# Data collection for refugee reception at the community level

## Policy brief

2022

## Review of options and support materials

MigrationWork CIC
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INTERCULTURAL CITIES
CITÉS INTERCULTURELLES

COUNCIL OF EUROPE
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# Data collection for refugee reception at the community level: review of options and support materials

POLICY BRIEF

**Intercultural Cities programme**

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*The opinions expressed in this work are the responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the Council of Europe.*

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# Contents

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## 1 INTRODUCTION: THE CHALLENGE OF DATA COLLECTION

Cities are often at the forefront of receiving people seeking international protection, or 'asylum': that is, people who have crossed international borders to escape persecution or conflict. Services to support these asylum seekers and refugees are mostly delivered at local level, and the places where they find work or connections to their own communities tend to be in towns and cities. Additionally, interactions with other residents and with civil society organisations supporting intercultural integration into the receiving society mostly happen there.

To make the welcoming process of refugee reception a success for the both established residents and newcomers, its elected authority and other public agencies need access to information: statistical data on the newcomers' demographic and socio-economic attributes, plus a picture of their needs and aspirations. This can only come from engagement with individuals. However, even cities with long experience of monitoring demographic change may find, when refugees arrive, that the city lacks effective ways of gathering such information.

To explore the challenge of collecting data about (and with) asylum seekers and refugees, this Policy Brief looks at the experience of cities in Poland and other European states that received people fleeing the Russian military aggression against Ukraine from February 2022 onwards.

Key terms used in the Brief to discuss this experience are defined in the box below:

**In search of protection: definition of terms**

People who claim international protection are asylum seekers while their request to stay in the receiving country is still being considered by its authorities. Refugees are people whose need to stay in the receiving country for their protection - that is, their right to asylum has been recognised by its authorities.

How do states reach the decision whether to recognise someone as a *refugee*, entitled to asylum? Most of them, having signed the UN's 1951 Refugee Convention, apply its criteria in making this decision.[1] Referring to dangers and persecution faced concretely by individuals in countries of origin rather than to their nationality, the 1951 Convention is likely to remain the normative framework for most asylum decisions for the foreseeable future.

The exodus of civilians fleeing Russian aggression against Ukraine prompted the emergence in spring 2022 of a new network of laws offering time-limited asylum - with wide civic and social rights - *specifically for Ukrainian nationals*. Central to this new regime is the Temporary Protection Directive activated by the European Union in March 2022.[2] It was accompanied by national laws with similar effect enacted by some EU member states such as Poland, and beyond the EU by states such as the UK and Canada. In effect, this array of laws is an interim framework for protection of a specific nationality, temporarily overlaid on the principles of the 1951 UN Convention to create a new collective category of protected persons. Within this group there are likely to be many individuals who would also qualify for refugee status under the 1951 Convention were this to be tested.

The term 'Ukrainian refugees' is used in this brief to mean anyone who fled Ukraine to seek protection since the start of Russia's military aggression. Available information suggests that the vast majority - probably at least 98% - were Ukrainian nationals, entitled to be received under the interim protection regimes indicated above.

People without Ukrainian nationality who had to flee Ukraine are likely, in most cases, to have been citizens of EU or other safe countries to which they could then return. Those could not do so had the option of seeking asylum elsewhere in Europe under UN Convention rules, as well as the offer of EU Temporary Protection (see footnote 2). They included people who, before February 2022, had refugee status within Ukraine or were applying for it, and those resident in Ukraine who were stateless.[3]

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[1] On the 1951 Convention - supplemented by its 1967 Protocol - see https://www.unhcr.org/1951-refugee-convention.html. States may vary, according to national law and policy, in the way they apply Convention criteria in practice to specific asylum claims.

[2] https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/common-european-asylum-system/temporary-protection_en. This Directive also extends EU temporary protection to people resident in Ukraine before 24 February 2022 who are not Ukrainian nationals but who had refugee status there (or were seeking asylum); who are stateless; or who are third-country nationals unable to return 'safely and durably' to their country of origin. It allows such beneficiaries of EU temporary protection also to apply - if they wish - for asylum under the standard system of the 1951 Convention.

[3] Refugees and asylum seekers in Ukraine before February 2022 (https://www.unhcr.org/ua/en/refugees-asylum-seekers) numbered just over 5000 in total. On stateless persons in Ukraine before 2022, see https://www.unhcr.org/ua/en/41381-

Because of forced displacement, people seeking protection typically arrive in a new country with few of the linkages to the official systems, services and social networks through which a city authority usually gathers data on its residents. Refugees, even when that status is officially recognised, may spend a long time without a fixed residential address to bring them within the scope of an official census or household survey. This places people in an even more precarious situation. Until refugees become visible in local data and their voices become heard, the city cannot work with maximum effectiveness and efficiency to support them.

### 1.1 Scope of this Policy Brief

To help city authorities meet this challenge, this Policy Brief offers an overview of methods for gathering information about newly arrived asylum seekers and refugees. Most methodologies outlined here are backed up by a large quantity of technical and academic analysis. Though some illustrative references are provided, the Brief could not attempt to review this literature as a whole nor to provide a technical manual for applying these methods in the very disparate circumstances of cities across Europe. To operationalise them in their specific local context, cities will want to apply their own expertise – in-house or external – according to available resources.

Rather, the Brief aims to *guide the city in reviewing its options* in this field, showing how different methodologies may fit with different aspects of refugee reception and integration, or different kinds of refugee movement. Some key features of its approach should be noted:

- This Brief is about both quantitative (statistical) data and qualitative (subjective, non-numerical) data. Where we use the term 'data' for brevity, it is intended to include both quantitative and qualitative information. The latter, describing qualities or characteristics which cannot be reduced to numerical values, includes refugees' own accounts of their needs, experiences and aspirations for the future. Whichever type of data is under discussion, this analysis recognises that it originates in the varying experience of individuals. A key strength of community-based methods of data collection, reviewed in section 3.4, is that they may more fully reflect the richness of individual experience.
- To frame the methodologies outlined here, this Brief proposes a set of ethical values and principles: a **Code of Practice for collection of information on refugees** (see section 2). Our research suggests that public authorities under pressure have sometimes embarked on data collection exercises with weak safeguards for the interests and rights of refugee respondents. We believe cities will welcome the reminder, in the proposed Code of Practice below, to prepare staff and tools – if possible well before refugees arrive – in order to respect the rights and well-being of respondents.
- The Brief explores ways of gathering data and other information which can potentially engage communities within the city, as well as more conventional methodologies that look at city residents as broad demographic categories. Engaging people at grassroots level can turn data collection into collective community action, so that it becomes part of the process of intercultural integration.
- Whilst its focus is on people seeking protection, the data collection methods described will typically also pick up information from 'migrants', meaning people who changes their country of residence to spend twelve months or more in the new country, with whatever motive.[4] This includes those who move to work, join family or study, as well as those who are undocumented or without current permission to stay.

The challenge of data collection was presented in acute form to Polish cities starting in February 2022, when the Russian military aggression against Ukraine drove millions of Ukraine's citizens to seek sanctuary beyond Ukraine's borders, particularly in Polish cities. The Polish example is presented in this Brief as a larger case study to provide insight into practical applications and challenges.

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strengthened-protection-for-stateless-people-in-ukraine-737-stateless-persons-applied-to-determine-their-status-in-2021.html. This UNHCR summary suggests they may then have numbered around 35000, mostly *'vulnerable and marginalized groups, such as Roma, homeless persons, older people holding Soviet passports'* and ex-prisoners. No information is available on how many of Ukraine's refugees, asylum seekers and stateless persons fled the Russian military aggression in 2022.

[4] Though this remains the orthodox international definition of *migrant* or *immigrant*, states in Europe and elsewhere are increasingly replacing it with criteria that refer to their own immigration control decisions. Further discussion and definition of these and related terms can be found here: https://rm.coe.int/intercultural-glossary/1680a836f2

**AN EXAMPLE: EXPERIENCE OF POLISH CITIES IN WELCOMING PERSONS FLEEING UKRAINE IN 2022**

The military aggression against Ukraine in February 2022 led to one of the largest, most rapid movements of refugees from a single conflict zone since the Second World War.

By December 2022, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had recorded 7.8 million refugees from Ukraine across Europe. Of this total, 61% had registered for protection under the European Union's (EU) Temporary Protection Directive or similar national schemes.[5] Earlier in the war, Europe's total of Ukrainian refugees may have been even higher. In September 2022, a survey within Ukraine by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) suggested that an estimated 1.3 million Ukrainians had already returned to homes there following cross-border displacement '*due to the war*'.[6]

Of these refugees from the war in Ukraine, Poland received more people than any other country, bringing major changes to the demography and civic life of its cities. Table 1 below gives the number of Ukrainian refugees recorded in nearby countries (first eight rows) and in other states of Europe which received more than 100,000 of them (remaining five rows), as reported to UNHCR for December 2022. The figure for Poland is 31% of the European total.

Table 1: Ukrainian refugees recorded by UNHCR, by country – Europe: December 2022

| | **Recorded refugees (1,000s)** |
|---|---|
| **Poland** | **1529** |
| Republic of Moldova | 98 |
| Bulgaria | 52 |
| Romania | 98 |
| Hungary | 33 |
| Slovakia | 103 |
| Czech Republic | 468 |
| Austria | 89 |
| | |
| France [(a)] | 119 |
| Germany | 1022 |
| Italy | 173 |
| Spain | 149 |
| United Kingdom | 148 |

[5] UNHCR Operational Data Portal - Ukraine Refugee Situation December 2022, at
[6] UNHCR Regional Bureau for Europe, *Ukraine situation flash update* No 33 (21 October 2022) - https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine.

| | |
|---|---|
| All other European countries[(b)] | 882 |
| | |
| **Total recorded refugees in European states** | **4963** |

*Source: UNHCR Operational Data Portal, December 2022 at https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine*

*Notes: (a) Data for 31/10/2022. (b) Includes Turkey (47,000 approx.)*

However, this shows only part of the picture. For most countries, the numbers in Table 1 refer to people registered under the EU's Temporary Protection Directive or equivalent national schemes. Generally, these numbers fall well short of the actual population of refugees who fled Ukraine after the military aggression. For instance, UNHCR projected in September 2022 that, by the end of that year, the actual number of Ukrainian refugees in Poland would be around two million – that is, nearly one-third higher than the figure for recorded refugees shown in Table 1.[7]

This gap illustrates the data challenge facing cities in Poland, and this is despite a benign legal framework for Ukrainian refugees to obtain legal residence that might be expected to encourage their engagement with public services and other recording systems. Legislation adopted by the Polish government within weeks of the war's outbreak had created a range of rights and safeguards for Ukrainian refugees: *'.. extended legal stay, access to employment, healthcare, education and some financial assistance'*, running for 18 months (with scope for extension) as well as the right to establish a company and free use of public transport.[8] All were entitled to register for the PESEL identification number (Powszechny Elektroniczny System Ewidencji Ludności - Universal Electronic System for Registration of the Population) that gave wider access to social services and some cash support.[9] Yet by autumn 2022 an estimated 30% of Ukrainian refugees in Poland had still not taken up a PESEL number.

More broadly, as indicated above, a similar proportion of Ukrainian refugees remained 'below the radar' of basic population counts.[10] When the Intercultural Cities (ICC) programme of the Council of Europe (CoE) organised a consultation with three Polish cities on their support needs in spring 2022, their clear view was that they had hardly any information about most of the new arrivals. Whilst Poland gave an almost unanimous welcome to Ukrainian refugees, these cities were essentially 'flying blind' when planning for the refugees' needs and possible longer-term integration.

Cities receiving refugees worldwide face similar challenges. But for three reasons the challenge was exceptionally acute for Polish cities responding to people displaced by the war in Ukraine. The first - paradoxically - was the generosity of the official welcome for Ukrainian refugees reaching Poland after February 2022. Its government, as noted above, almost immediately granted them access to a broad range of rights that were not conditional on going through the complex immigration control procedures normally faced by migrants of all kinds, including asylum determination procedures. For millions of Ukrainian refugees in 2022, these rights were guaranteed simply by registering at the border to legally stay in Poland, or by applying for a PESEL number giving access to some additional rights. With no obligation to register, they were less likely to appear in official Polish datasets either on immigration or on use of services.

When in October 2022 the government decided to make registration for a PESEL number compulsory for Ukrainian refugees, one of its aims (besides reducing risks of social security fraud) was to give the public authorities *'more information on each Ukrainian that enters or leaves Poland'*. [11]

[7] UNHCR Regional Bureau for Europe, Ukraine situation: Recalibration – Regional Refugee Response Plan March-December 2022 (September 2022).
[8] This 'special law' is outlined at https://www.pomocprawna.org/en/special-law-for-people-fleeing-ukraine---a-short-guide
[9] PESEL stands for Powszechny Elektroniczny System Ewidencji Ludności (Universal Electronic System for Registration of the Population).
[10] See UNHCR ibid., (September 2022). The new law was the Act on Assistance to Ukrainian Citizens in the Context of the Armed Conflict in Ukraine.
[11] This legislative change also cut some social benefits for Ukrainian refugees and required those in public accommodation to contribute to its cost : https://www.euractiv.com/section/all/short_news/poland-to-tighten-ukrainian-refugee-residency-laws/

Secondly, the data challenge was deepened by refugees' uncertainty about their own future. The military aggression against Ukraine, exposing most of its civilian population to risk of devastating attack, nevertheless left open efficient rail and road links which gave them the option of leaving the country or returning to it much more readily than refugees in most conflict situations. The result, as already noted, was exceptionally rapid flight of high numbers of refugees – very largely women, most with children – of whom a significant proportion then wished to keep open the option of early return to homes in Ukraine. A survey in Poland's 12 largest cities in April 2022 found that 39% of these refugees wanted to return to Ukraine as soon as hostilities ended.[12]

Ambivalence about staying in the country of sanctuary discouraged many from registering with its public services. Officers in the city of Lublin – relatively near to the Ukrainian border – estimated in April 2022 that only 10-15% of refugee children had been registered for schools there, with parents often preferring tuition online from Ukraine for the sake of continuity.[13] Hesitancy about using available public services of course meant that these refugees were less likely to appear in administrative data.

A third factor – again, in itself very positive – had the perverse effect of excluding Poland's Ukrainian refugees from some conventional forms of population count. Before the war, Ukraine's migrant diaspora had already been enormous, across Europe and globally, with over one million Ukrainians living in Poland alone. The diaspora's welcome for their compatriots fleeing the Russian aggression, combined with Polish citizens' eagerness to help, resulted in offers of accommodation in private homes for most Ukrainian refugees. By April 2022, it was estimated that 38% were lodging in homes of 'private Polish owners', with a further 23% staying with Ukrainian friends or family who had previously migrated to Poland.[14]

Low take-up of accommodation and other services offered by public authorities and civil society has inevitably left these refugees outside standard systems for recording and counting newcomers. Five months after the outbreak of war, Lublin city authority had some data on roughly 1000 Ukrainian refugees whom it was supporting directly, and on a similar number being helped by civil society organisations. In total, however, these supported groups made up only about four percent of Lublin's estimated Ukrainian refugees in early summer 2022.[15]

Poland's city authorities, with partners in academic life and civil society, responded vigorously to this data challenge. By April 2022, the Association of Polish Municipalities (UMP), with input from experts at Warsaw University and leading migrant rights organisations, had published a research report[16] on the scale, composition and intentions of this new population of Ukrainian refugees. Bringing together official population and administrative statistics, mobile phone 'big data', and survey findings, it exemplifies the combined-methodology approach discussed in Section 4 of this Brief. Alongside the UMP report, other surveys and analyses have continued to explore available data on the forced migration of Ukrainians to Poland.[17]

The challenge remains, however. Officers of major Polish cities and NGOs confirmed in summer 2022 that – though the UMP work had been valuable – they still lacked the data they needed, both to respond to immediate needs of Ukrainian refugees and to plan longer-term steps towards integration: '*Municipalities are still largely in the same data crisis as in April. Despite macro numbers from UMP they have a far from full picture of what is happening in their cities* ...'[18]

**Lessons from Polish cities' experience**

1. Besides more obvious factors like the scale of new arrivals and the scope (geographically and logistically) for moving back and forth between country of origin and country of sanctuary, the level

[12] UMP (Unia Metropolii Polskich – Union of Polish Metropolises)*, Ukrainians in 12 largest Polish cities after 24 Feb 2022: Key results from reports of the UMP Research and Analysis Centre* (June 2022) – includes Krakow, Wroclaw, Lublin.
[13] ICC consultation meeting 26.04.22.
[14] UMP*, Ukrainians in 12 largest Polish cities*…, (June 2022). Survey evidence in the UMP report indicates that within two months of the Russian invasion, two-thirds of all residents in these 12 cities had given help to Ukrainian refugees.
[15] Research interview 28.07.22.
[16] The report, initially entitled as in footnote 8 above, was prepared by the Research and Analysis Centre of the Union of Polish Metropolises with input from experts at Warsaw University (in particular its Centre for Migration Research), and leading NGOs the Polish Migration Forum Foundation and Polish Hospitality Foundation which champion migrant rights and integration. It is now online as *Urban hospitality: unprecedented growth, challenges and opportunities: a report on Ukrainian refugees in the largest cities* (April 2022) at https://metropolie.pl/fileadmin/user_upload/UMP_raport_Ukraina_ANG_20220429_final.pdf. A June
[17] A good example is: Pietrusińska M.J., Nowosielski M. (2022) *Ukrainian forced migrants and the (in)equalities of the Polish educational system*, CMR Spotlight 7 (42) (Centre of Migration Research, Warsaw University) www.migracje.uw.edu.pl/en/.
[18] Research interview 28.07.22.

of public sympathy and political support for refugee newcomers may also critically affect cities' ability to collect information about them via traditional administrative channels.

The initial challenge of data collection may be greater when public opinion and asylum policy are very favourable to newly arrived refugees than when refugees' admission to a country is tightly controlled and the public is less engaged with their welfare. A 'refugee-friendly' environment may enable them to deal with exile outside the scope of state-based systems that usually generate conventional statistical reports.

For the longer term, however, refugees' visibility - and hence the quality of data on their reception and settlement - can only be assured by opening their access to public services and giving them confidence in their role as new residents of their cities.

Though refugee movements are inherently difficult to predict, some contingency planning may be possible. Cities can prepare themselves for the potential task of data collection by making links in advance with voluntary sector bodies and NGOs likely to play a role in any future refugee reception - including migrant associations - offering them an introduction to data collection and management issues; and

Expert partners in academic bodies and NGOs can explore possible methods of data generation and analysis, tailored to city circumstances.

## 2 CODE OF PRACTICE: GATHERING DATA AND OTHER INFORMATION WITH REFUGEES

This Code of Practice summarises key issues which need to be considered to ensure the ethical and responsible operation of a research process, especially when dealing with vulnerable groups facing emergency situations. It has been drawn up within the framework of the literature focusing on ethics in forced displacement. It is based on the law, best practice, and people's rights and welfare.

As a summary, the Code presented here does not offer specific policies or procedures but aims instead to ensure that all relevant areas are given consideration and thought, to help individuals and organisations develop their own procedures relevant to their circumstances. Issues presented here are of equal importance (regardless of the order in which they are listed) and should all be given due consideration. It should be noted that the Code is intended as a living document to be adapted and improved over time.

The following principles are essential in the design and implementation of data collection:

**1) Independence.** Research should be designed and implemented under the principles of neutrality and impartiality. This means independence with respect to vested interests, political or ideological influence, or any form of prejudice.

**2) Purpose.** The processing of data should be done for legitimate purposes, not for the benefit of the individual or institutional processor or that of third parties. All research subjects must be made aware of the purpose of the research.

**3) Voluntary and informed consent.** Participation in research should be on the basis of an informed and free decision. The research subjects should retain the right to revoke this consent at any time.

**4) Use and custody of confidential information.** The confidentiality of the research subject's data is vitally important. All procedures must be designed with confidentiality and security in mind. Data subjects should be assured that their data will be kept confidential and informed how it will be analysed and shared. Data subjects should also be informed about when this confidentiality must be broken (e.g., in instances where there is potential for harm to the data-subject or others).

**5) Non-discrimination/ equal treatment.** The principles of non-discrimination and equal treatment should be respected for any person, irrespective of nationality, gender, racial, ethnic or social origin, religion or belief, political ideas, age, ability or sexual orientation. This is both to ensure that the research process is not discriminatory in itself, and to ensure that resulting data is accurate and does not inappropriately present results which are skewed due to particular individual needs or characteristics.

**6) Training.** All those involved in the research process should be appropriately trained to ensure competence, systematic professional reflection, and a clear understanding of this Code.

**7) Inclusion of refugees and 'host' community as partners.** Active consideration should be given to how both refugees and members of the receiving community can be involved at all stages of the research process (design and implementation e.g., as researchers, analysts and disseminators of results). This will both enhance accuracy and transparency and also encourage intercultural interactions by means of the process itself.

**8) Clarity of methodological approaches.** Published research should be explicit about how data (qualitative and quantitative) was collected and analysed, drawing attention to factors that might have filtered or biased its findings: for example, reliance on translation, use of online contacts, sampling techniques, and the extent to which samples are representative of the diversity of the 'target' population.

**9) Open access.** Thought should be given to the dissemination of research findings, and commitment should be made to their widest possible dissemination in a timely and accessible manner, to ensure all possible social, economic, cultural, and environmental benefits. That said, messaging disseminated through the media or elsewhere should be carefully considered in relation to Principle 10 ('Doing no harm') below.

**10) Doing no harm.** The dignity, safety and well-being of stakeholders (participants, partners, researchers, assistants and interpreters etc.) should be proactively prioritised. Particular attention should be paid to the ways in which research processes, directly or indirectly, can (re)traumatise. They can also feel dehumanising and can contribute to racism, xenophobia and the criminalisation of migration. Researchers must consider how their mere presence in a specific location might influence and provoke risks.

**11) Gender.** Issues of gender should be considered at all stages of the research process (design, proposal, research, evaluation, and dissemination). For example: by breaking down data by sex and analysing data in a gender-sensitive way; by identifying possible gender stereotypes, inequalities, and gender biases in the research project; and by using gender-sensitive language throughout the process.

**12) Child centred approach.** Any research involving children should have their protection and wellbeing at its core. Particular attention should be given to designing research in a way that will engage children and encourage them to share their lived experiences and perspectives.

# 3 RECEIVING REFUGEES, COLLECTING DATA AND LISTENING TO PEOPLE'S VIEWS: OPTIONS FOR CITIES

## 3.1 Official datasets

How far can states' pre-existing data systems help to inform cities' decision-making as they receive forced migrants?

This Brief distinguishes between four broad types of official data source that cities may want to explore. Two are country-wide schemes with a statutory requirement for residents to supply the information requested - in effect, universal data systems. The other two arise from administration of public services or control functions, and hence apply only to a sub-set of the population.

### *3.1.1 National census data*

All Council of Europe member states conduct nationwide population censuses. EU member states are required to conduct them every 10 years. In principle, these offer a detailed dataset on every household and individual present on a given date, and are a powerful tool for analysis of long-term change. If it poses migration-related questions, a census may offer insight into the integration trajectories of migrants over time.

A rarely-conducted census is of limited use to municipalities, however, in responding to the recent or ongoing arrival of refugees. Some limitations may stem from census design or protocols: for example, omission of questions related to migration, or exclusion of collective accommodation (e.g., hostels) from coverage. Risks of bias may arise from lower response rates in districts or types of households that are more likely to include refugees. The crucial problem, however, is timeliness. Even if by chance a national census happens just after the arrival of many new refugees, the time taken to process its

vast dataset and to disaggregate findings to local level means that census outputs cannot guide cities in responding to the needs of these newcomers.

Census population counts, or updated estimates derived from them, may usefully give a baseline to contextualise more recently generated estimates of refugee numbers. This was the case, for example, in the April 2022 calculation of likely numbers of Ukrainian refugees in Poland by the UMP Research and Analysis Centre, testing mobile phone data against state population statistics.[19] But in general they will not be as useful as more immediate methods of data collection.

### *3.1.2 Identity (ID) cards and resident registration data*

All Council of Europe member states except the United Kingdom (UK), Ireland and Andorra issue a national identification card to their citizens. Compulsory in some states, voluntary in others, ID cards may offer local authorities some data on resident population since they require an address.[20] ID cards specifically for foreign nationals – compulsory or voluntary – are issued in most Council of Europe member states as an extension of national citizens' ID cards. But in general ID cards offer cities little information about their migrant and refugee populations.

Access to data held elsewhere, especially at higher levels of government, can be challenging for local authorities to access. This can be due to bureaucratic and/or political hurdles, including in some cases formal regulations that restrict access.

ID cards intersect with compulsory resident registration schemes. Most Council of Europe member states (but not, for instance, France or the UK), operate some form of compulsory registration for longer-term residents. Typically, these require both citizens and foreign nationals moving into a given locality to register within a specified time period at the town hall or other local public office.

If administered by the city itself, such schemes are clearly an effective tool for gathering basic information about change in its population. But once again this is not a tracking system since onward moves are not registered. In many countries, moreover, the registration system is centrally administered so that - as with ID cards - cities may have difficulty in acquiring the data it generates.[21]

### *3.1.3 Administrative data: service provision*

Council of Europe member states vary widely in the way they control access to public services: education, health and social care, employment support, financial benefits and so on. Sometimes the key to using them will be the national ID card. In other cases, a separate ID is issued, or an individual service may maintain independent user records. If they can navigate these administrative sources, cities have the option of attempting to extract data from public service user records, as distinct from the universal ID or registration schemes.

Once again, however, there are limitations. These include:

- the recurring issue of data access by local government;
- the risk of mismatch between parameters recorded by a given service and key elements of city reception plans; and, not least,
- the reality that many refugees never take up the relevant service, whether because of the volatility of their lives in exile or because they are undocumented or otherwise unrecognised by the state.

Experience of Polish cities receiving Ukrainian refugees – even if exceptional in several ways – illustrates the barriers to using such administrative data. For example, these refugees in Poland were encouraged to apply for a PESEL number, which grants access to the full range of state health and social care plus some financial help. In theory, therefore, PESEL data should have given valuable insight into basic characteristics of the new refugee population in respective city areas. In autumn 2022, moreover, registration for a PESEL number was made compulsory for Ukrainian refugees (see footnote 9 above).

In practice, however, Polish city officials found that this existing data system helped them very little because:

[19] UMP, *Ukrainians in 12 largest Polish cities*…, (June 2022) op.cit. p.10.
[20] For instance, they are compulsory in Poland, Germany, Hungary; but voluntary in France, Finland, Ireland.
[21] States which administer their resident registration scheme centrally include Hungary, Norway and Denmark. Often such schemes are run in conjunction with the system for ID cards.

- PESEL numbers could be allocated to refugees without a current personal address. So PESEL data became quickly outdated as people moved within or beyond Poland.
- Information associated with PESEL was minimal, omitting the fuller detail of refugees' attributes and aspirations which would be necessary for longer term planning.
- Local officials were not even sure that they would be given access to PESEL records.[22]

Administrative data from public services nevertheless has a part to play in supporting refugee reception. In Poland, for example, the local authority report on Ukrainian refugees (see footnote 19) used data supplied by the Ministry of Education to estimate take-up of school places by refugee children in each city.[23] And service providers in many European states are increasingly recognising the value of collating data specifically about refugees and migrants and their needs. For example, the World Health Organisation (WHO) reported in 2020 that most countries in its European region routinely collect migrant data within health information systems.[24]

**Local leisure cards and/or 'city passports'** may provide data directly to city authorities. In various forms, these cards offer local residents cheaper or free access to a range of amenities ranging from public transport to leisure facilities, cultural sites and events. Many cities have made them available to refugees free of charge (for instance Edinburgh through its Relocated People Access Programme or Berlin via its Berlinpass, Paris through its citizenship card). Such cards create opportunities for collecting information about the cardholder, usually including contact details. This information will, however, probably be limited in scope and may be quickly out of date as people move.

### *3.1.4 Administrative data: immigration control and asylum/refugee systems*

Nowadays, states have complex systems for controlling the arrival and stay of foreign nationals within their borders, with policies and procedures to demarcate a route for each type of voluntary migration: employment (temporary or permanent), study, or family reunification. Here we focus on the other major channel for people seeking sanctuary as refugees.

For Council of Europe member states who are also members of the EU, procedures for receiving and supporting asylum seekers are governed by the Common European Asylum System.[25] For states outside the EU, these procedures will be controlled by national government, with very little input from local authorities. However, local authorities are often called upon by national authorities to deliver both reception services and longer-term integration support. Local authorities may also be asked to support new arrivals under a refugee resettlement programme. Where they take on this role, clearly, cities should have direct access to relevant data about people seeking asylum under its care, as well as good opportunities to engage them in surveys or workshop discussions about their needs.

Even when directly managed by cities, however, refugee systems may present challenges for data collection:

- Staying outside the system: A support system generates useful data about newcomers only if they engage with it – as Polish cities found in 2022 when a large proportion of people fleeing Ukraine found accommodation outside reception centres and other public provision. Though this case is unusual in recent European experience, it is a reminder that data from asylum and refugee support systems cannot cover refugees outside those systems.
- End of process: Cities seeking information from official systems for determining asylum claims will need to ask: What happens when that refugee determination process is completed? Where the decision is positive, with recognition of the applicant's refugee status, they will usually move to 'mainstream' services where – as already discussed – the analysis of administrative data may be challenging. Those whose refugee status application is refused often lose whatever support they

[22] Research interview 28.07.22

[23] UMP, *Ukrainians in 12 largest Polish cities*…, (June 2022) op.cit. p.

[24] WHO Regional Office for Europe, *Collection and integration of data on refugee and migrant health in the WHO European Region*. Copenhagen 2020. The report noted however the selection of such data by health authorities too often focuses on infectious diseases rather than wider health needs: https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/337694/9789289055369-eng.pdf.

[25] https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/common-european-asylum-system_en.

had as asylum claimants, while they will usually have minimal or no entitlement to mainstream support. Gathering information on their cases will therefore be even harder for city authorities.

### *3.1.5 Step by step: best practice in using official datasets*

To address the problems in using official data sets identified above, and to get full benefit from them in preparing for reception and integration of refugees, the following recommendations to cities and other local authorities are key.

**Access**: Negotiate in advance with agencies and ministries to get access to all official data relevant to refugee reception and integration.

**Engagement**: Aim to strengthen links with local migrant community groups and forums, and to build capacity (on both sides) for dialogue with them. Create alternative channels for communication with those refugees who may not engage with 'official' support services.

**Data needs**: Anticipate weaknesses in many official sources - data becoming outdated, lack of qualitative information - by encouraging the early training and engagement of community-based researchers.

## *3.2* Geolocation or 'big data'

The rapid spread of mobiles and smartphones to most of the world's population - above all in higher-income countries but with majority ownership also in others - alongside the development of technology that can instantly process their colossal output of signals, has created new scope for relating phone use to location through the technique known as geolocation or 'geotrapping'.

Early pioneers of this methodology were urban planners, and epidemiologists plotting patterns of disease transmission.[26] Simply by identifying the phone mast through which each call was made, across the sequence of calls from each owner, the analyst was able to trace people's movements. With the shift to smartphones and social media, the technique has been enhanced for academic analysis but also as an advertising tool, making it possible to target adverts to each phone-user according to the pattern of their journeys and activities. All analysts applying the technique insist that data is anonymised, with no possibility of identifying individual phone users within their geolocation dataset.

As Ukrainian refugees reached Polish cities after 24 February 2022, researchers at the Unia Metropolii Polskich (UMP) called on the advertising data company Selectivv[27] to apply 'geotrapping' to estimate the increase since February in the number of Ukrainians in the country and in each of its 12 major cities.[28] This was done by assuming that Poland's Ukrainian population (refugee and non-refugee) at a given time could be identified as being: all adult smartphone users (aged 15-plus) who had been in Ukraine at least once in the previous year, and had set their device to Ukrainian or Russian language, or were using a Ukrainian SIM card.

By interrogating the data from the use of such 'Ukrainian' phones in January and then again in March 2022, the geotrapping analysts derived their estimate of the increase in the Ukrainian population in Poland since the Russian invasion. Cross-checked against official estimates of population, the phone-based figures were deemed to be realistic.

At the same time as this study was exploring the use of phone data, a more in-depth academic analysis monitored the use by Ukrainian refugees of three social media platforms: Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. It argued that this gave *'first insights into the integration willingness and identification of trends in the movement and intentions of refugees when there is no official data'.* The author warned however that *'this approach has many limitations, and there is a need for many more studies to perfect this method'.*[29]

Basic questions can be posed about big data methodology. If analysis is based on phone usage, for example, is it realistic (even in Europe) to assume universal ownership of a smartphone, or that each

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[26] For instance Tatem A.J. et.al., *The use of mobile phone data for the estimation of the travel patterns and imported* Plasmodium falciparum *rates among Zanzibar residents*, Malaria Journal (2009) 8:287 https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2800118/.

[27] More information about this company can be found here: https://selectivv.com/en/.

[28] See UMP*, Ukrainians in 12 largest Polish cities*…, (June 2022) op.cit. p.8.

[29] Jurić T., *Ukrainian refugee integration and flows analysis with an approach of Big Data: Social media insights (*April 2022, Catholic University of Croatia), preprint version https://www.medrxiv.org/content/10.1101/2022.04.18.22273958v1.

device is quasi-permanently switched on? However, such technical issues, and any statistical bias that they might imply, seem marginal in the context of the urgent needs felt by Polish cities in spring 2022 for large-scale, up-to-date estimates of population change.

A more fundamental question is about the possible impact of geolocation and big data on the relationship between a public authority deploying it and refugees whose personal use of digital communication systems becomes part of the 'geotrapped' database. If they find out that they are in this database, will they be convinced by the standard assurance that it is fully anonymised?

To illustrate the efficacy of the technique applied by its partner Selectivv in spring 2022, the UMP notes that it could target relevant advertising to an individual geolocated to a specific music festival in Poland.[30] This implies that it could equally have located her/him at the site of a political demonstration. Refugees are often fleeing from regimes that are adept both at cyberwarfare – including the hacking of databases – and at launching clandestine attacks on individual opponents in exile. Digital privacy and data anonymity can therefore be experienced by individual refugees as matters of life or death.

On a smaller scale, the municipality of Greater Irbid in Jordan reported in 2021 that it had commissioned a study using geolocation to map the settlement of the Syrian refugees who now amounted to around 20% of its total population of one million. The purpose was to target the municipality's support more accurately to these refugee communities.[31]

The method is powerful, and it has already established itself as a standard instrument of demographic analysis, in particular for migration research; for example, the European Commission has also explored its use in analysing labour migration within Europe.[32]

Faced with rapid large-scale movements of refugees in future, cities elsewhere may well opt to apply such techniques. In doing so, city leaders will want to reflect carefully on how (like national governments conducting a census) they explain the technique to its subjects and make sure that they will remain protected by anonymity.

### *3.3* Surveys

Surveys are a very common tool for primary research due to their versatility. Through surveys, qualitative and quantitative data can be collected fast, providing useful insights into changing contexts. In the context of forced displacement, surveys can inform the authorities about the movement of people, their routes, and their current needs, helping design policies and adopt measures that will facilitate reception and integration.

Surveys can be carried out online or in person, the latter choice requiring considerably more resources and capacity. They can be conducted at any scale. The methodological and ethical considerations mentioned above are a big part of designing a survey, and if the survey is to be done in person, then sufficient time and resources must be allocated to training the staff that will carry out the research.

Large scale surveys are usually carried out by states or international agencies who have the ability to employ expert survey-makers, to train staff and to analyse the results. Those surveys can have a big sample, run over a longer period, and can be repeated in order to monitor changing needs or evaluate the delivery of the humanitarian response.

One of the more systematic surveys in the field of migration is the International Organisation for Migration's (IOM) Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), which is a research project that runs in multiple countries, including Poland. Data collectors carry out extended surveys with individuals and households to collect information about their displacement routes and their needs.

The DTM in Poland is aimed at gathering population data to "disseminate critical multi layered information on mobility, vulnerabilities, and needs of Ukrainian refugees and Third Country Nationals (TCNs) to enable decision makers and humanitarian actors to provide these populations with better and targeted assistance."[33] The data collected incorporates information on the origin of the migrants

[30] UMP, *Ukrainians in 12 largest Polish cities*…, (June 2022) ibid.

[31] MedCities Network, *Migration and reception in Mediterranean cities: Experiences, challenges and future actions for municipalities* (Proceedings of workshop, unpublished July 2021). Greater Irbid Municipality had also set up an urban observatory on migration.

[32] Gendronneau C. et.al. (for European Commission, DG Employment Social Affairs & Inclusion) *Measuring Labour Mobility and Migration using Big Data* (2019) https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/6c4b29f7-6e47-11ea-b735-01aa75ed71a1/language-en.

[33] International organisation for Migration DTM Poland 2022 https://dtm.iom.int/poland.

and refugees, their routes towards the EU, family units, as well as indicators for trafficking of persons and other protection related issues. This data contributes to better mapping and understanding the needs of the migrants and refugees in this context and enables IOM and other major actors to plan their response accordingly. IOM is committed to publicising information gathered through the DTM surveys widely "to the extent that data protection, do no harm and confidentiality considerations allow".[34]

Smaller scale surveys can also be a very effective tool to provide relatively quick feedback regarding refugee arrivals. These can be adapted to have a local focus and might be conducted by local authorities, universities, NGOs or other actors. They can focus on a few key needs -- housing needs, healthcare needs etc. – and they can be carried out online or in person, usually at refugee reception sites. The location is an important factor as refugees fleeing war might have a different view of their needs while they are in transit at a border crossing than when they reach their destination and are presented with new conditions that were previously unknown to them.

Smaller scale but targeted surveys can help local authorities to understand what services are needed. The Work Rights Centre is an NGO in the UK that recently conducted a survey of 191 Ukrainian refugees focusing on housing needs.[35] They found that the scheme by which the UK government encouraged locals to host Ukrainian refugees has not provided a stable and long-term solution, as 10% of those surveyed reported facing eviction threats from hosts, though alternative housing was not readily available. They were able to make multiple recommendations to improve housing security for Ukrainian refugees in the UK that can be implemented both at national and local level, such as providing undocumented Ukrainians with a path to regularisation, revisiting the financial support given to hosts in line with the current cost of living, improving the response of local housing authorities and enabling referral of refugees to other local authorities that might have bigger housing capacity.

Although surveys can be extremely useful tools in many different contexts, there are certain limitations that are more common in surveys than in other research. The first limitation that needs to be understood is that surveys can lack accuracy, both in the answers received (given options might not cover a range of possible answers, no verification of answers is possible, etc.) but also due to the incomplete surveys often returned.[36] If a sample is large enough, however, limitations of non-answered questions can be reasonably mitigated.

The second challenge, relevant to all research projects, is to overcome bias in the design or the execution of a survey. At all stages the survey must consider the varying perspectives of different groups (such as gender and age), questions must be translated in a culturally appropriate way, and those conducting the survey must not limit their sample to specific groups excluding others. This can often be mitigated by robust training as well as by the inclusion of members of the target group in the planning phase, as they are aware of relevant social, religious and other norms.

UN Women carried out a rapid online assessment survey on the impact of the war on Ukraine's women civil society organisations in March 2022.[37] Their approach was very inclusive. They were able to receive responses from 67 CSOs working with women and girls in Ukraine, and through this survey they were able to highlight seven key areas of concern: safety; lack of basic necessities; loss of livelihoods; the psychological impact of the war; sexual and gender-based violence; lack of communication, information and social services; and exclusion from the decision-making process. UN Women have used this survey to advocate for giving a meaningful role to women's networks and organisations in the humanitarian response as well as the prioritisation of funding for women's CSOs.

[34] Methodological Framework for Quantifying Displacement and Mobility in Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Operations, 2nd edition, p.4 https://dtm.iom.int/methodological-framework.

[35] Work Rights Centre 2022, Six months on The UK's response to the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, and how the government can better protect refugees https://www.workrightscentre.org/media/1246/ukraine-report-six-months-on-27-september-2022-final.pdf.

[36] Graham Kalton and Howard Schuman 1982, The Effect of the Question on Survey Responses: A Review, https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/146916/rssa04317.pdf;jsessionid=54D0A9D758C093AA75947C70DA799AA4?sequence=1.

[37] UN Women Rapid Assessment: Impact of the war in Ukraine on women's civil society organizations, 2022, https://data.unwomen.org/publications/rapid-assessment-impact-war-ukraine-womens-civil-society-organizations.

### *3.4* Community engagement

If cities want to get realistic insight into the experience, needs and intentions of newly arriving refugees, the methods they apply must include various kinds of engagement with local communities of refugees and other migrants, as well as other groups of interested local residents.

'Communities' are here understood as groups of residents who recognise some kind of shared interest or link between themselves beyond the basic fact of living in the city in question: for example, their location in a particular neighbourhood, or in a particular kind of housing; their cultural affinity; participation in voluntary (civil society) action; or a shared migration background.

Why is community engagement crucial for collecting information to support refugee reception? Its importance lies at two levels.

Firstly, refugees have a *civic right to participate* in deliberation and action on local issues – including their own place in city life.[38] To have a say in city governance through participatory decision-making is all the more important for refugees since (like many other migrants) they often do not have the right to vote or may be missing from electoral registers. Such civic participation is therefore a key element of refugees' integration within the city, for those who choose to settle. Participation in city decision-making - even on small-scale neighbourhood issues - confirms their stake in the city's future and is likely to enhance their sense of belonging. The right to participate in this way was spelt out in 2018 by the UN's Global Compact on Refugees: *'Responses are most effective when they actively and meaningfully engage those they are intended to protect and assist. Relevant actors will, wherever possible, continue to develop and support consultative processes that enable refugees and host community members to assist in designing appropriate, accessible and inclusive responses.'*[39]

Secondly, there is increasing evidence across all human sciences that the *quality of knowledge* available to cities, and its ability to realistically guide their decisions, will be enhanced through community engagement. A full understanding of people's experience, actions and intentions calls for an insider perspective:

> *'[A]cademics as well as practitioners, research funders and evaluation commissioners have realised that those traditionally viewed as research objects possess skills, knowledge and expertise that can enable them to make a wide range of valuable contributions to research projects. Engaging members of different communities to research social life, problems or processes within their own communities can bring new dimensions and perspectives to research questions and can bring insider knowledge about social life within communities rarely reached by 'outside' researchers.'*[40]

If the insider perspective helps in interpreting social life generally, it is particularly important in understanding refugees' needs and experience. Traditional approaches to social research, urban planning and public consultation may struggle to gather meaningful evidence on refugee populations, especially soon after their arrival, for a series of reasons:

- Uncertainty about their size and composition, making it hard to define sample frames.
- Complex emotional and psychological pressures on many individual refugees – not least anxiety about future state decisions on their right to remain - which will often weaken trust and may discourage responses to 'outsider' enquiries.
- Practical obstacles: not only differences of language and culture, but also instability in their accommodation and their employment (if any), which is likely to impede contact and obstruct their participation in standard research or consultative exercises.

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[38] Council of Europe, Intercultural City policy brief, *Participatory and Deliberative Democracy Strategies for the Intercultural City: Engaging migrants and foreign residents in local political life* (by) Jack Leighninger (2017).

[39] UNHCR, Global Compact on Refugees (New York 2018), Principle 34 p.14 (emphasis in original) at https://www.unhcr.org/5c658aed4.

[40] Goodson L and Phillimore J (2012) Ch.1 'Community research: opportunities and challenges*', in:* Goodson L and Phillimore J (eds) Community Research for Participation: from Theory to Method (Policy Press 2012) p.3 at https://policy.bristoluniversitypress.co.uk/community-research-for-participation. See also Goodson L and Phillimore J 'A community research methodology: working with new migrants to develop a policy related evidence base', Social Policy & Society 9:4, 489–501 (2010) at http://pure-oai.bham.ac.uk/ws/files/17448614/GoodsonS1474746410000217a.pdf.

To construct an evidence base sufficiently broad and robust to support a city's decisions on refugee reception, therefore, it must find ways to give a voice to insiders – people within these communities. We will now outline three ways in which this can be achieved.

### *3.4.1 Long-term migrant assemblies*

Many cities across Europe have established local channels through which non-national residents can convey their opinions and proposals to city leaders over the long term. Some have been constituted through an electoral process. In other cases, the mayor convenes a (theoretically) representative range of members from known community networks and associations.

Such bodies face well-known risks and pitfalls, and not all have survived. Problems which may arise include: domination by traditional 'gate-keepers'; not reflecting the diversity of the refugee and migrant population; a failure to represent newer arrivals; lack of engagement or financial investment by the Mayor and city authority, and/or a sense that the authorities do not truly listen to what they hear; and disputes between the body and the city leadership over the agenda.

However, an assembly, council or board - formally constituted through an open process (whether by election or by invitation) to give it a representative membership - can play a valuable role in the city's work on data collection and integration, for newer as well as long-settled refugees and migrants. As a permanent structure it has a particular strength in helping city leaders to steer long-term programmes. Membership can rapidly adapt to reflect new cohorts of refugees, and its longer-established refugee members will of course have a valuable perspective on the city's options for receiving newcomers.

As surveys and other research exercises are launched to gather data on incoming refugees, possibly including research by 'citizen social scientists' recruited from refugee communities, engagement of such a body can strengthen these enquiries. Its input may not only improve their research design, but also give them more authority and legitimacy.

**CASE STUDIES FROM THE LOCAL LEVEL**

### Oslo (Norway)

In 2001 the Mayor of Oslo launched OXLO Extra Large, a long-term campaign aimed at making the city more tolerant, free from racism and prejudice. The longstanding Board of Immigrant Organizations, set up as an advisory body to the city government, became an important partner in this campaign. It brought together 300 different immigrant organisations. In recent years the city has moved to a different model of engagement. Disbanding the original Board of Immigrant Organisations, it has set up a number of municipal boards, each focused on a group at risk of discrimination. These new boards include one for intercultural minorities.

### London (UK, Greater London Authority)

In 2006 the Mayor of London launched a city partnership to design and realise a strategy for refugee integration. To ensure input from refugee communities in the long term, the Mayor's Refugee Advisory Panel (MRAP) was convened and became the Migrant & Refugee Advisory Panel when central government agreed that London's strategy should cover other migrants as well as refugees.

Since these communities made up altogether some two million London residents, it was not realistic to offer an electoral process to represent all of them on the Panel. Instead, some 40 activists in the city were invited to join the MRAP on the basis of their track records as champions of refugee and migrant interests, whilst seeking a balance between them by gender, world region of origin and area of London. They could add items to the agenda of the Panel, which also sent delegates to the board of stakeholders convened by the Mayor to oversee implementation of his integration strategy. To date, despite two changes of Mayor, the Panel still functions.

### Fuenlabrada (Spain)

The Mesa por la Convivencia (Coexistence Board) is described as 'the motor' of the city's work on interculturality. It involves 30 associations: migrant groups, parent teacher associations, neighbourhood associations, labour unions, LGBT organisation, regional 'houses' (for residents who moved from other Spanish regions) and others. The Board has a management committee made up of six to nine associations elected annually for a maximum of four years each, so that its leadership is renewed while remaining as 'horizontal' as possible. The Board sets annual aims and organises events and actions, with a grant from the city council based on this programme.

It takes the initiative in organising a wide range of activities to promote diversity and interculturality. Each year this includes a street procession and a 'laboratory' - a day of debate and discussion on migration and interculturality – as well as an educational programme in local schools. During the pandemic the Mesa organised a Solidarity Network to support households which were isolated or in poverty.[41]

#### *3.4.2 Wider outreach: a programme of participatory action*

To inform itself adequately about the needs, experience, and aspirations of newly arrived refugees, a city will have to go beyond any standing migrant assembly and reach out to newcomers as soon as possible. It will need to empower them to participate in discussions about future provision of services to them and their families. This might be captured by the French term 'citizen dialogue'.

Clearly such a dialogue cannot happen on day one of a large-scale refugee movement into the city. It first has to deal with emergency pressures. In any case, refugees' own interest in joining discussion about services or opportunities in the city will depend on feelings about their futures, which - as Polish experience suggests – may take some time to become clear. But once the city's contacts with them and the civil society organisations helping them indicates that dialogue could be of mutual interest, it can launch such a participatory programme.

Examples of its content might include: focus groups; surveys (see also section 3.2 above) in places like schools or supermarkets with high refugee presence, and possibly even door-to-door surveys in relevant neighbourhoods; open workshops held close to known clusters of refugee accommodation; online consultative exercises; 'meet-the-council' events attended by elected members; and events mixing entertainment with discussion groups. Steps to encourage participation by harder-to-reach

[41] https://mesaconvivenciafuenlabrada.org/en/.

refugees and rules to ensure respect for diversity will of course be required. Wherever feasible and relevant, such events should be open to other interested residents.

This dialogue with refugees has the best chance of success when it is launched within a policy framework already established by the city to promote residents' participation in decision-making. Where the city has developed this wider policy, its staff specialising in civic participation can help to shape the dialogue with refugees. Framing it as part of a familiar city approach will make clear to all residents that engagement with the refugee newcomers is not 'favouritism' towards them, but rather an affirmation of their status as new residents entering the civic life of the whole city.

**CASE STUDY FROM THE LOCAL LEVEL**

**Nantes (France)**

The city of Nantes has succeeded in establishing, over more than a decade, spaces where its refugee and migrant residents can express their needs and their experience of the city. Besides a basic commitment to equality of access to rights and services, their principles are: (1) citizens' participation in decision-making, and (2) the idea of civic citizenship treating all residents as citizens regardless of nationality. This wider commitment to equality and participation, across all policy fields, underpins the city's work.

In October 2021, Nantes *Métropole* adopted a Pact of Citizenship setting out 12 key principles for citizens' participation. Concrete results generated in this framework have varied over the past decade, reflecting changing priorities within the city's leadership. However, they include:

- establishment of a permanent assembly representing migrant residents, with powers (in earlier years) to question and challenge city politicians;
- other measures to encourage migrant participation including outreach workshops and surveys, as part of the city's wider programme of 'citizen dialogue';
- a package of measures based on refugee and migrant views expressed through these channels, aiming to improve advice and guidance for recently-arrived newcomers;
- various actions to support longer-term integration, in part guided by national policy but also responding to voices of non-national residents in Nantes expressed through its participatory work.[42]

### *3.4.3 Community researchers: 'citizen social scientists'*

Even if it can call on a permanent assembly or other participatory activities, a city receiving refugees will inevitably need the rich and timely information that a local survey can generate. Running a survey in this field should therefore benefit fully from the 'insider perspective' on producing knowledge, by making community researchers part of the survey teams.

Also referred to as 'citizen social scientists', these are individuals who share with the refugees to be surveyed some part of their life experience but also have research skills enabling them to conduct interviews in accordance with the agreed survey design. Ideally those skills may also equip them to take part in the preparation of the project and the analysis of its findings.

To provide them with the necessary skills and an understanding of the principles that should guide social enquiry (see section 2 above), they will require training. This may be brief but will need to be focused and intensive. A budget will be required to subsidise the training and to pay the trainee for their eventual role in research work.

For a survey of newly arrived refugees, this approach means that some of the researchers themselves have a refugee history. However, they could also include local residents who share other areas of experience with the newcomers (for example a non-asylum migration history, or residence in the same neighbourhood). An exercise in training 70 citizen social scientists from three UK cities in 2021 (see below) found outcomes were enhanced by recruiting trainees from across migrant and other communities.

[42] More information available at: https://metropole.nantes.fr/files/pdf/actualites/dialogue%20citoyen/A4-28p-pacte-citoyennete-metropolitaine_BDpage.pdf.

**CASE STUDY FROM THE LOCAL LEVEL**

**Training community researchers – MiFriendly Cities, West Midlands (UK)[43]**

Training of local residents as 'citizen social scientists' was carried out as part of the MiFriendly Cities (MiFC) programme across the UK's West Midlands region, comprising the cities of Coventry, Birmingham and Wolverhampton. Funded by the EU's Urban Innovation Action fund, this programme recruited and supported 70 people resident in the region – migrants, refugees, and UK-born – to train as citizen social scientists. The trainees included 30 nationalities and were from all walks of life. Training was delivered in 2021 by the Centre for Trust Peace and Social Relations at Coventry University.[44] It was brief but intensive, resulting in accreditation: two online modules of two days each with four weeks of field work in between, when trainees researched topics of interest under professional mentorship.

The strengths of this course included the variety of participants, recruited across migrant and non-migrant communities, and the personal interaction and sense of solidarity between them through the training cycle. This was found to be a major benefit, enhancing their confidence. Topics selected by participants for their field work were diverse and the resulting quality of research was variable, but participants were positive about the training and most expressed a wish to pursue social research in future.

*Key lessons:*

Community researchers can be trained effectively in a short intensive course, though quality of their output in any subsequent survey project will depend on how it is structured and the topics selected.

Accreditation of the course adds to its impact, helping to build confidence.

Interaction and exchange between trainees, across migrant and non-migrant categories, enhances the learning experience and builds confidence.

Since social background and inequality between researcher and respondent may affect research outcomes, the training should address this issue of 'positionality'.

Such training courses could be extended beyond the four days (plus four weeks practice) of the West Midlands initiative described above. For example, an earlier research project in the UK, on the role of refugee organisations, recruited 16 refugees as community researchers who each received training equivalent to a module of an undergraduate course.[45]

With this preparation, researchers drawn from relevant communities could offer major advantages to projects seeking better information about newly arrived refugees. One obvious advantage, if they are of the same national or ethnic origin, is that they should need no interpreter. More basically, being an 'insider' with shared experience may mean in interviews that this community researcher:

- has a better chance of winning the trust of their refugee respondent, helping to secure fuller and more candid replies; and
- can more readily pick up tacit meanings and connotations of their replies, enabling the researcher to understand better what is being said and hence to record it more accurately.

When city and NGO officers in Poland engaged in supporting Ukrainian refugees were asked in summer 2022 whether citizen social scientists might help them to get clearer information about the scale and pattern of need among these newcomers, they at once said that they could have a useful role, subject to provision of the necessary training and payment. A manager in the Ukrainian Foundation in Wroclaw, playing an active role in the city's reception work, suggested points of access to Ukrainian and other local migrant communities through which such researchers might be recruited: for example, discussion groups, language classes and self-organised social media groups.

[43] Source: research interview, Coventry University (UK), October 2022.
[44] See https://www.coventry.ac.uk/research/areas-of-research/trust-peace-social-relations/
[45] See Goodson L. and Phillimore J., *A Community Research Methodology: Working with New Migrants to Develop a Policy Related Evidence Base, Social Policy and Society , Volume 9 , Issue 4 (2010) DOI: 7*https://doi.org/10.1017/S1474746410000217

Some caveats should be noted.[46] Firstly, if the interviewer and respondent share a very similar background their sense of close proximity may arouse distrust rather than trust (whatever assurances are given on confidentiality). Refugees from inter-ethnic conflict should not be interviewed by someone from the opposing ethnicity, for example. Secondly, if they have a common ethnicity, nationality or language, this may in fact carry less weight in the interview relationship than aspects of their identity where they differ greatly, such as gender, age, or social class. A senior practitioner in Wroclaw closely involved in work with Ukrainian refugees pointed out that they were sharply differentiated by their level of personal resources, so researchers must be prepared to explore this social disparity and its implications for reception policy.[47] Evidently such differences of class or status could affect the interview relationship itself.

A final concern about the engagement of community researchers is that they are typically brought into a project not as part of its leadership but with a limited interviewer role, after its launch. This will probably exclude them from decisions about research strategy and the contents of the questionnaire they will use, undermining the claim that the community researcher role gives a voice to refugee experience.

These challenges can however be resolved. In assigning researchers to interviews – whilst shared language is clearly an asset – the project can avoid pairing them on the basis of very similar origins or personal networks. On the other hand, it should also avoid setting up interviews where different identities or social characteristics may create a clear difference in power or status between them, since this could distort responses and interview results.[48] More fundamentally, the project team should aim to include its refugee researchers as full members, and to enlist them early enough in its planning process for them to contribute to the survey design.

Preparation of some capacity for future training of community researchers seems to be a worthwhile investment for any city likely to receive refugees in substantial numbers in coming years.

## 4 COMBINING METHODOLOGIES

Reviewing cities' options for collecting data to support refugee reception and integration, it is clear that no single methodology will equip a municipal authority with the full range of information they need to carry out these complex tasks. The city therefore needs to be able to combine and coordinate a range of data sources – not just as a series of alternatives used in isolation, but as a systematic approach, designed to achieve complementarity between them.

The following matrix (Table 2) suggests how and where the main types of data collection method described in this Policy Brief could be applied to help address the wide array of needs and objectives that arise in cities' work.

A further four examples of innovation and good practice in the use of migration data are presented, which illustrate the potential benefit of assembling a composite and richer picture of migratory movements and their consequences. The last of the four cases is Krakow's Multiculturalism and Migration Observatory. The strengths of this initiative were so clear in this study that a recommendation about it has been included in the Conclusion to this Brief.

[46] For fuller commentary on caveats in this paragraph, see also Brown P et.al., *Community research with Gypsies and Travellers in the UK: highlighting and negotiating compromises to reliability and validity*, in Goodson L. and Phillimore J. Community Research for Participation: from Theory to Method (Policy Press 2012) Chapter 4, at https://policy.bristoluniversitypress.co.uk/community-research-for-participation.

[47] Research interview 06.09.22.

[48] Jon Pedersen (FAFO research institute, Norway) from experience of surveys in the Middle East and Europe, points out the impact of stark differences in perceived power and status - as between interviewer and interviewee - on interview response rates and on attitudes to the interview. Cited in: National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2019 Forced Migration Research: From Theory to Practice in Promoting Migrant Well-Being: Proceedings of a Workshop. Washington, DC (2019) p.43 https://doi.org/10.17226/25584.

**Table 2: Combining methodologies for refugee reception: illustrative matrix**

**Key:** ✓✓ = lead method ✓ = supplementary method: test, weighting, additional detail

| Objective / area of need | Official datasets: universal or admin.data | Surveys: by NGO or by city | Community-based enquiry |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Baseline for refugee population: total number and composition** | ✓✓ | | |
| **Total current population: estimates** (a) | ✓✓ | ✓ | |
| **Household composition** | | ✓✓ | |
| **Accommodation: need, type, standard** | ✓ | ✓✓ | ✓ |
| **Income: state support, earnings** | ✓ | ✓✓ | ✓ |
| **Employment: skills, goals, outcomes** | ✓ | ✓✓ | ✓ |
| **Health and care needs** | ✓ | ✓✓ | ✓ |
| **Education: primary/secondary** | ✓ | ✓✓ | (b) |
| **Education: higher** | ✓ | ✓✓ | ✓ |
| **Language learning** | | ✓ | ✓✓ |
| **Information and advice incl. legal** | | ✓ | ✓✓ |
| **Civic participation** | | ✓ | ✓✓ |
| **Conviviality: intercultural opportunities** | | ✓ | ✓✓ |
| **Community safety/fear of crime** | ✓ | ✓✓ | ✓ |
| **Vulnerability and risks of abuse** | ✓ | ✓✓ | (b) |
| **Children and young persons: unaccompanied/other** | ✓ | ✓✓ | (b) |
| **Refugees' intentions for future** | | ✓ | ✓✓ |

*(a) Lead method for estimating total current population = digital geolocation (big data)*

*(b) It is assumed that information/ideas on provision for children and young persons, or on vulnerability, would not be addressed via community-based research.*

## 4.1 Use of composite data: Examples

**CASE 1**: **'New migrant databank' concept, London (United Kingdom)**

Faced with statistically weak estimates of the UK's migrant population, especially at city level, the Greater London Authority in 2006 commissioned two University of Leeds experts to investigate ways of producing more accurate estimates at each local authority area. Their report proposed that administrative data from a variety of UK services which included migration-related variables, and which could be broken down to city level (from health and school datasets to social security numbers) should be set alongside census and available immigration data, to see what migrant estimates and trends emerged from this composite picture.[49]

Initial scoping suggested that this New Migrant Databank could offer more accurate and timely estimates of migrant population in each British city. The Databank as originally proposed was not implemented, and the original research report for the Mayor of London is no longer archived. But in subsequent years the UK's statistical authority began to follow this approach, as it indicated in 2018: 'No single source of information will provide a clear view of migration; therefore, our transformation programme aims to triangulate the multiple sources to build a more comprehensive and granular evidence base for migration in the UK.'[50]

**CASE 2: Database of refugees, Erlangen (Germany)**

The database in Erlangen highlights the kind of coordination task, with resources, that is important in this area. The database accesses and coordinates data from a variety of statutory and non-statutory services, including:

- The Worker's Welfare Association
- The Worker's Samaritan Foundation
- The Employment Office and Job Centre
- Vocational schools and adult education centres
- Social assistance offices
- The Office for Statistics[51]

**CASE 3: Quantitative data collection, Fuenlabrada (Spain)**

The city of Fuenlabrada assembles comprehensive data, quantitative and qualitative, from many sources to give an exceptionally full picture of its migrant residents and their place in the wider population. This reflects its choice to identify migration as a key strength of the city.

Quantitative data

Firstly, its local statistical service compiles a statistical yearbook for Fuenlabrada which reports on the number of migrants, origin, age, sex, training and educational level, and place of residence.

The yearbook combines:

- data from the national census (Instituto Nacional de Estadística)

- information at regional level (Institute of Statistics of the Community of Madrid)

- the city's own data, extracted and analysed locally by its ocial Services department and its immigration programme.[52]

Local demographic data are derived by municipal staff from the Municipal Register of Inhabitants, together with data on key areas such as the local labour market for immigrants. The city council input includes data on new arrivals in the city, from questionnaires completed by its social welfare service

[49] This innovative proposal for data-linking is described in Boden P. and Rees P., New Migrant Databank Concept and Development in: Stillwell J. et.al. Technologies for Migration and Commuting Analysis: Spatial Interaction Data Applications (2010) Ch.6 at https://www.igi-global.com/book/technologies-migration-commuting-analysis/37291.

[50] Office of National Statistics (United Kingdom) , *Report on international migration data sources* (July 2018), Part 1 - see https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/internationalmigration/articles/reportonthecomplexityandqualityofinternationalmigrationstatistics/july2018

[51] More information available at: https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/-/database-of-refugees.

[52] More information available at: https://www.ayto-fuenlabrada.es/index.do?MP=2&MS=17&MN=2&TR=C&IDR=1233.

when migrants arrive. This asks about their personal situation, family, income, knowledge of the language, whether they have refugee status, and basic needs (housing, education, health services). In principle it covers all new immigrants but in practice is completed when they contact City Council services with specific needs, for example for legal advice, or for help with language, employment, or other issues.

Alongside these statistical sources, the city gathers qualitative information to identify emerging needs and challenges. Sources for this input include:

- feedback from the city's network of migrant associations and 'anti-rumour agents' (persons working within a methodology to counter disinformation 'rumours')
- its Mesa por la Convivencia or 'Board for coexistence' (section 3.2 above)
- discussion groups convened, with special provision for the most vulnerable groups, to prepare the city's Urban Agenda Action Plan.

**CASE 4: Multicultural and Migration Observatory, Krakow (Poland)**

The Multicultural and Migration Observatory is a joint initiative between Krakow's municipal authority and the Krakow University of Economics. Established in 2019, the Observatory monitors migration in Krakow, using its resources to: co-ordinate and commission qualitative and quantitative research into the migration experience; make recommendations to benefit both migrants and non-migrants within Krakow; and provide a forum for policy debate and the sharing of best practice sharing amongst relevant local stakeholders.

Its core work is to produce four reports per year focusing on issues as agreed with the city authority.53 Besides this data-based picture of migration developments, the Observatory produces analysis of challenges faced by migrants, the host community and policy makers, makes relevant recommendations and creates a space (via workshops and conferences) for dialogue, sharing and problem solving.

Key to the Observatory's success has been its day-to-day delivery by an experienced and expert University department. It offers:

- Expert data analysis;
- Independence and connections: The Observatory has staff with their own links to official data agencies, yet remains independent politically. This has enabled it to negotiate barriers and tensions between different tiers of government that can (see section 3 above) inhibit cooperation in getting access to datasets and in analysing their implications;
- Wide ranging data sources: The Observatory has been able to explore both conventional statistics and novel sources of data like 'big data' from the tracking of mobile phones;
- Economies of scale and alternative funding streams: Modest funding from the city authority, applied within a University infrastructure, has produced high quality outputs at relatively low cost. The University's independent status has allowed it to build on the city funding by securing alternative funding streams to enhance the Observatory's work.

The foresight of city and university in creating the Observatory is now yielding further benefits. Firstly, the Observatory has established longer-term relationships that enable it to influence the scope and methods of data collection in the areas of multicultural societies and migration, with the prospect of improving data quality.

As an established unit with existing practices, the Observatory has been able to respond swiftly to unforeseen events like the outbreak of war in Ukraine and the ensuing mass arrival of Ukrainian refugees. In this emergency, the Observatory was able quickly to change its data plans and provide timely analysis to services and organisations working to support the reception of exiled Ukrainians.[54]

[53] The range of these reports (mostly in Polish) are available at https://owim.uek.krakow.pl/index.php/en/publications/.

[54] More information: https://owim.uek.krakow.pl/index.php/en/about-mmo/.

## 5 CONCLUSION

Collecting and interpreting the vast array of data required to steer the work of receiving and integrating refugees is a massive challenge. This review of options available to Europe's cities suggests some key elements (also reflected in the Checklist in the Appendix):

Understanding: City leaders and officers may find it worth taking time to reflect on refugee flows, on their causes, the experience of individuals caught up in them and their feelings. Constraints on data collection are tied up with that refugee experience. A city's approach to this task has to take into account the reality that, compared with other residents, refugees are likely to be more mobile, more stressed financially and emotionally, more wary of statutory authorities and systems (often with good reason), and therefore less likely to appear in standard datasets.

Anticipation: Though the exact timing of refugee arrivals is by its nature impossible to predict, it is vital that the city makes some preparation for them in advance. This Policy Brief has shown that securing key data when refugees arrive is a complex task, but also that several steps in that task (such as building structures of community engagement) can be taken well before the event. Fundamentally this is a reminder that, even if each refugee is fleeing an emergency, migration as a process is not an 'emergency' but intrinsic to the development of our cities. Planning for it, in all its forms, makes sense.

Multi-faceted approach: No one form of data collection can provide an adequate picture of arriving refugees and their needs. To draw that picture, this Brief suggests that cities have to adopt a multi-faceted approach, applying different combinations of the available methodologies as appropriate to their circumstances and the nature of the refugee movement to which they are responding.

Resources and partnering: Given the demanding scale and complexity of this task, cities will need to invest early in building partnerships with the many actors – local, national, community-based, statutory and non-statutory – who can help them secure access to data, or to implement local research or participatory processes. In particular, noting the highly effective work of the Krakow Migration Observatory, this Policy Brief recognises a strong case for cities (perhaps in consortia) to consider investing in the establishment of an independent expert body which can ensure long-term delivery of reliable, locally-sensitive data analysis of migratory movement – including refugee arrivals.

Data and intercultural integration: Cities always have scope, by mobilising the strengths of their diverse communities, to secure more and better data, and, while doing so, to create opportunities for intercultural interaction that will themselves help promote integration.

# 6 APPENDIX: CHECKLIST

## Before refugees arrive

**Anticipate**: Start early. Migratory movement affects all cities – and often includes refugees. Make contingency plans for securing the data you will need:

- open negotiations (especially with national agencies) on data access the city will need
- contact potential partners in data collection and analysis, especially in academia
- assign responsibility for refugee/migrant data issues, at officer level.

**Invest:** Consider investing soon in long-term partnership with a relevant university or other expert body to establish a politically independent observatory which can collect and analyse data on migration issues reliably at city level. If necessary, talk to neighbouring authorities about forming a consortium to launch this expert resource.

**Train:** Recruit citizens, if possible, of migrant or refugee background, to train as community researchers with your academic partner. Train and involve them early in research project design, as well as implementation.

**Principles**: Referring to international best practice, compile a code of practice for all staff and partners who may be collecting data on future refugees, and train them in this set of principles to ensure that your city's work will always respect the best interests of the refugee respondents.

**Civil society:** Support the development of voluntary associations in the city, especially those which gather and represent existing non-national residents of the city. If they see the city authority as a partner, their role in gathering data on new refugees will be invaluable.

**Big data**: Assess options for applying big data – from use of phones or social media – to the analysis of new arrivals including refugees. Open discussions with migrant and other community organisations, to hear their view on this data option, and its potential risks.

## When refugees arrive

**Mobilise:** Alongside immediate practical support, put into action the above 'data support' measures: accessing to data sources as relevant at national level, calling in an observatory or other expert support, creating a simple data reporting process for local voluntary organisations.

**Dialogue**: As soon as possible, launch a process of 'citizen dialogue' with refugees and other interested citizens (section 3.2.3 above) to explore refugee needs and hopes, and any possible city responses.

**Surveys:** Commission or carry out regular surveys of new refugees, with teams including community researchers, to gather data on basic parameters of the city's new population: numbers, composition, basic needs – but also their aspirations and views about life in the city.

**Community:** Act soon to encourage the emergence of genuinely representative groups and organisations within the new refugee community, potentially an invaluable conduit of information and views to guide the city authority in assessing needs and possible responses.

**Share**: Unless data are known to be flawed, ensure that data collected within the city is shared openly with its citizens. Understanding the true scale and nature of change within its population can help the city population to avoid false information and narratives about newcomers and their impact.

Diversity has become a key feature of societies today and is particularly tangible in urban centres. While people of diverse national, ethnic, linguistic and faith backgrounds have immensely contributed to post-war prosperity, inequalities related to origin, culture and skin colour persist, and anxiety about pluralism, identity and shared values is often politically instrumentalised. The challenge of fostering equity and cohesion in culturally diverse societies has become more acute. Cities are uniquely placed to imagine and test responses to this challenge.

The Council of Europe and its partner cities have developed and validated an intercultural approach to integration and inclusion which enables cities to reap the benefits and minimise the risks related to human mobility and cultural diversity. A decade after the start of this work, there is growing evidence that diversity, when recognised and managed as a resource, produces positive outcomes in terms of creativity, wellbeing, and economic development.

The Intercultural Cities (ICC) programme invites cities in Europe and beyond to explore and apply policies that harness diversity for personal and societal development.

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 46 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

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