors are one of the solutions, but we need to multiply the possibilities for people to move across borders and to strengthen solidarity. He also emphasised the possible risk associated with a 'humanitarian logic' and the 'institutionalisation' of the notion of humanitarian corridors with a specific focus on the notion of "vulnerability" as a category of selection that could be exploited in the logic of the externalisation of asylum (he provided as an example what the OFPRA – the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons – does in Niger). In his opinion, "humanitarian corridors must exist, but there is a risk that the institutional approach to the concept of vulnerability may, in practice, result in humanitarian corridors being utilised only for a limited number and categories of migrant people."

Filippo Furri stressed that today the main challenge and goal they have as Migreurop — and that we all have as civil society actors — is to find a way to build and defend roads of solidarity towards and inside Europe through the creation of networks of solidarity actors. In this regard, he mentioned as an interesting example of past initiatives the 2014 "Lampedusa Charter".

> "We have to think and work on multiple legal access routes (work, study, family, etc.), and we can imagine 'real' corridors of solidarity only organically linking different spaces and actors of solidarity"
> (Filippo Furri)

> "As solidarity cities, we need new political and legal tools; we could create a sort of confederation of cities through specific laws and resolutions" (Eleonora de Majo)

Rikko Voorberg's remark on this topic was that he likes the idea of humanitarian corridors, but such corridors should not exist only for people who have already obtained the refugee status. With respect to this last remark, Fiona Kendall replied that nobody who has access to the Mediterranean Hope Project programme already has refugee status and that this is an important difference with the resettlement program, as in the "Humanitarian corridors" project people arrive on humanitarian Visas, and they need to apply for international protection once they get here.

THE ROLE OF "SOLIDARITY CITIES" AS CRUCIAL ACTORS FOR CORRIDORS OF SOLIDARITY AND WELCOMING POLICIES

During the panel, the question of the role of cities in the creation and promotion of "corridors of solidarity" and "relocation from below" was touched upon more times.

Eleonora de Majo, after highlighting the level of networking achieved by Italian cities over the past few years (especially against Salvini's policies and in favour of "open harbours"), pointed out the need to "make a leap forward" to improve the infrastructures among solidarity cities through the writing of common resolutions and a common work on humanitarian corridors. She said that maybe the period of "new municipalism" will end because some mayors will soon end their term in office, but solidarity cities can do something — like pass common resolutions — that will remain in the future and that will make it possible for those cities to maintain the welcoming and open-minded approach that has distinguished them over the past few years.

> "We have to try to connect all our experiences, to strengthen our networking and to emphasise through common initiatives that there is a network of cities that is able to overcome also changes in local governments" (Eleonora de Majo)

Talking about the central role of cities, Filippo Furri mentioned the "roads of solidarity" from Lesvos and Lampedusa to Paris and Barcelona set up in 2017 and emphasised the importance of strengthening the right of the people to live in real "cities of solidarity" asking, for instance, local administrations not to implement local policies against migrants and to promote instead welcoming policies and initiative (as it has been done by "Sanctuary cities" in United States). Filippo also stressed the work they are doing as Migreurop to connect people and solidarity actors inside and outside Europe.

"I would like to recall the concept of "firewall" by François Crépeau: we can try to apply this logic and concept not only to solidarity cities but also to solidarity roads, finding a way to protect people both on the move and inside cities" (Filippo Furri)

Filippo also highlighted how crucial it is to work on different levels, citing as an example the city of Marseille, where civil

society was really present and active before the new progressive mayor was elected. Another very interesting goal, in his opinion, is to create networks outside Europe (e.g., including African mayors and cities) and solidarity initiatives between European and non-European cities.

Maurice Stierl stressed that C-MRCC grew from grassroots level, and it has as one of its priorities to work with cities, because at the national and EU levels only very few political possibilities are available to achieve our goals, since EU institutions and member states work hand-in-hand to create deterrence-based policies against migrant people. For these reasons, Maurice said, we all really have to focus on the grassroots level.

MIGRANT PEOPLE AGENCY AND CORRIDORS OF SOLIDARITY: WHO THE REAL PROTAGONISTS OF MIGRATION ARE

Another interesting debate that took place during the panel and that was related to corridors of solidarity and migration routes was about migrant people agency and the need to point out that migrant people are the protagonists of migrations and those who 'create' migration corridors and routes.

According to Maurice Stierl, we need to rethink human movements across borders:

"The question of solidarity and who are the real protagonists of migration is really crucial; I think that we must remind ourselves who the real protagonists of migrations are — those on the move — and we need to emphasise their agency in order to avoid reproducing a racialised and colonial imagery of "others" from the "Global South". And this issue is not merely about political discourse, but it also has important practical ramifications, because these "others" are often considered victims to be saved by Europeans, and this attitude erases

the reality of migration. So, it's not only about bringing them here, but we need to emphasise the tenacity they display by crossing the sea and organising that crossing" (Maurice Stierl)

When they reach Europe, Maurice stated, they often already have a concrete idea where they want to end up, and they continue their precarious journeys despite the obstacles put in their way by the Dublin and fingerprinting regimes. We need to think about our work as that of facilitators of sorts of the 'relocation from below': people themselves relocate because they know where they want to end up. The collective idea of creating infrastructures is based on the acknowledgement that people on the move do move. Instead of emphasising the idea that "we bring them in our spaces" it's much better to politically emphasise what we can do to strengthen along the way these migratory corridors, which are actually created by those on the move.

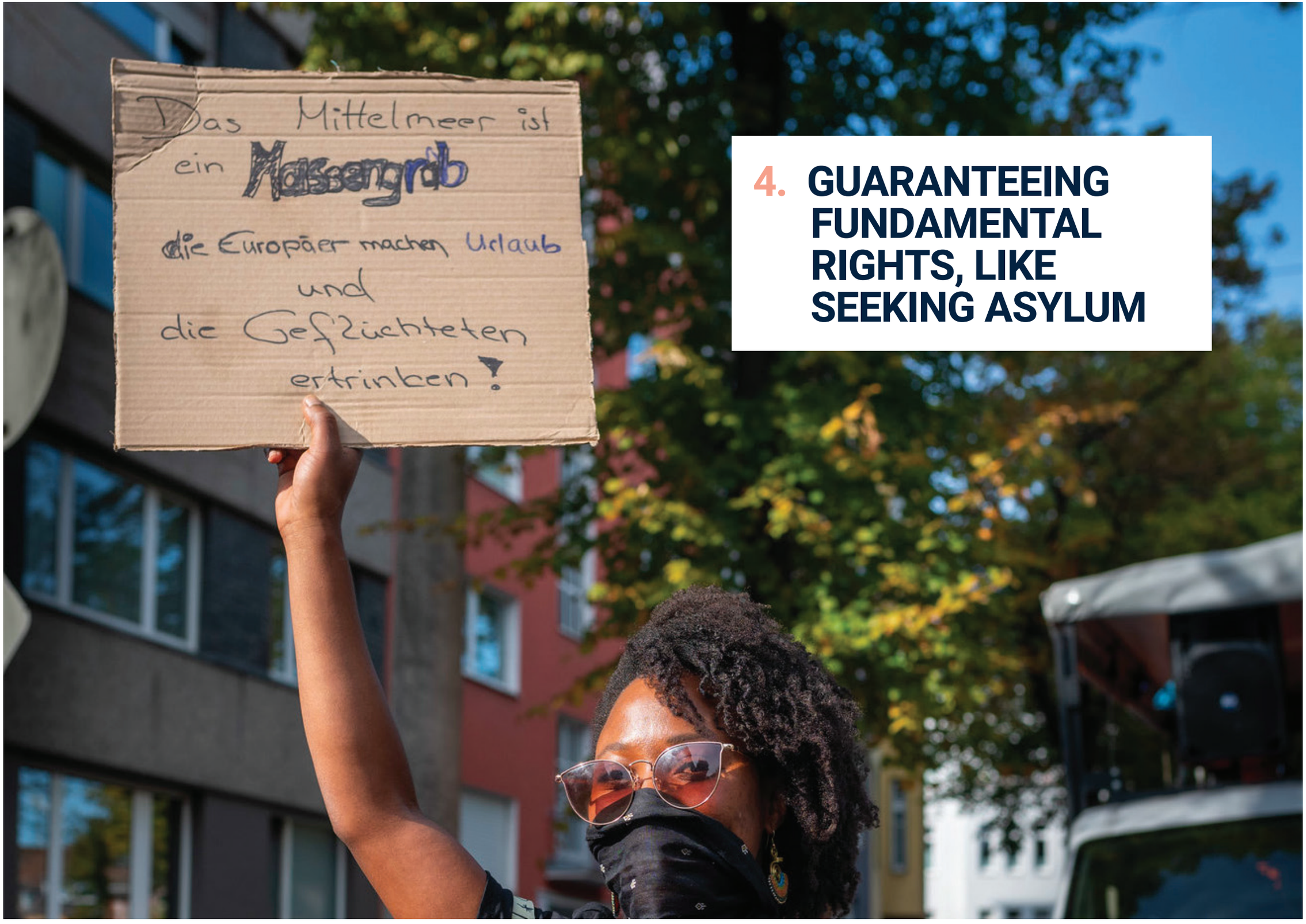
In reference to this topic, Fiona Kendall agreed with the importance of migrants' agency and, concerning specifically their project on humanitarian corridors, she said that, although their project is young, they engage with the participants themselves through a monitoring and evaluation system that relies on systematic feedbacks aimed at acquiring a better understanding of the needs and wishes of the migrant people involved.

On the same issue, Filippo Furri stated that EU and national institutions are denying migrants' agency and their right to move, and we need to work with a pedagogical approach about community, solidarity and cohabitation as ideas and practices.

The final comment by Maurice Stierl concerned the narrative we use. He said that he's not against a 'humanitarian' approach, but we always have to use it in a sort of creative way. In other words, not only do we have to take on the negligent nation states, but we also need to use that approach as a generator of political momentum to create ruptures in the border regime and to enlarge the spaces of resistance that migrants themselves created. So, we can use this humanitarian narrative — Maurice concluded — but we always have to be embedded in political languages, because the issue is political: people dying in the Mediterranean Sea is not a natural phenomenon. If we use the humanitarian language and approach, it has to be linked to direct political actions and demands for radical political changes and transformations.

LESSONS LEARNED & NEXT STEPS

- There is a need to support and reinforce the already existing corridors of solidarity.
- In most of the cases, existing corridors of solidarity are created in practices of disobedience by people on the move and by those who support them.
- The creation of corridors of solidarity should start from the reinforcement of existing structures set up by civil society and supported by city institutions, EU representatives and national governments.
- The ongoing experiences of humanitarian corridors (in Italy and other European countries) are proving that it is possible, from a logistic and economic standpoint, to create safe and legal channels of arrival to Europe.
- Migratory corridors should be reinforced and co-created together with those who are on the move.
- Local governments have the possibility and the will to become protagonists of the corridors of solidarity.
- Even if the criterion of "vulnerability" is important to create safe passages, it should not be the only one.
- The 'humanitarian' narrative and approach need to be connected to the political level.
- When we talk about corridors of solidarity and migration in general, we need to emphasise as much as possible the leadership and agency of migrant people.



4. GUARANTEEING FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS, LIKE SEEKING ASYLUM

DEMAND 2 & 5

Ensure protection of migrants' lives in the Covid19 crisis:

Protection of migrants' and refugees' lives and needs in the COVID-19 crisis.

Ensure fundamental rights and dignity for migrants and refugees:

Right to seek asylum, access to the social and health care system, adequate housing and decent working conditions.

According to the IOM, in 2020, 1,366 people lost their lives attempting to reach the European shores[1]. The actual number of the dead and missing is likely to be significantly higher than this estimate.

2020 has been a very difficult and challenging year. The pandemic did not prevent migrants embarking on the perilous journey across the Mediterranean, with its crossing even more insecure due to the constrains on travels across borders and the hard-line restrictive EU policies.

The pandemic has highlighted the current failures of the asylum systems and exacerbated existing problems, putting into sharp relief the importance of guaranteeing access to information, adequate shelter, housing and, above all, health care. It showed also the disproportionate threat faced by the most vulnerable, who had to comply with lockdown orders, often sleeping rough and lacking basic hygiene, with migrants paying the heaviest toll of the health crisis[2].

Finally, the pandemic compromised the ability to work for many, hitting particularly hard those who have to operate under precarious and informal working conditions.

Access to work, housing and health care are fundamental rights. Starting from these three words "health", "shelter" and "work", this panel has explored current constraints and discussed practical solutions to promote and implement human rights-based migration policies.

The panel, within the framework of the From the Sea to Cities campaign, encourages cities to reinforce and renew their commitment to showing solidarity to the migrant population in this challenging period. This engagement is more crucial than ever, when hostility towards asylum seekers is measurably mounting in many EU countries[3], and when the main priority of EU Member States in the near future might not be to reinforce inclusive policies.

HOW TO PROMOTE A HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED MIGRATION POLICY TODAY?

The panel, moderated by **Laura Colini** (Researcher and Senior Policy advisor, Tesserae Urban social research and Activist at INURA), provides the opportunity to bring together different perspectives from five European countries. **Annalisa Camilli**, Italy (journalist for the *Internazionale* weekly magazine covering migration in the Mediterranean), gives a quick overview of the situation in the Mediterranean and in the EU during the COVID-19 crisis. **Onalia Bueno**, Spain (Mayor of Mogán, Canary Islands), recounts the controversial story of a small city in the Canary Islands that, on its own, is unable to grant human rights protection to migrants, while balancing the growth of hostility towards newcomers by the local population under pressure for the COVID-related economic recession.

Mathieu Garabedian, France (Deputy Mayor Villeurbanne France), shares insights on how belonging to the solidarity network of French cities and having a long-standing tradition of welcoming migrants can help reinforce inclusive policies at local level, even during the pandemic. **Muhammad al-Kashef**, Germany (Human Rights lawyer, Migration Researcher and member of Watch the Med Alarmphone), reminds the panel that the "crisis approach" risks portraying migration as a problem. Instead, the long-term solution of adequate and accessible living conditions for all asylum seekers and refugees should be vindicated and set as priority. **Malin Björk**, Belgium (Member of the Left group in the European Parliament — GUE/NGL) provides an overview of the political commitment pushed by the Left Group at the European Parliament and the need for broad alliances to change the Dublin Regulation.
This panel was organized around the 'From the Sea to the City' Demands 2 and 5:

"Ensure protection of asylum seekers' and refugees' lives & needs in the COVID-19 crisis" and **"Ensure the access to fundamental rights and dignity for asylum seekers and refugees arriving to European cities, from the right to seek asylum, an access to the social and health care system, to adequate housing and decent working conditions"**.

"Over the last few years, we have witnessed a shift in the political debate and European public opinion. While five years ago rescue operations were a priority, now the EU Border Agency Frontex is accused of coordinating refoulement practices" (Annalisa Camilli)

THE DEADLIEST BORDER ZONE

"The Mediterranean route is still the deadliest border zone in the world", opens up the debate Annalisa Camilli. The COVID-19 pandemic contributed to the worsening of an already critical scenario. While Greece increased pushbacks of migrants to Turkey, in breach of the non-*refoulement* principle, in April 2020, the Italian government declared its ports unsafe for people rescued at sea due to the pandemic. Soon after, Malta did the same. Both countries contracted private ships to hold migrants and asylum seekers in quarantine before allowing them to come ashore.

NGOs, volunteers and activists taking part in search-and-rescue operations have been under legal scrutiny and sued. The reduction in the number of search-and-rescue boats in the Mediterranean and the numerous returns to Libya, where migrants are detained in appalling conditions, also provoked the reopening of the old route to the Canary Islands. Together, these developments keep putting into question the international law of the sea and erode the human rights of thousands of asylum seekers.

With the release on September 23rd of the long-awaited new European Pact on Migration and Asylum, the European Union announced a fresh start on migration policy, seeking to build confidence and to strike a new balance between responsibility and solidarity. Although the newly released document underscores the importance of cooperation and creates a solidarity funding pool, the disputes around the Dublin regulation concerning a fair sharing of responsibilities in welcoming migrants are far from addressed. Migration continues to be treated as a security issue, with the main objective remaining to keep migrants outside the European borders.

Over the years, politically-driven changes have affected Mediterranean routes and led to repeated landings in certain areas, especially islands, which have become synonymous with migration: Lampedusa, Lesbos and now the Canary Islands. The Guardian reports that from January to November 2020, about 20,000 people braved the Atlantic route from Africa to Europe, with over 8,000 of them arriving at the Canaries in November alone[4]. Claiming between 500 and 1,000 victims in 2020, the Atlantic route is the most dangerous.

"The general public has lost interest in speaking about this issue, and it has grown insensitive to the situation at the borders. This is why, in such a difficult moment, the civil society and activists should stand firm in their demand for a common and humane system of sea rescue" (Annalisa Camilli)

VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS — THE CONTROVERSIAL CASE OF THE CANARY ISLANDS

Despite reports by Frontex and the Intelligence Spanish Centres from the countries of origin of most migrants, the Spanish central government found itself unprepared when migrant inflow sharply increased in August 2020. The Coast Guard alone leads rescue operations. Although the emergency camp in Arguineguín was intended to host 400 people for 72 hours, the number of its occupants has swelled to almost 2,600. After identification, migrants undergo the PCR test for COVID-19; they are then provided clothes, food and basic items, and they receive medical care.
Most migrants slept where they ate on the bare dock in adverse weather conditions for 20 days. The insufficient number of sanitation facilities and the presence of rats at the port

compromise the hygienic and health conditions at the camp. On October 28th, 2020, Onalia Bueno denounced this situation to the judicial authorities. Following a visit in Arguineguín, the case was dropped due to the lack of a law for this specific violation; this decision was then appealed by the Public Prosecutor's Office of the Canary Islands. In November, the Spanish Ombudsman visited the camp and declared its upcoming closure on the 30th of November. Migrants have now been transferred to an 800-people military camp in Gran Canaria.

"My municipality decided to bring to the public attention the violation of the human rights of migrants and of international conventions in what we call the 'shameful camp' in Arguineguín. This is happening indistinctly at all European borders in the Mediterranean and in the Atlantic" (Onalia Bueno)

THE HOUSE OF EQUALITY AND RIGHTS IN VILLEURBANNE, FR

Part of the ANVITA network, the City of Villeurbanne has a longstanding experience of migration: today, Algerians are the largest foreign community, but each generation of migrants has left a mark in the history of the city. Mathieu Garabedian, Deputy Mayor of Villeurbanne, explained how this feature played a role when the French Government dismantled the camp in Calais, an action that incited a political debate on relocation and solidarity. Located in a region whose President was opposed to relocation, Villeurbanne welcomed 100 people and promoted innovative integration policies. As the first French city to sign the Homeless bill of rights[5], Villeurbanne

> "I would like to have contacts with other cities. The European Union and Spain did not pay proper attention to this matter. At the end of the day, we are speaking about human beings and we continue to treat them like objects" (Onalia Bueno)

> "The city is working on a 'residency citizenship' with a ceremony for welcoming newcomers. This initiative, of course, is intended also for migrants and refugees. It will encourage the active participation of everyone" (Mathieu Garabedian)

pays particular attention to housing, engaging in initiatives whose focus ranges from temporary emergency accommodations to long-term housing policies. In this framework, the city has created the "House of Equality and Rights", where migrants and refugees receive support for completing and filing their administrative papers. Part of this work is specifically dedicated to children, helping them to navigate the school system and offering language courses.
Matthieu argues that the next step should be to create partnerships between French municipalities and those in other countries to expand the network of welcoming cities. In order to build a more welcoming Europe, everyone should be involved, including citizens, who should stand shoulder-to-shoulder with migrants and refugees.

“The hashtag #LeaveNoOneBehind about the Moria camp turned into a global campaign, promoted by different NGOs, individuals and organizations, to disseminate common demands worldwide”
(Muhammad al-Kashef)

ADVOCATING FOR LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS

“European reception camps, whether in the Canary Islands or in Greece, share similar constraints related to access to health care, food and housing/shelter”, said Muhammad al-Kashef. This “crisis approach” has the downside that it sends the message that migration is a problem without solutions. On the contrary, concrete examples tell us that solutions can be found. We should adopt a long-term sustainable approach to welcoming migrants and engage in advocacy at the European and national levels.

Thanks to the campaign **#LeaveNoOneBehind**, funds were raised that will be devoted to running a broad spectrum of projects aimed at improving the living conditions of refugees, while empowering them. Building on this experience, Muhammad stressed the importance of creating strong networks and encouraging solidarity. In order to develop effective inclusion programmes, migrants and refugees should be an active part of the process. Mohammad concluded by drawing a comparison between the global effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which immediately received public and political attention along with considerable resources, and the inhumane conditions that migrants and refugees face every day, which are instead neglected because “others” are suffering them.

“In theory, pre-screening procedures at the borders should not affect nor abolish the right to seek asylum (...) In practice, however, it does, and we see that in our daily practice”
(Muhammad al-Kashef)

BUILDING ALLIANCES TO ADVOCATE FOR FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

Malin Björk (Member of the Left group in the European Parliament — GUE/NGL) explained how civil society associations, consortia and lobbying groups could make a real difference by advocating for an improved access of migrants and refugees to fundamental rights. Malin argued that the legal framework currently in place, which includes detainment as a cornerstone, renders the struggle to guarantee the rights of migrants and refugees especially complex.
European policies keep tending towards deterrence, detainment and externalisation. The funding allocation and the new Pact on Migration and Asylum confirm these priorities. Concrete examples are the EU–Turkey deal, the discussions

> "I have been to Moria, like many of you. I have seen the so-called 'new Moria camp', and what is happening there is beyond words; this is not the way to treat people" (Malin Björk)

> "Stop the pact, redo Dublin, that's the fix" (Malin Björk)

about "safe" third countries and the financing of the Libyan coast guard, which, rather than engaging in coast guard operations, seems intent in implementing a coordinated *refoulement* policy. These cannot be real political answers.
Malin presented some of the proposals put forward by the Left: de-militarisation of the borders, activation of coordinated SAR operations, evacuation of the camps and an end to agreements with third countries aimed at blocking migrants outside Europe. She added that solidarity will set in motion a change in momentum.
Part of the European Parliament has joined forces with NGOs to report and document abuses at the European borders. Although much work is left to be done to achieve harmonisation, the setup of an independent monitoring mechanism is being discussed. The remit of this mechanism should be extended to include SAR operations and third countries.
Malin concludes arguing that it will be in the European Council that strong voices will be needed. The goal is to facilitate a virtuous alignment of policies that is aimed at replicating the best practices, not at lowering standards to get everybody on board. The way forward is to build a coalition of the willing that will not compromise.

[1] https://missingmigrants.iom.int/region/mediterranean

[2] https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/oecd-employment-outlook-2020_1686c758-en

[3] https://news.gallup.com/poll/320678/world-grows-less-accepting-migrants.aspx

[4] https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/nov/29/canary-islands-struggle-with-huge-rise-in-migration-arguineguin?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other

[5] https://www.housingrightswatch.org/sites/default/files/Template%20Homeless%20Bill%20of%20Rights%20EN_0.pdf

LESSONS LEARNED & NEXT STEPS

- Lobby and advocate for SAR operations coordinated at the European level
- Create coalitions of the willing to find the best possible solutions rather than seek compromises at the expense of the human rights of migrants and asylum seekers
- Encourage the exchange of best practices among cities
- Provide evidence of successful projects on the ground and document violations

CREDITS

This is a publication by From the Sea to the City Consortium. From the Sea to the City is an initiative launched in June 2020 that aims to join forces to reimagine the European stance on migration with cities and human rights at its centre. With this vision, we want to send a strong signal to European institutions that we want to pursue a welcoming and human rights-based migration and refugee policy. Welcoming refugees and migrants in our municipalities and cities is a chance to democratise Europe further from below: cities bear the brunt of the problems associated with managing migration, so cities should also have a say in European migration policy. We thank the Schöpflin Foundation for their support in the process.

This report is for everyone interested in supporting the work of the From the Sea to the City Consortium around the demands, and/or wanting to read about good practices already in place at the local level.

This publication is the result of a collective effort by the members of the Consortium of From the Sea to the City. The content of this publication represents the views of the author only and is his/her sole responsibility.

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pp. 94-95: Members of From the Sea to the City

LIST OF SPEAKERS AND MODERATORS OF THE ONLINE PANELS IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER:

Malin Björk - member of the European Parliament

Jan Braat - representative of City of Utrecht

Onalia Bueno - Mayor of Mogán, Canary Islands

Annalisa Camilli - journalist

Laura Colini - member of Tesserae, INURA and From the Sea to the City

Léa Enon-Baron - coordinator of ANVITA, France

Filippo Furri - Member of Migreurop and researcher on "solidarity cities"

Mathieu Garabedian - Deputy Mayor Villeurbanne France

Muhammad al-Kashef - Human Rights lawyer and Migration Researcher, a member of Watch the Med Alarmphone

Fiona Kendall - European and Legal Affairs Advisor for Mediterranean Hope Project

Hagen Kopp - No one is illegal and a member of From the Sea to the City

Alina Lyapina - Seebrücke and a member of From the Sea to the City

Eleonora de Majo - City Councillor for Culture and Tourism of the Municipality of Naples

Carlos Mascarell Vilar - Council of European Municipalities and Regions

Rossella Nicoletti - Eurocities

Massimiliana Odorizzi - representative of the network Europe Must Act, Focus on Greece

Niene Oepkes - representative of City of Utrecht

Leoluca Orlando - Mayor of the City of Palermo

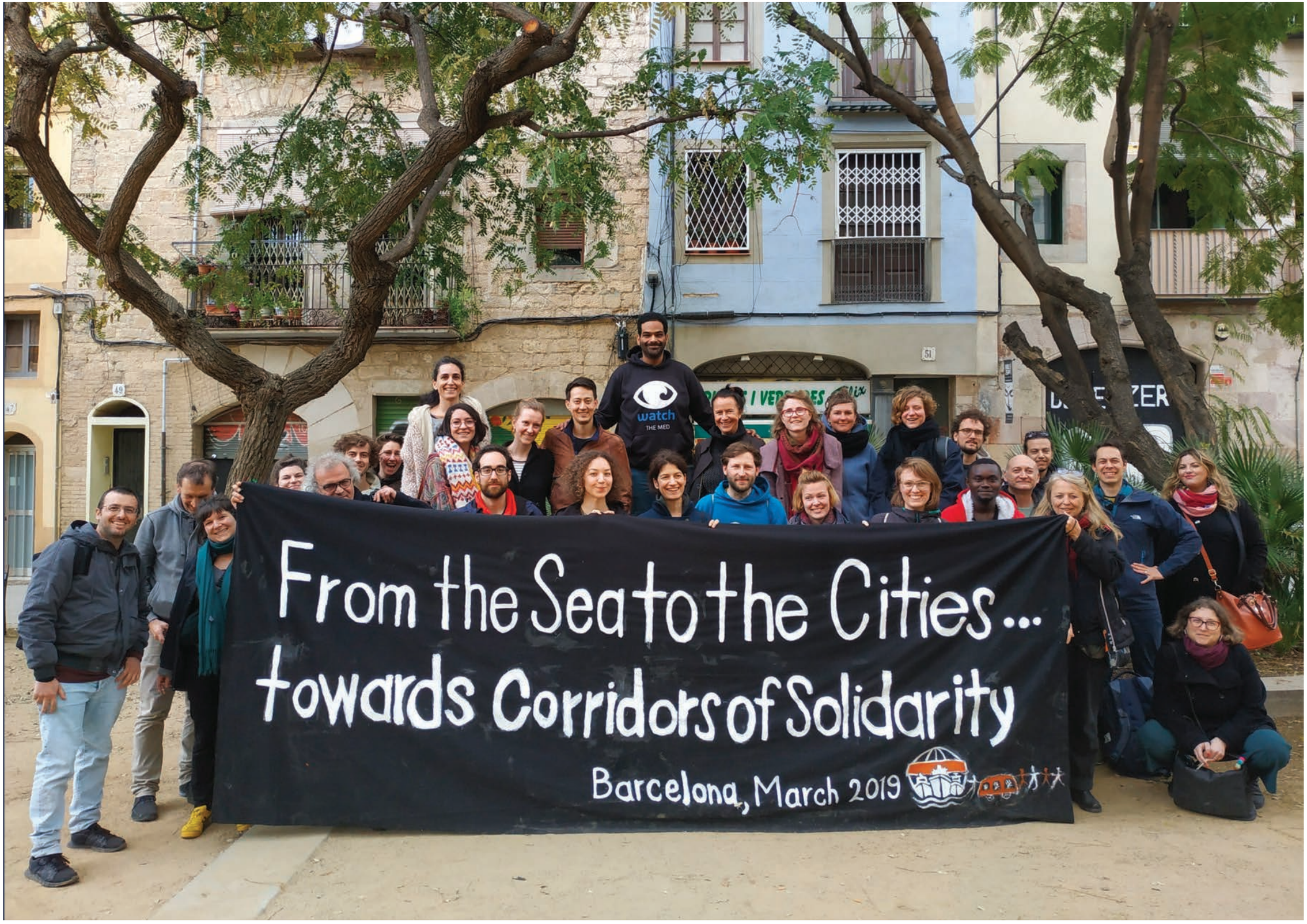
Gesine Schwan - HUMBOLDT-VIADRINA Governance Platform

Marc Serra - representative of the City Council of Barcelona

Maurice Stierl - WatchTheMed Alarm Phone

Rikko Voorberg - "Let's bring them here" project

Malisa Zobel - HUMBOLDT-VIADRINA Governance Platform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