Summary of *IncluCities* Project

Partners:

Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR); Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions + 1 city; Central Union of Municipalities of Greece + 1 city; French Association of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions + 1 city; Italian Association of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions + 1 city; Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces + 1 city; Brulocalis (Association of the city and of municipalities of the Brussels-Capital Region) + 1 city; Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities + 1 city; Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments + 1 city

Main objective: IncluCities aims at improving the integration of third-country nationals in middle-sized cities through city-to-city cooperation.

Specific objectives:

➢ **Facilitating the exchange of knowledge between 4 experienced (*mentors*) and 4 less experienced (*mentees*) middle-sized cities** (and 8 accompanying associations of local and regional government) to improve the integration of migrants and refugees through city-to-city (mentoring) in the fields of:

1. Education and training (1 Action Plan);
2. Access to basic services (1 Action Plan);
3. active participation and social inclusion (1 Action Plan);
4. Housing (1 Action Plan)

Core deliverables (outputs): 4 Action Plans, each of them (1 per *mentee* city) dealing with one of the abovementioned topics and **4 Online One-stop-shops** *(for mentors)* with useful information (tailor-made) for asylum seekers, refugees and migrants for each *mentor-city (information on* legal issues, access to education, healthcare, etc.) and **4 thematic/methodological** toolkits containing benchmarks, good practices, as well as the methodology used in the study-visits.

➢ **Enhancing the capacities of middle-sized cities and national associations of local and regional governments** to better deliver policies on the 4 topics addressed by the project and **scale-up** the most successful ones to the European level, while **strengthening the role of national associations as pivotal actors** in reinforcing multilevel governance, better regulation and knowledge-exchange.

Core deliverables: 1 integrated toolkit with all above-mentioned outputs, including 4 thematic infographics and reports of thematic training academies and transfer/methodological workshops.

Summary and types of activities:

1 kick-off meeting and 1 final conference together with the project management related-activities (Steering Committees, preparatory webinars, etc.);
4 integrated mentoring-schemes (pairs' of 2 cities) aiming at organising 3 study-visits each (one per year and mentoring-scheme);
4 thematic training academies (on education and training, housing, access to basic services and active participation and social inclusion) 4 transfer/methodological workshops to compare results between mentoring-schemes (and re-define action plans).

Main activities and WP:

The strength of the IncluCities project lies in the **interaction between two levels: specific and local, and general and EU-wide.** IncluCities supports *mentee cities* (less experienced) in carrying out concrete changes in local practice, where standards are set by a benchmark based on EU-wide experience through a peer-to-peer process led by a *mentor city* (more experienced). By defining thematic benchmarks and pooling best practices linked to these benchmarks, IncluCities develops, tests and validates them using an in-depth methodology aiming at elaborating actions plans for mentee cities, together with transfer and training activities so that the process can be repeated in other European cities as tools for improving practices EU-wide in the future.

The IncluCities project consists of 2 main Working Packages. **The first Work Package** (mentoring schemes) aims at establishing 4 mentoring schemes. Cities (accompanied by associations of local and regional government) will be 'paired' in groups of 2, in which one city will act as *mentor* and the other city as a *mentee* (learner) in order to organise 3 annual study visits (per each mentoring-scheme).

Each pair of cities (mentoring-scheme) will aim at producing action plans on integration (education and training, housing, access to basic services, active participation and social inclusion) for *mentees* and online one-stop-shops (with relevant information for migrants at the city level) for *mentors*. The peer-to-peer process will consist of 3 main phases in which each of the "pairs" will address 1 of the topics addressed by the project (education and training, housing, access to basic services and active participation and social inclusion), depending on the results after phase 1:

- **Best practice identification, benchmarking** (standards) and **needs assessment** in each city (1st study visit per mentoring-scheme);
- **Development of Action Plans**, implementation and re-definition (2nd study visit per mentoring-scheme);
- **Evaluation, final re-design of action plans**; potential **transferability** to the rest of the project network (3rd study visit per mentoring-scheme) and dissemination throughout all CEMR network;

The second Work Package will involve the organisation of 4 thematic training academies (for project partners and other city officials) to enhance capacities of participants (city officials, practitioners, NGOs working with migrants and refugees) on the topics addressed by the project and 4 transfer/methodological workshops to compare and improve (1 workshop per theme and only accessible for project partners) action plans and online one-stop-shops accordingly.

Expected results (outcomes) of the project are;

1. Improved long-term integration of third-country nationals in intermediary cities;
2. Improved transnational local cooperation between cities and associations of local and regional governments;
3. Increased capacities of cities and associations of Local and Regional Governments.

All WP deliverables:

- 1 booklet for the kick-off meeting explaining the project objectives, activities, outputs and expected outcomes;
- 4 action plans (for mentee cities) about the different sub-topics of the project and 4 videos of study visits (1 video per mentoring-scheme);
- 4 online one-stop-shops with essential information for migrants on legal issues, access to education, healthcare, etc. (in mentor cities);
- 4 thematic/methodological toolkits containing benchmarks and good practices for each theme, as well as a summary of the action plans and the methodology used in the study-visits (mentoring-schemes);
- 1 integrated toolkit with all above-mentioned outputs, including 4 thematic infographics and reports of thematic training academies and transfer/methodological workshops.

Methodology (mainly for Action Plans):

IncluCities aims at promoting mutual learning between more and less experienced intermediary cities and associations of local and regional government. IncluCities aims to do this by a peer-to-peer learning method (city-to-city). Its strength lies in the interaction between two levels:

1. **Specific and local**: It supports partner cities in carrying out concrete changes in local practice, where goals and standards are set by a benchmark based on EU-wide experience, and each city undertaking these actions is mentored through the process of change by a mentor city.

2. **General and EU-wide**: By applying its thematic benchmarks in these 'real-life' city actions, IncluCities develops, tests and validates them so they can be delivered to Europe's cities and the European Commission as tools for improving practice EU-wide in future years.

The methodology helps mentees to identify key actors and factors that need to be in place to accomplish the reference benchmark (after the definition of standards) as well as how to use it; steps to take before the visit; the mentoring visit itself (including the task of drafting an action plan); implementing the action plan and evaluating it. The benchmarks and key factors for each topic will be drawn from a Europe-wide review of cities' experience polled by associations' knowledge, as well as by previous projects and initiatives funded under AMIF. The methodology will be used to define action plans in mentee cities as well as in the transfer workshops that will aim at comparing the process' state of play (and results) between the 4 mentoring schemes.

Key players of the study-visits (mentoring-process):

The Mentor city and its accompanying association of local and regional government helps practitioners in the mentee city to achieve change. It does so partly by drawing on its own experience, but equally by being a good listener: allowing mentee city colleagues to explore concerns and develop ideas in confidence with a trusted partner from outside their own authority. Its mentoring encourages them to see what needs to be changed or upgraded; to identify options for change and risks; and to move towards the chosen solution.

The Mentee City and its accompanying association of local and regional government will aim, through IncluCities, to improve selected aspects of their work on a relevant theme. The mentee city will work with its mentor to identify changes it wants to make; plans the action needed to achieve them; and then carries them out. This process of improvement, supported by the mentor, facilitator and the associations of LRGs participating in each mentoring, begins with early planning before their visit to the mentee city. It runs through the visit and continues to the end of the project, as change gets under way.

Clusters: Whilst one *Mentor City* and a single *Mentee City* can work together productively in the IncluCities process, cities may find they can benefit from it most by working with other local governments which share an interest in the same theme, within the field of migrant and social integration. Within a cluster made up of 8 cities and 8 associations arranged in mentoring and mentee 'pairs', they can exchange experience and ideas both about the mentoring process, and about practical solutions in this area of work. In addition, they will be also able to learn from the process, results and outcomes of the other 'pairs'. This cluster will allow each mentoring scheme to exchange on their own experience and meet all together during the last part of it.

The facilitators and consultants advise the mentors and mentees on how to apply the methodology to get good results both in specific local actions and in benchmarking for EU-wide use. They support the mentoring schemes during the 3 study-visits in building their relationship, and in developing plans for local change. But they also link up the work of all cities in a cluster to ensure the transfer of knowledge between all the participants (through transfer workshops) in the project beyond each mentoring scheme and make sure the project ends with benchmarks that are tested, user-friendly and reliable.

Local Support Networks will be established in each mentee city gathering stakeholders who are representative of organisations with an interest in helping the city improve its practices in a relevant thematic area (cooperatives, practitioners, hospitals, etc.). They may include migrant and ethnic minority associations, business and trade union representatives, other civil society groups and academic experts. City officials from relevant departments will attend for liaison. Local Support Network views will inform the city's analysis of needs and challenges, and its work to identify solutions and to design a roadmap for change.