



Guidelines

European Partnership and Intervention Model of Project “Fast Track Action Boost” (FAB)

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MetropolisNet
European network of local development
partnerships in metropolitan areas

Guidelines

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Introduction

The following guidelines are based on the ‘Partnership and Intervention Model’ policy strategy outline report, generated within the framework of Project FAB’s 4th outcome². We have also considered the findings of the different local empowerment workshops (LEW) and policy practice workshops (PPWG). The evaluation results³ and the experiences of the ‘pilot actions’ in five territories have additionally been taken in account.

Before introducing the guidelines, we repeat the central inquiry of the FAB project:

How can we integrate refugees, in particular women, into the labour market as quickly as possible?

- Which partnerships and co-operations do we require for this?
- Which interventions work? Which do not?
- What can be learned from the FAB project for both our participating cities and for other European cities and the European level in general?

The 23 guidelines in this document are divided into three categories:

- Guidelines concerning the partnerships.
- Guidelines concerning the interventions.
- Special guidelines concerning female refugees.

¹ Call of the DG EMPL: Fast track integration into the labour market for third country nationals targeting exclusively asylum seekers, refugees, and their family members in the Frame of EaSI (Employment and Social Innovation, PROGRESS) Programme – Proposal VP/2016/015/0096 – Agreement No VS/2017/0441

² A.4.3 Description of the Action of the FAB Project

³ FAB C.1 Evaluation System – Evaluation report 2021 by Söstra GmbH

I. Guidelines concerning the partnerships

Guideline 1:

Ensure a clear distribution of responsibilities, competences, and tasks among the different levels of government (national, regional, local, or municipal level), ensuring fluid and direct communication between these levels.

- Some of our FAB cities recommend a more decentralised system and call for more autonomy on the regional or city level. Others emphasize the importance of federal or national regulations to guarantee equal standards across the country, leading to higher efficiency.
- However, the general conditions in all cities and countries for asylum seekers and refugees are predominantly regulated by laws on the central level.
- All partners agree that developing fluid and direct communication between the central administration, autonomous communities and local authorities (on plans and programmes concerning the reception and integration of refugees) is crucial.

Milan – new Italian law impacts the city level

In September 2019, the Italian Government passed a decree-law (No 113/2018) on security and migration with the aim, to make the asylum system more effective. In another law (No. 130/2020) the former migrant's reception System has been reformed and more favorable conditions for asylum seekers and refugees have been implemented.... Consequently, the structures and services of reception in the city of Milan have also changed.

Madrid – consequent collaboration between the different levels is necessary

In Spain, the Central Government is exclusively responsible for matters pertaining to asylum, both in legal regulation and for preparing social policies aimed at those applying for and benefiting from international protection. The Spanish Constitution grants the possibility that competences in matters of social assistance can be transferred to the Autonomous Communities, which is why the consequent collaboration between the administrations is necessary.

Vienna – provision of equal standards in all regions by the central level

The National level in Austria provides a provision of equal standards (with regard to refugees and asylum seekers) in all Austrian Federal Provinces. At the National and City level accommodation for people with special needs has been provided. A good organisation and sound division of tasks between the different actors ensures fast-track integration for all those persons benefiting from protection and particularly for women. Coordination and cooperation with the national level mainly takes place in the framework of federalist multi-level governance..... Cooperation with the federal government mainly concerns access to federal funding and European funding administered by federal authorities.

Belgrade/ Republic of Serbia – Co-operation of Ministries improved

The broad involvement of institutions (during the FAB project) helped to improve inter-institutional cooperation in Serbia by learning about specific tasks and competences and by forming new contacts. Its main driver was a working -group which was formed and in which all relevant stakeholders participated. It was installed under the direction of the assistant minister of MoLEVSA. Source: Evaluation Case Study Serbia.

Guideline 2:

Develop and organise a more dynamic and participatory coordination model between the different partners on a horizontal level.

- Combine efforts and resources
- **create a cohesive chain of information and activities for newcomers through successful cooperation of the involved authorities on the city level.**

Belgrade – Co-operation on horizontal level

At the local level, the `Commissioner for Refugees´ is an important person in charge of addressing problems of caring for and meeting the general needs of refugees and displaced persons. The `Migration Council´ (focus on Belgrade) consists of Representatives of the executive body of the local self-government unit (Centre for Social Work, Police Department, Employment Service, Municipal administration).

Milan – integration of projects to make better use of the resources

Milan invested much effort for a better integration of ongoing projects with the aim of optimizing resources and activities and avoiding redundancies.

Guideline 3:

Make the reception of newcomers more equal and spread out across the country.

Stockholm – all municipalities obliged to receive newcomers – increased responsibility

In Stockholm, efforts have been made (new law in 2016) to make the reception of newcomers more equal and spread out through the country. Since then, all municipalities have been obliged to receive newcomers (this was voluntarily up until then). This has increased the responsibility for newcomers to all municipalities in the country, the reception of newcomers is a shared responsibility for the whole of Sweden. A more evenly shared reception is also important for combating social and ethnic housing segregation.

Guideline 4:

Strengthen the cooperation between the public employment service (and/ or the Job-centres) and the relevant city departments.

- Implement coordinated, complementary active labour market programmes.
- This includes those already recognised, but also those who are rejected, with a status of temporary suspension of deportation or during the recognition process.

Berlin – successful cooperation between the Federal Employment Agency and the Land Berlin

In Berlin (and in Germany) the cooperation between the Federal Employment Agency and the regional state ministries, in Berlin, in particular the respective Department of Integration, Labour and Social Services, is a crucial element for successful integration of refugees and asylum seekers. In Berlin we find a relatively clear division of tasks: The mainstream measures for integration are implemented by the Jobcentres (in the frame of Germany's Social Code II). This applies for persons with refugee status. Asylum seekers and persons whose demand for asylum was rejected but who cannot return to their country of origin ("Duldung") are supported mainly by municipal structures. The Berlin Senate backs up these activities with its own instruments along language, training, employment support and outreach measures.

Madrid – reorganisation in favour of refugees

The Agency of Employment has renewed and developed its strategy and organisation since 2015 towards a comprehensive strategy and has consolidated its competency management model. Since 2018 these efforts have been enhanced. The Agency for Employment is a strong key stakeholder to help refugees join in the labour market.

Belgrade – tailor-made approaches developed by local authorities

Local authorities are key actors in formulating programmes that respond to the needs of migrants and asylum seekers and can be sustainable in the long term.

Stockholm - PES and municipality work together

A very important aspect of successful labour market integration is the collaboration between authorities. When the PES and the municipality work together it is easier to create effective activities for the newcomers that link into each other and to avoid the duplication of activities and mapping.

Guideline 5:

Involve businesses early on - a key factor for success and for fast labour market integration.

- Unlock the companies! In addition to refugees, companies also require support.
- In our experience, many companies have positioned themselves over the last five years as being either "open" or "closed" to refugees.
- However, companies that have hired refugees are usually very satisfied with their decision. They benefit (among other advantages) from the high motivation of refugees.
- Refugees contribute to the diversification of teams, which often prove to be more efficient.
- Once a refugee gets into work or training, they learn very quickly!
- It can be said that true fast-track labour market integration takes place in the companies.

Madrid – Collaboration Agreements with companies

Agencia para el Empleo (Madrid Employment Agency) reinforced the search for talent through alliances with companies to establish collaboration agreements for the benefit of the most disadvantaged population, among which is the migrant population, refugees and asylum seekers and the integration of the training in the Agency's services portfolio, to multiply its effectiveness.

Berlin - ARRIVO

Berlin city authorities and the local Chamber of Handicrafts (‘Handwerkskammer’) launched the ARRIVO project in 2014 to improve the labour market integration prospects of refugee residents and to address severe labour shortages in local businesses. The project offers a combination of workshops on local employment standards and ethics, short vocational and language training modules, internships and on-the-job skills assessments to refugees with basic German language proficiency (in different professional fields). Additionally, the ARRIVO service office provides companies with information about the employment of refugees. Special courses are offered for female refugees where they can try out various craft trades (for example gardening, hairdressing, sewing, carpentry etc.) and the health sector such as carer for the elderly or nurse.

Guideline 6:

Cooperate with the different municipal stakeholders, including chambers, social partners, third sector and welfare organisations, NGOs and civil society, and various on-ground initiatives (including volunteers). Moreover, refugee communities and organisations should play a crucial role.

- Involve the different municipal stakeholders throughout the whole process.

Stockholm – horizontal partnerships of different institutions

In Stockholm, a sound structure and a clear division of tasks between the Municipality, the Public Employment Service, the City Council and the County Board can be assessed as a strength. The County Council (Health Department) is responsible for a health check-up. This is important to be able to help people with an illness, as well as to prevent spread of diseases.

Vienna – platform for coordination

At a political level, the regular meeting of the City Senate including all Executive City Councillors is the main platform for coordination. The Department for Integration and Diversity is involved in all meetings touching on migration and integration. At the district level, the District Offices of the Department for Migration and Diversity regularly organise stakeholder meeting with the administration and NGO`s. In most districts with a high percentage of immigrants, local offices for urban renewal (“Gebietsbetreuung”) coordinated by the Department of Urban Planning regularly participating at these meetings.

Guideline 7:

A network of the municipalities and an exchange between them is useful.

Madrid – Refugee Towns Platform

One of the strong points in Spain and especially in Madrid, is the “Refugee Towns Platform” Network, containing Madrid and other 20 large and small Spanish municipalities, which were open to receiving refugees. Regarding the municipalities, they hold autonomy and competence over certain services and local policies which may benefit the reception of refugees and migrants in general. The “Refugee Towns Platform” believes in real inclusion of refugees over the long term through different labour market and employment-oriented measures, counselling, training, outreach.

FAB Cities - Exchange and transfer between Cities on European Level – use also EUROCITIES

In our FAB project we made the experience, that a transnational exchange by study and mentoring visits, transfer of ideas and instruments and a longer-lasting cooperation between the cities is very useful and recommendable. Another network to exchange in terms of labour market policies for vulnerable groups, including refugees, is EUROCITIES (SAF Forum).

Guideline 8:

Develop local action plans (in particular, for refugees who cannot be reached through mainstream structures and institutions).

Belgrade – local action plans

it is necessary to support development of local action plans for employment, programmes and measures for migrant population considering labour market demand.

Berlin – District alliances for Economy and Employment

a strength of the Berlin strategy is the over 20-year-old local partnership model ‘District Pacts for Economy and Employment’ (BBWA) which has been launched in 1999 in each of the 12 Berlin districts. These pacts stand for the local dimension of the European Employment Strategy and are co-financed by the ESF and the ERDF. The pacts offer many services and measures, also for refugees. The strength is that they are working close to the ground, in the neighbourhoods, enabling – amongst other - access to those refugees who cannot be reached by the mainstream institutions.

II. Recommendations concerning the interventions

Note: The integration process of refugees typically takes place in the following steps: arrival and basic needs (including housing and health); acquiring system knowledge, i.e. knowledge on laws, institutions and support systems; learning the language; obtaining recognition of existing qualifications and / or improving skills; entering the labour market⁴. However, to speed up the integration process, interventions in FAB cities have been designed, developed and implemented in a combined way, providing a broad variety of services and projects.

Guideline 9:

Establish a ‘welcome centre’ (first aid) as a one stop-shop with initial services for all newcomers, including refugees, following the principle of ‘accompaniment or integration from DAY 1’.

- Offer first aid services such as registration, recognition pathways, accommodation, information on legal rights and duties, the culture of the host country, first steps towards orientation and language courses, education, and work.
- Function as a “service-hub” with a network of all institutions, organisations and initiatives involved in refugee policy.
- Provide services in several languages (including languages of the most common refugee origin countries).
- Implement a permanent (or repetitive) information campaign.

Berlin – Welcome Centre

‘Willkommenszentrum Berlin’ (Welcome Centre) for all newcomers in the city offers services in 11 languages; around 18 permanent partners are involved; counselling in registration/ arrival, recognition of degrees, language courses, family, housing, employment and education, including self-employment is offered as well as counselling ‘how to deal with every-day-life – culture in Berlin/ Germany’ and counselling for Labour Law.

Vienna – Start Vienna

‘Start Vienna’ provides services in several languages. It is an initiative lead and co-ordinated by the city department for Integration and Diversity (MA 17). ‘Accompaniment from Day 1 on’ is the principle! Start Vienna offers – amongst other - just at the beginning a Vienna language voucher (value 100 EUR) for language and integration courses and a ‘Start Coaching’ (for first orientation) as well as information modules, also in several languages.

⁴ See FAB Project – C.1 Evaluation System, Evaluation Report April 2021, Söstra GmbH

Guideline 10:

Establish an early (and continuous) competence check using a professional profiling tool

- Recording knowledge and training is not only important at the beginning but should also be incorporated in training and further education.

European Skills Profiling Tool - European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion

Use the 'European Skills Profiling Tool for Third Country Nationals' (DG Empl), a service that assists citizens of non-EU countries. One can use it in an interview situation to produce a profile of refugee's skills. The tool is offered in several languages and has been developed in 2017. It still exists and became in 2020 (launched 1 July 2020) part of the Europass platform ("the tool to manage your skills and plan your learning and your career")⁵. The European Skills Profile Tool has been tested within the FAB project.

Vienna - Education Passport

With Vienna's Europass users can create a profile to record all their skills, qualifications and experiences, add files (documents, diplomas, images) to a personal library so that their information and documents are all available in one secure location, receive tailored suggestions of jobs (via EURES) and courses based on their experiences, interests and skills registered in their profile, prepare CVs and cover letters using the online editor to create applications for jobs and courses, share a link to their profile with employers, recruiters, guidance professionals or education and training institutions, access information on learning and working in Europe including links to national services provided by Member States.

Guideline 11:

Support self-assurance and system learning

- Fostering the capacity of refugees to navigate the legal, social, cultural, and working context of the receiving or host country.

Guideline 12:

Implement information and counselling services with well-equipped and qualified counsellors or coaches, using digital services:

- following an empowerment approach
- individual and group coaching
- ideally, based upon stable, long-lasting relationships built on trust
- integrating digital services and devices (digital guidance is particularly important during the pandemic). Messenger services play an important role!
- low threshold!

⁵ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1266&langId=en>

Milan – Serbia – Mobile App for Refugees

The pilot activities in Serbia put an emphasis on improving information for refugees and asylum seekers. In Milan, there were specific approaches and ideas that caught the Serbian delegation's interest. The most important one was the mobile app that had been developed as a private initiative by a refugee in Italy and which compiled all necessary information for refugees and asylum seekers. Therefore, they decided to develop a similar app, gathering all relevant information for refugees and asylum seekers.

Guideline 13:

Organise outreach actions - go where the refugees are!

Berlin – Mobile Education Counselling (MoBiBe)

Mobile counsellors offer advice on further and vocational/ academic education and related issues such as German language courses, additional qualifications, recognition of degrees and certificates, job search and application writing/ strategies, work and internships in Germany generally, and in Berlin particularly. The in total 34 counsellors consider qualifications and skills, guide towards possible education opportunities and make suitable individual proposals.

Guideline 14:

Combine language and vocational training courses for faster integration – offer team teaching.

- The fast tracks aim to offer internships, language training and education in a coherent process. The goal is to shorten the time from arrival to work (making sure that the newcomers are matched to the right jobs, and ensuring the provision of skills to the industries in which there is labour shortage).
- Fast track (rapid) integration requires docking on to home country work experience (a doctor or engineer should not become a taxi-driver), unless the refugee deliberately wants to do something completely different in the new country.

Stockholm - SFX- Swedish for Professionals

SFX offer intense language studies combined with vocational classes for newly arrived professionals in Stockholm. The programme started in 2001 after identified need for custom SFI courses for professionals. New courses have been added over time, many which have been started with EU-funding, and then have been implemented

YFI - The EU-funded project YFI offers vocational training for immigrants with integrated language education, to increase the capacity of adult education in the City of Stockholm to effectively integrate language and vocational training in an educational programme for low educated adult immigrants, in order to speed up their attainment of a relevant language and vocational competence.

Milan - IFX

Milan promotes the IFX path, transferred from SFX (Swedish for professionals) from Stockholm, as an effective practice for the Italian language training of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, at local institutions (not only Milan, but also other municipalities in the area) (Vienna Education Passport, recording documenting the completed courses and certifications has been adopted)

Guideline 15:

Foster labour market integration using approaches that may not directly relate with the labour market.

Vienna – Project COMPARE

In the Project COMPARE (Community Parents), implemented by the Board of Education for Vienna – European Office, the target group were those parents who were challenged by the Austrian school (“My child in school”) and education system (for instance information and guidance for the VET sector for young people) and the job market for their children (uncertainties of the complex system and how to make the right decisions).

Guideline 16:

Provide workplaces, work experience and internships by companies, municipalities and NGOs

- Networking with companies is crucial.
- Sensitize refugees also for non-academic professions and trained jobs, so that they do not get stuck in unskilled and/or poorly paid jobs (to take up an apprenticeship).
- Create job offers and work experience also through the municipalities themselves, cooperatives, charities or NGOs.

Guideline 17:

Launch programmes that support the entrepreneurial spirit and self-employment of refugees

Vienna Business Agency

supports people with a refugee background on their way to becoming self-employed with a special training programme. In a series of one-week workshops in the sectors bakery/confectionery, gastronomy and carpentry as well as a series of 12-week workshops in the area of IT, interested persons are provided with the most important theoretical and commercial knowledge on starting up a company. The workshops are offered in German, English and Arabic or Farsi respectively.

III. Special guidelines concerning female refugees

Note: This target group is the core of the FAB project. From among the 294 participants in our FAB pilot projects across five cities, 231 (78,5%) were female. However, the reality is different: when it comes to real jobs in companies, in the labour market, the proportion of women among refugees is much lower than among men. This has been exacerbated by the Corona pandemic. Nevertheless, the vast majority of women would like to work, revealing a great need for action in this field!

Guideline 18:

Be aware of the personal and professional experiences of women gained in their home countries (including flight experiences and enduring instances of trauma), that are distinct from those of men.

Madrid – mainly women

During 2019⁶, 65 percent of migrants and refugees who participated in employment activities in career and career guidance services, resource counselling, active job search skills training, vocational training in sectors with the highest demand for employment and labour insertion, were women. Likewise, and according to these same data, of the almost 4,500 migrants and refugees who participated in Spanish courses for foreigners, 57 percent were women between the ages of 18 and 50.

Guideline 19:

Offer special settings of counselling.

- Particularly at the beginning of the integration process, it is important to accompany women separately with coaching and courses adapted to their special needs.

Evaluation Report FAB

Female refugees might have experienced serious trauma which can differ from those experienced by male refugees. Therefore, safe, women-only spaces and settings might be necessary for women in order to help processing trauma.

Vienna - Erstberatungsstelle

special settings for women counselling, including childcare services

⁶ Data from the last report of the municipal department that deals with migration issues, at the time of writing the update of this report

Berlin and Stockholm – Neighbourhood Mothers

Since many years, the *Neighbourhood Mums* serve as a key example of Berlin's low-threshold, outreach integration policy. It is a local initiative, launched in Berlin-Neukölln in 2004, that qualifies long term unemployed women who are mothers and have a migrant background. In a six months - training program they are prepared to offer education and support to other migrant families that cannot be reached through established institutions and programmes. Since 2014 the focus of the Neighbourhood mums project has broadened to newly arrived refugee women as well. The Neighbourhood Mothers Programme has been transferred to Denmark and Finland. In the life-time of the FAB Project it has also been transferred to Stockholm. One can find 24 district mothers in 7 Stockholm Districts, employed by the City of Stockholm.

Guideline 20:

Provide extra language classes and vocational training tailored for special professions

- including professions traditionally occupied by their male counterparts.

Berlin – ARRIVO for women

Special courses are offered for female refugees where they can try out various craft trades (for example gardening, hairdressing, sewing, carpentry etc.) and the health sector such as carer for the elderly or nurse. In addition:

- German courses for the proficiency of general and professional vocabulary,
- Advisory elements about the German apprenticeship system and opportunities in the Berlin job market,
- Guided visits of Berlin-based companies,
- Courses on how to write/ expand a CV for job Interview

Vienna – My languages

ABZ Austria – “Meine Sprachen” (My languages) – Literacy in German and Farsi – special German course for women

Madrid - Collaboration Agreement in favour of women refugees

Collaboration Agreement between `Agencia para el Empleo` (AEM) (PES) and “Quiero Trabajo Foundation (QTF)” is a model based on selection, job orientation, mentoring and empowerment of 75 unemployed women at risk of exclusion to successfully pass a job interview. 85% of the women in this action come from non - EU-Countries. The collaboration between the AEM and the QTF takes the following steps: HR Volunteers of large companies take part in the integration process and work together with Job Advisors of the AEM (PES), volunteers help women successfully passing their job interview, QTF volunteers are mentors for the women, that have applied for a specific job and have been selected by the AEM.

Guideline 21:

Provide childcare support and part-time courses

Vienna – “Basic Education”,

The Municipal Department for Integration and Diversity (MA 17) offers courses in basic education, which includes German, Math, IT and orientation on the labour market. The focus is on youth and women. All courses are offered with child – care - service, so also mothers with small children can attend.

Guideline 22:

Make use of blended learning –

- this has a positive impact on the participation of women.

Evaluation Report of FAB – Pilot Action Job Boost Berlin

Designing practices according to women’s disposable time slots implies that they need to be flexible, e. g. by making use of digital tools and by employing blended learning or counselling methods (as tested in the Berlin `Job Boost´ pilot).

Guideline 23:

Include information and learning about equality and the expectations of the host society

- the task here is to break up traditional role models, raising self-esteem and achieving acceptance of the system of the host country (this applies to both men and women). At the same time, we should also respect the culture of the home country and the individual background of refugees.

Evaluation Report of FAB

Women, especially those from societies with a conservative division of labour within the family, tend to assign a lower personal relevance to paid work. This means that either migrant women have no work experience and do not consider paid work as a relevant option at all, or that their initial occupational choice has not been driven by personal interest, but rather was a result of financial constraints, social conventions and family influence. Therefore, the process of labour market integration may require an extended phase of (re-)orientation towards new occupations. In this context, the perspective can be broadened to also include options such as taking up a vocational training or entering self-employment.