

# **SOFIA: A SUCCESS STORY IN THE OPEN CITIES PROJECT**

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# Situation analysis



# Current stay of play

- Sofia role in the project: Bulgaria is a new state member of the European Union as of 1<sup>st</sup> January 2007
- Gaining from experience exchange
- Added value to the project – from national to regional and local competence and process of decentralization
- Available policies influencing in the course of the project

# Sofia's Goals in the Open Cities

- Identity current & present research & outreach efforts supporting Strategy for internationalization and openness of the city
- Identify current and potential resources including policies and measures on local level
- Identify degree of development according to the convergence area criteria, define needs and opportunities, develop and refine research questions and outreach activities for Sofia.

# Goals

- Develop assessment to measure effectiveness
- Develop a supportive environment for exchange of ideas, partnering, and involvement of stakeholders.
- Develop network for transnational and regional cooperation
- Creation of mobile platform for social integration

# Anticipated outcomes on local level

- Learning interests of the shareholders
- Identifying results and introducing multilayer approach
- Creating mechanism/ programmes for administrative, educational, social and labour service of immigrants on local and district level

# Perspectives in the Open Cities project

- Open cities dimensions:
  - European level Bulgaria: the external border of the EU
- ↓
- Apply EU rules and Sofia has to be to the highest extent strict observer of the application of the EU rules in the immigration field
  - Transnational level – networking
  - Local – to institutionalize policy measure in the Sofia City Council decisions in two aspects: investment incentives and dialogue to the international business community located in Sofia and through social integration of those sectors of the society most vulnerable by the process of integration and adaptation

# Results and assets

- Local action plan draft
- Transfer of competence to local level
- Task force working group generating ideas on how to deal and what policies to be offered to the City Council

# Sofia case

- Aspects of immigration
- Economic – economy of knowledge according to Lisbon agenda
- Social – measures for creating mobile social platform and infrastructure



# Legal framework

- **3.1. Legal acts defining the immigration process in Bulgaria**
- **Constitution**
- **Laws**
- Foreigners act
- Law for refugees and asylum seekers
- Civil registration act
- Law for the Bulgarian identification papers
- Bulgarian citizenship act
- Labor encouragement act
- Discrimination protection act
- Trafficking combat act

# Gaps in the application and transposition of the EU regulations and regulatory mechanism identified in the process of working out the Open Cities project

## Treaty of Lisbon

- *Article 63a*
- 1. The Union shall develop a common immigration policy aimed at ensuring, at all stages, the efficient management of migration flows, fair treatment of third-country nationals residing legally in Member States, and the prevention of, and enhanced measures to combat, illegal immigration and trafficking in human beings.
- 2. For the purposes of paragraph 1, the European Parliament and the Council, acting in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure, shall adopt measures in the following areas:
  - (a) the conditions of entry and residence, and standards on the issue by Member States of long-term visas and residence permits, including those for the purpose of family reunification;
  - (b) the definition of the rights of third-country nationals residing legally in a Member State, including the conditions governing freedom of movement and of residence in other Member States;
  - (c) illegal immigration and unauthorised residence, including removal and repatriation of persons residing without authorisation;
  - (d) combating trafficking in persons, in particular women and children.
- 3. The Union may conclude agreements with third countries for the readmission to their countries of origin or provenance of third-country nationals who do not or who no longer fulfil the conditions for entry, presence or residence in the territory of one of the Member States.
- 4. The European Parliament and the Council, acting in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure, may establish measures to provide incentives and support for the action of Member States with a view to promoting the integration of third-country nationals residing legally in their territories, excluding any harmonisation of the laws and regulations of the Member States.
- 5. This Article shall not affect the right of Member States to determine volumes of admission of third-country nationals coming from third countries to their territory in order to seek work, whether employed or self-employed.

# Measure to be implemented

- **Institutional level**
- Develop working definition of the economic immigration
- Setting up degree of collaboration between Sofia Municipality and the Ministry of Internal Affairs regarding planning of common policy approach towards immigrants on Sofia territory. No statistical data available. The access of the local authorities to the national data base has to be therefore institutionalized.
- System of registration of immigrants on local level.
- Participation in the Working group of the Ministry of foreign affairs.
- To form Forum for networking and discussion for problem identification, solution and measures application in the near future
- Hot phone line for immigrant services through central administration
- Immigrant desk in district administration.

# Local level – Defining economy priorities on local level

- Programmes for education and adaptation of foreign speakers – along with the NGO sector
- Platform for IT based services and web platform for foreign speakers and immigrants with an information site for questions and answers
- Delivering information in electronic format on administrative procedures regarding foreigners

# Local level – Defining economy priorities on local level

- Creation of administrative basis for the direct actions and deadlines for regulation on the matters connected to immigrants and foreigners on the part of the City Council
- Creation of immigration unit on local level for implementation of the policies listed above
- Spin-off with universities and companies

# Local level – Defining economy priorities on local level

- Investors interactive forum
- Mobile platform for social integration
- Local immigration tax for improved administrative services

# Thanks for your attention

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