



GOVERNMENT OF MALTA
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIAT
FOR REFORMS AND EQUALITY



Migrant-Led Initiatives

TURNING THE TABLES

Facilitated by: African Media Association Malta
Prepared by: Neil Falzon (ADITUS)

2022



Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund 2014-2020
This project is part-financed by the European Union
Co-financing rate: 75% EU Funds 25% Beneficiary Funds
Sustainable Management of Migration Flows





Migrant-Led Initiatives

TURNING THE TABLES



Facilitated by African Media Association Malta
Prepared by: Neil Falzon (ADITUS)

2022

Summary

This research is aimed at supporting the empowerment of migrants to directly tackle integration related matters through the Turning the Tables initiative, a migrant-led process funded through the Learning-Exchanging-Integrating project. This project is co-financed by EU Funds under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund 2014-2020, and in collaboration with the Human Rights Directorate (National Funds). The content of the publications does not necessarily represent the views of the European Commission or the Human Rights Directorate





Contents

1	Importance of Migrant-Led Organisations.....	5
2	Understanding the Environment	7
2.1	International and National Institutional Dynamics	8
3	What is Advocacy?	11
3.1	Supporting Migrant-Led Organisations	11
4	Migrant-Led Organisations in Malta.....	15
4.1	Challenges faced by Migrant-Led Organisations	16
4.1.1	Capacity & Skills	16
4.1.2	Environment & Collaboration	17
4.1.3	Mobilisation	18
4.2	Opportunities.....	18
4.3	Recommendations to Support to Migrant-Led Organisations ...	18
4.3.1	Skills.....	19
4.3.2	Funding and Logistical Support.....	19
4.3.3	Environment.....	19

Increasingly, a significant number of migrant-led organisations have started to emerge across Europe and in Malta



1. Importance of Migrant-Led Organisations

The Turning the Tables (TTT) initiative is a migrant-led project, spearheaded by the Intercultural and Anti-Racism Unit of the Human Rights Directorate and implemented by African Media Association Malta (AMAM). Through TTT, the AMAM brought together stakeholders, migrant groups and academia to discuss and highlight the issues facing migrants in a number of different sectors, namely Education, Employment, Documentation, Political Rights and Detention. Further to these discussions, 5 in-depth reports on the same subject were researched and published. The *Compendium of Recommendations*, also published within the ambit of the same project, gathered all the recommendations on these topics in one easy-to-use publication, while *Integration Governance – The Way Forward* examined the requirements for a future-proof integration policy for Malta.

However, what was key to the success of this project, and will be key to any future integration policies and processes, is the active involvement of migrants and migrant-led organisations. Increasingly, a significant number of migrant-led organisations have started to emerge across Europe and in Malta. These groups and their initiatives bring vital and distinct perspectives and ideas to policy discussions on migration, at a national and international level¹. Migrant-led groups, including refugee-led organisations, are increasingly being seen as key stakeholders in integration, both at policy and practical level, as well as on the grassroots and

community level². This is because few know the effect that the implementation of laws and policies have on the ground more than grassroots and small organisations. It is these organisations that have practical and first-hand experience of the impact of laws and policies on people's lives.

Furthermore, it is not only the practical experience that is valuable to policymakers, but also the watchdog role of such migrant-led organisations which is crucial in ensuring that rules are adhered to and in highlighting those that are not. Lastly, the importance of these organisations is that they are composed of people with lived experience of the migrant and refugee journey, and that such first-hand knowledge and expertise is irreplaceable.

Although their importance is key, it has been noted that “[c]ompared to other sectors and levels of advocacy, there are still very few displaced persons and refugees involved in direct advocacy work at the EU level in the migration and refugee sector”³.

It should be noted that in this publication, a distinction is being made between organisations working on migration, such as aditus foundation and the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) Malta, and those organisations, both formal and informal, that are led by people that identify as migrants and/or refugees.

1 European Programme for Integration and Migration, Migrant-Led Advocacy Across Europe – Challenges and Opportunities, 2019 <https://www.epim.info/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Migrant-led-advocacy-across-Europe-Report.pdf>.

2 ECRE, Refugee-Led Organisations (RLOS) In Europe: Policy Contributions, Opportunities and Challenges, 2019 <https://ecre.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Working-Paper-01.pdf>.

3 Refugee Rights Europe, RRE Civil Society Guide EU Advocacy on Asylum and Migration, 2021 https://refugee-rights.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/RRE_CivilSocietyGuide_EU.pdf.

It is crucial for any organisation engaging in advocacy to understand who needs to be approached and who to work with



2. Understanding the Environment

Like any other advocacy or grassroots organisation, a migrant-led organisation needs to understand the political and institutional space in which they work. It is crucial for any organisation engaging in advocacy to understand who needs to be approached and who to work with, whilst also identifying the aims of their own advocacy.

For example, in a report published by the European Programme for Integration and Migration (EPIM),

advocacy work was split into two parts. The first part is engaging directly with policymakers to influence law and policy. This would require migrant advocates to be involved in formal and informal spaces where decisions are taken. The second is advocating to influence public opinion, and this would require migrant advocates to become public figures that work in public spaces, engage with the media and promote awareness raising on specific topics.

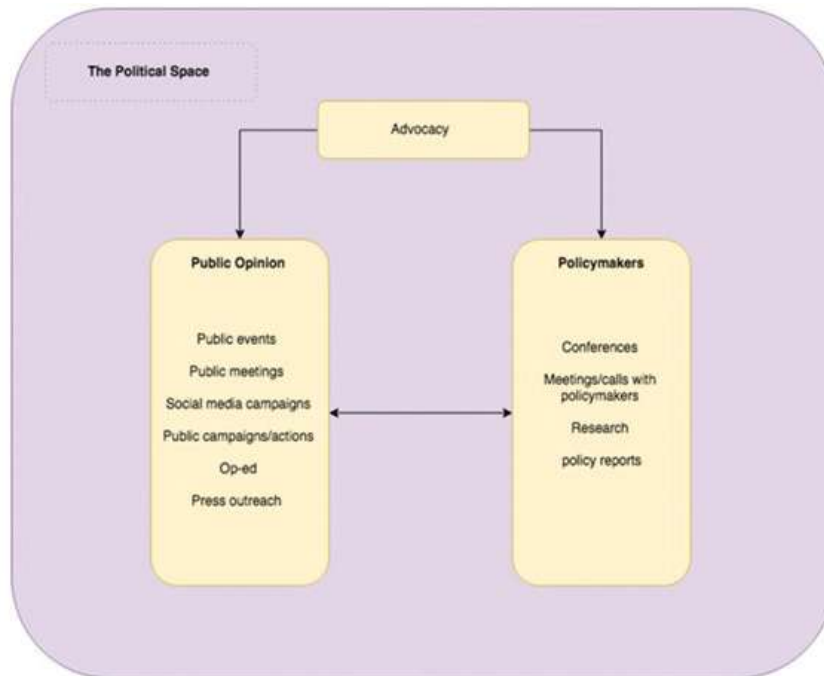


Figure 1: The Political Space - Source: EPIM Migrant-Led Advocacy Across Europe, 2019

2.1 International and National Institutional Dynamics

In order to effectively advocate and influence decision making at a national level, there needs to be an understanding of the way national institutions operate in order to be able to target those that are most relevant to the aim to be achieved.

The figure above shows the state and non-state actors that are relevant to the mechanics of how the organs of the state are organised, as well as the stakeholders ensuring checks and balances on the way they act. In the local context, laws are enacted by the parliament through legislative procedures set in law. It should be noted that within the context of migration, both regular and forced migration are heavily, if not almost entirely, influenced by European Union law. The national agenda and strategy are set by the government of the day, and migration matters primarily fall within the ministries responsible for home affairs and justice. However, that is not to say that other ministries and their agendas are not

impactful on migration and the lives of migrants, such as the ministries responsible for education, health and social welfare among others.

Such laws and policies are then implemented by the executive through its agencies, such as Identity Malta, the International Protection Agency and the Principal Immigration Officer. These agencies fall within the oversight of the judiciary, which include the International Protection Appeals Tribunal, the Immigration Appeals Board and above those the Civil and Constitutional Courts.

In any advocacy initiatives, migrant-led organisations and migrant activities would need to engage with the stakeholders illustrated above in different ways and in varying degrees. Acquiring the knowledge and skills of how this is done would also entail support and training of those migrants that work in the field.

Furthermore, there are a number of migrant-led umbrella, or network, organisations that work in

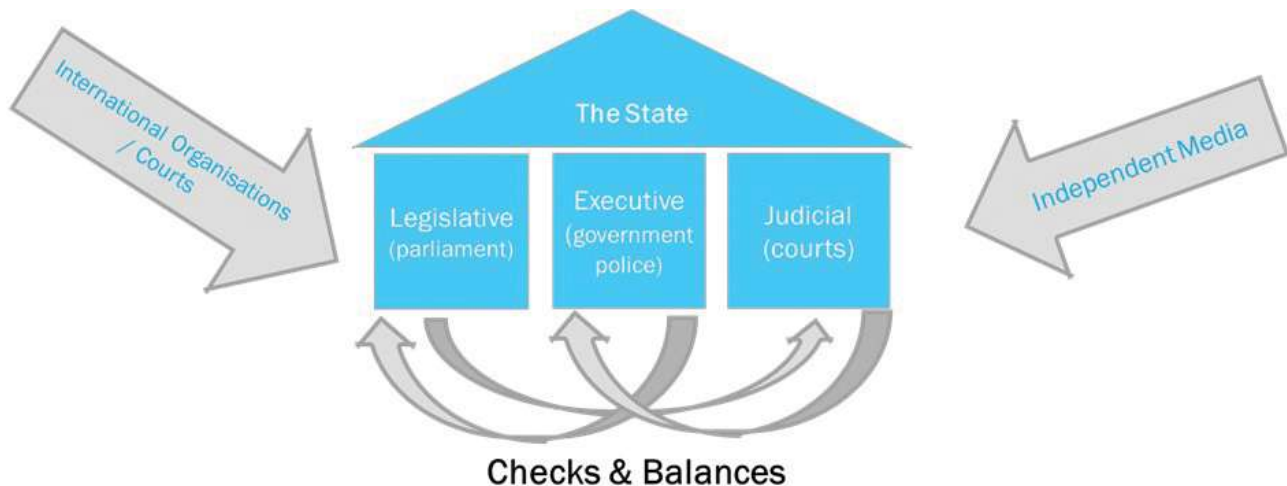


Figure 2: Basic Structure of the State & Other Actors

advocacy on asylum and migration on a European or global level. It is necessary for these organisations and any local members of such umbrella organisations to have a clear understanding of the workings of the European Union institutions.

Organisations include: the Diaspora Network Alliance⁴, a politically and religiously unaffiliated diaspora-led network comprised of some 40 members based across Europe; UNITEE – New European Business

Confederation⁵, a migrant-led organisation representing entrepreneurs and professionals with a migrant background; Humanity Crew⁶, a refugee-led organisation that specializes in the provision of first response mental health interventions to refugees and people in crises; and Network for Refugee Voices⁷, which is a group of refugees and refugee-led organisations working to contribute to processes and commitments aimed at reforming the international refugee protection regime.

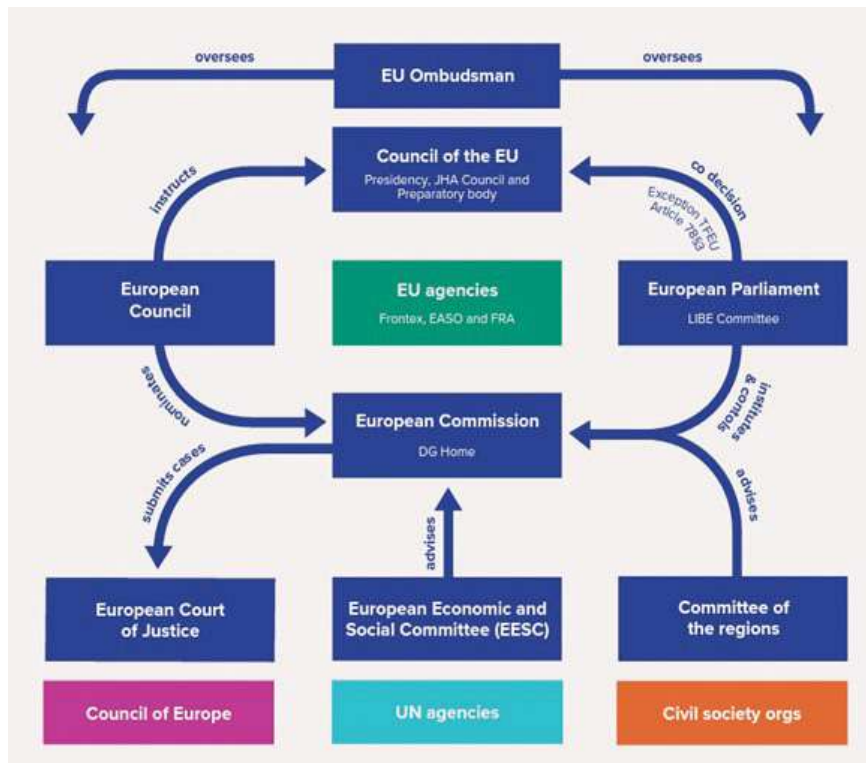


Figure 3: Relevant EU bodies - Source: RRE Civil Society Guide: EU Advocacy on Asylum and Migration, 2021

4 <https://www.diasporaalliance.net/>.

5 <http://www.unitee.eu/>.

6 <https://humanitycrew.org/>.

7 <https://www.networkforrefugeevoices.org/>.

**The space and opportunity to
advocate represents a significant
step in the integration of
migrants into society**



3. What is Advocacy?

The importance of empowering migrant-led organisations in order to advocate for change in laws and policy should be a cornerstone of any integration strategy. The space and opportunity to advocate represents a significant step in the integration of migrants into society, ensuring the right to have their voices heard and participate in public life, without fear of discrimination or repression.

Supporting active advocacy is particularly important in Malta, seeing as there is limited scope for migrant political participation in Maltese electoral systems. As mentioned in previous reports, *“ethnic and religious minorities in Malta are excluded from mainstream politics.*

For these groups participation in public discourse and political processes, combined with representation in civic and political institutions is essentially non-existent”⁸.

3.1 Supporting Migrant-Led Organisations

The lack of regular consultation by the government with migrant representatives and organisations only serves to increase the frustration at being invisible and unheard. Therefore, it is even more important for migrant-led organisations to be made aware of advocacy (see Figure 4) and trained on how to build an effective advocacy strategy.

What is advocacy?



Figure 4: What is Advocacy?

⁸ Jean-Pierre Gauci and Maria Pisani, Shadow Report: Racism and related discriminatory practices in Malta, ENAR, 2013.

There needs to be a concerted effort for state actors to identify, support and train migrant advocates and migrant-led organisations to achieve real and significant advocacy outcomes that would result in effective change, as shown in Figure 5.

A recent project, carried out by a number of European non-governmental organisations (NGOs), aimed to strengthen refugee inclusion by supporting the empowerment of those refugees who wanted to play an active role in their communities and at the EU level⁹.

The Training Kit, which is adaptable and freely available, adopts various training methodologies, including exercises, discussions, practical activities and interactive sessions

The two main outputs of this project were a comprehensive comparative report on the needs and strengths of refugee-led organisations and refugee communities¹⁰ and the creation of training kits for empowering refugee-led organisation at EU-level advocacy and at national-level¹¹. The Training Kit, which is adaptable and freely available, adopts various training methodologies, including exercises, discussions, practical activities and interactive sessions. This can be seen as a best-practice example of how support for the empowerment of refugee-led groups and migrant-led groups could be introduced and supported by government agencies.



9 Training Kit for Empowering Refugee-Led Community Organisations, aditus foundation, Cyprus Refugee Council, Dutch Refugee Council, European Council on Refugees and Exiles, Greek Forum of Refugees, Jesuit Refugee Service (Malta), Mosaico – Azioni per i rifugiati, with Syrian Volunteers Netherlands as Associated Partners. <https://aditus.org/our-work/projects/training-kit-for-empowering-refugee-led-community-organisations/#.YulHAHZBxD8>

10 Comparative Report on the Status of Refugee-led Community Organisations <https://aditus.org/Publications/rcotrainingproject-comparativereport.pdf>.

11 Training Kit : Empowering Refugee-Led Community Organisations <https://aditus.org/publications/training-kit-empowering-refugee-led-community-organisations/#.YulG7HZBxD8>.

Advocacy Outcomes



Or a combination of some or all of the above.

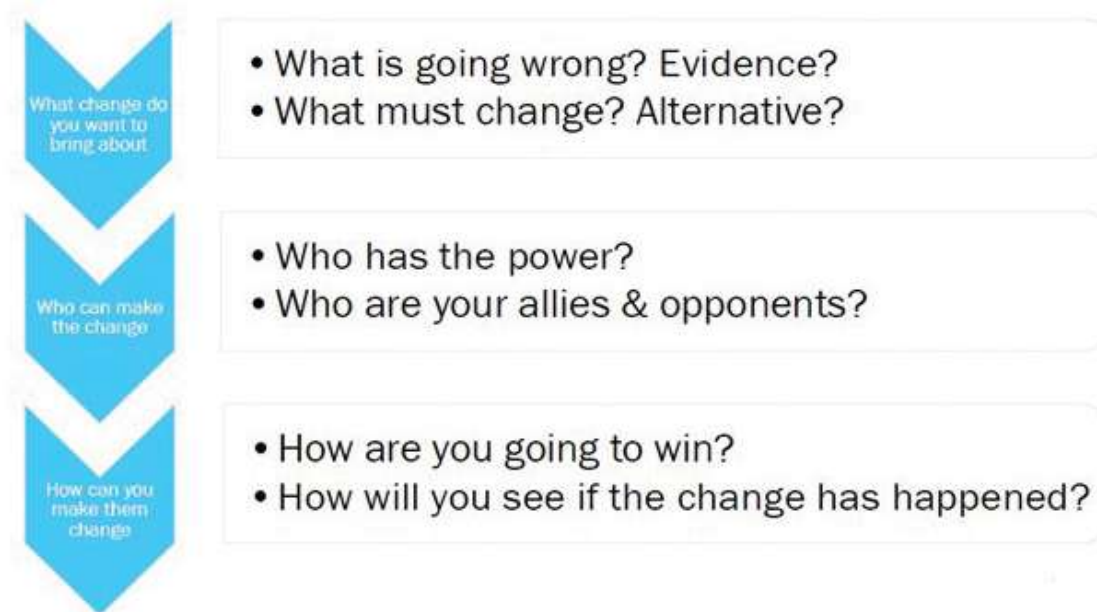


Figure 5: Advocacy Outcomes & Strategy

**In addition, a newly set-up
Malta Refugee Council acts as
an informal network of NGOs
working with refugees**



4. Migrant-Led Organisations in Malta

The exact number of refugee or migrant-led organisations in Malta is not known. However, a recent report published by aditus foundation & JRS Malta¹² found that there existed several organisations, both formally registered as a non-governmental organisation with the Office for Voluntary Organisations and also informal, non-registered, groups.

Furthermore, these organisations either represented a specific diaspora or migrant-originating region or had a sectoral approach and represented a specific cohort, such as women or youth. In addition, a newly set-up Malta Refugee Council acts as an informal network of NGOs working with refugees, including some migrant-led organisations¹³.

Name of Organisation or Group	Vision & Aims
African Media Association Malta	A media NGO that identifies special challenges of the African migrants in Malta and lobby for positive changes by bringing them to the attention of Governments and other relevant authorities.
Syrian Solidarity in Malta	The main focus of the organisation is to provide support and assistance to the Syrian community in Malta.
Sudanese Community Malta and the Sudanese Migrants Association	These two associations work in close contact with each other and together they represent the Sudanese community in Malta.
Somali Community in Malta	An informal group that works for all refugee Somalis regardless of their background.
Eritrean Migrant Community Association	Although not formally registered as a voluntary organisation, it advocates with government representatives, together with other NGOs and migrant communities, on issues such as integration and refugee policy in Malta.

¹² aditus foundation & JRS Malta, National Report on the status of refugee-led community organisations in Malta, 2020 https://aditus.org.mt/Publications/rcotrainingproject_maltareport_122020.pdf.

¹³ <https://maltarefugeecouncil.org.mt/>.

Libico	An independent, non-profit, non-political and non-discriminatory organisation that aims to connect the Libyan community within Malta.
Migrant Women Association Malta	A formal NGO committed to empowering migrant and refugee women to help enable them to fully integrate within Maltese society.
Spark15	A youth refugee-led organisation which came together to address the different challenges that are being faced by refugee and migrant youth.

Figure 6: Migrant-Led Organisations in Malta, 2022

4.1 Challenges faced by Migrant-Led Organisations

In order to develop into an effective organisation, there needs to be individuals who are determined and committed to work. However, since many migrant-led organisations are run on a voluntary basis, they lack the capacity¹⁴ and funding to be truly sustainable. Furthermore, the individuals working within these organisations would need to have, or to acquire, the skills to plan, organise and implement activities and projects. However, there are unique challenges that migrant-led organisations face: these include problems with the lack of knowledge of the structures in the host countries; a lack of trust in the authorities¹⁵; and negative public

discourse and narrative¹⁶. Below is a summary of the main challenges identified:

4.1.1 Capacity & Skills

- The securing of funds to sustain activities and the organisation itself, and to employ staff to work in such organisations. The formal requirement to register and keep the organisation in good-standing in order to access funding is seen as one of the major obstacles. This impacts the possibility, or otherwise, to rent office space, pay for utilities and other professional support.
- A key challenge is that migrant-led NGOs work on a voluntary basis, mainly due to the fact that their members juggle full-time employment or studies and their family life on top of their voluntary work.

14 Betts, Alexander et al, Refugee-led responses in the fight against COVID-19: building lasting participatory models, Forced Migration Review, June 2020, <https://www.fmreview.org/issue64/betts-eastoncalabria-pincock>.

15 Mohammed, Badran et al, Migrant-led Advocacy across Europe: Challenges and Opportunities. European Programme for Integration and Migration, October 2019 <https://www.epim.info/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Migrant-led-advocacy-across-EuropeReport.pdf>.

16 Amas, Neil, Strengthening the Voice of Refugee Community Organisations within London's Second-tier Voluntary Sector: Barriers and Opportunities, City University, March 2008, <https://www.bl.uk/britishlibrary/~media/bl/global/social-welfare/pdfs/nonsecure/s/t/r/strengthening-the-voice-of-refugee-community-organisations-within-londonsecondtier-voluntary-sector-barriers-and-opportunities.pdf>; Zetter, Roger et al, Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, The minority within the minority: Refugee community-based organisations in the UK and the impact of restrictionism on asylum seekers. (Routledge Taylor and Francis Group), October 2000, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/713680501>.

- The complexity of national requirements and legislation that needs to be adhered to in order to establish and run a registered organisation or association.
- The difficulties for migrant-led organisations, as well as for migrants themselves, to open bank accounts is a core challenge that the majority of organisations face.
- The keeping up of a public image, including maintaining a website and various social media platforms with up-to-date information, is burdensome.
- Navigating through complex and new national and European systems, in an already extremely complicated migration system, makes it a challenge for migrant-led organisations to carry out advocacy activities.
- A lack of expertise in the national regime relevant to the sectors in which they operate, and the difficulty in remaining updated. This is also due to the fact that, at times, migrant-led organisations are often excluded from networks and opportunities that would allow them to keep abreast with developments.
- Identified needs include the following:
 - a. Basic accounting, project management and budgeting;
 - b. Language fluency;
 - c. Legal advice and information relating to policy and legislation;
 - d. Media communication;
 - e. Knowledge of system of government and related authorities;
 - f. Training in advocacy and public speaking;
 - g. Capacity to identify issues and to build strategies to address issues.

- The continued reliance on support from other non-migrant-led organisations, government agencies and international organisations, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), could result in a risk of effecting the independence of such organisations and their long-term planning.
- Legal impediments, such as the absence of a legal status, may limit the direction and the content of refugees' and migrants' activities.

4.1.2 Environment & Collaboration

- An effect relating to the challenges mentioned on the difficulties with registering an organisation and opening bank accounts is that formal collaborations with other NGOs or government entities on funded projects would be an impossibility.
- The lack of migrant or refugee-led spaces for the coordination of strategies and approaches bars migrants from taking control of their own agenda, and instead remain dependant on others.
- A core challenge can also be found in the relationship between migrant-led NGOs and non-migrant-led NGOs, in that the latter lack inclusive employment or training policies. Furthermore, there exists a power imbalance against migrant-led NGOs, which in turn feeds into the narrative of migrants being disempowered and needing assistance.
- An environment which is racist and xenophobic also effects the working of organisations, making it harder to engage with public authorities and private entities.
- Limited engagement by the major players within the Government with migrant-led NGOs limited the opportunities for open discussion on issues of concern, policies and legislative changes.



many migrant-led organisations are facing a high number of demands from their members and their individual needs, and this leaves the organisations with little time to tackle the broader advocacy issues

4.1.3 Mobilisation

- Mobilising migrant or refugee communities to organise themselves into groups or organisations is particularly challenging when they are also working, securing housing for themselves and their families, while aiming to guarantee a level of security.
- Furthermore, many migrant-led organisations are facing a high number of demands from their members and their individual needs, and this leaves the organisations with little time to tackle the broader advocacy issues.
- Diversity issues within migrant-led NGOs can result in the shrinking of space in which certain members of particular groups, such as women and LGBTIQ+ migrants, can participate in.

4.2 Opportunities

Whilst migrant-led NGOs face several challenges, they also present a great number of opportunities, for migrants, policymakers as well as the larger community.

- Learning how to support migrant-led advocacy allows for a new approach to policymaking that is more connected to realities on the ground. This is an opportunity for policymaking to become more inclusive of migrant populations.

- In order for there to be more inclusive policymaking, space needs to be created where both migrant advocates and policymakers can exchange ideas and create a more trusting relationship. Creating such spaces provides an opportunity for learning and trust building to take place.
- Using online tools to share knowledge and information drawn up by migrant experts, and translated into different languages by migrants themselves, enables newly arrived migrants to be immediately engaged.
- Bringing the emerging migrant-led organisations, advocates and initiatives together to focus on joint initiatives presents an opportunity to develop a voice and shape future participation in policymaking.
- Similarly, bringing together migrant advocates with established NGOs and networks to build sustainable and equal partnerships would allow for the sharing of experiences and best-practices, resulting in stronger voices for both.

4.3 Recommendations to Support to Migrant-Led Organisations

The following are recommendations that would assist migrant-led and refugee-led organisations overcome the challenges identified above, whilst also making the best of the opportunities presented by these organisations.

4.3.1 Skills

- There needs to be a review of the existing skills gaps and a training plan for workers and volunteers from migrant-led NGOs to fill those gaps needs to be developed.
- Facilitate migrant preparedness to engage in strategizing and decision-making by providing a professional development fund and provide training and capacity building opportunities.
- Make training on migration, asylum and refugee policies and procedures freely available for migrant and refugee advocates.
- Support new migrant-NGOs with establishing a structure and registering with the Commissioner for Voluntary Organisations.

4.3.2 Funding and Logistical Support

- Migrant-led NGOs should be supported to make contact with key agencies, including councils, funders and National Human Rights Institutions (NHRI).
- Support migrant advocates and NGOs by providing the logistical support needed to facilitate access and create safe spaces for engagement.
- Finance migrant participation and migrant-led initiatives by compensating migrants and refugees for their time, expertise, and work and provide core funding for migrant-led initiatives.

- Facilitate and provide funding for the creation of inclusive, self-organised platforms for migrant participation.
- Make direct funding available to refugee-led and migrant-led organisations.
- Commission paid services via public calls or project calls, to refugee-led and/or migrant-led organisations.

4.3.3 Environment

- Local councils should promote the participation of migrant-led NGOs in the design and implementation of integration measures in a meaningful way.
- Ensuring that migrant-led NGOs participate actively in relevant public consultation processes and consultation bodies.
- Employ staff and fill a number of leadership and governance roles with migrants and refugees.
- Establish partnership structures with government agencies that promote equal access and that would include migrant-NGOs as equal partners.
- Facilitate collaboration, networking and access to media outlets and possibilities of association.
- Create an up-to-date overview of migrant-led and refugee-led organizations and advocates in order to identify opportunities for collaboration.
- Invest in the competences of policymakers in order to make room for advocates' perspective.



Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund 2014-2020

This project is part-financed by the European Union
Co-financing rate: 75% EU Funds 25% Beneficiary Funds
Sustainable Management of Migration Flows

