



Promising Practices in Migration Policy

One-stop-shops: coordinating integration from day one

Dirk Gebhardt and Bella Kosmala

»The first contact with a reception service is not neutral (...). Because in that first moment it is still possible to see the person as a whole. Before they become mere ›access data‹ and the system loses sight of what happened next. The question that rarely appears in the design is how we are configuring the trajectory of a person through this first contact. Not just what resources we have available. Also what we are favouring and what we are leaving out. What barriers we are not seeing. What opportunities we are not recognising, for the person and for the city. Because we are talking about new neighbours. And a well-thought-out welcome is not just a service. It is a commitment to social cohesion.«

Glória Elena Rendon Toro, former Coordinator of the One-stop-shop SAIER, Barcelona

Introduction

Newcomers often arrive in a new city with only limited knowledge of how the local society works and where to go for support. This may be the case whether they have moved from a neighbouring country or from the other side of the world. Questions such as how to register for child care, access health care, find work, have qualifications recognised or apply for a residence permit can

quickly become complex and overwhelming. How much more so when someone also has to cope with a new language, unfamiliar institutions and financial insecurity.

When people are unable to access the right information and support early on, the consequences can be significant. Migrants may end up working in jobs below their qualifications, struggle to access health care or housing, or become isolated from wider community life. Problems

that could have been resolved early can become more serious and more costly over time, for both the individual and public services.

At the same time, the »integration« landscape is often fragmented. The integration process involves interactions with many different government institutions, as well as NGOs and community organisations, each with their own responsibilities and ways of working. For newcomers, this can make services difficult to navigate. For service providers and cities, it can lead to duplication of work, gaps in support and unnecessary pressure on already stretched services.

Across Europe, so-called »one-stop-shops« (OSS) have emerged as one response to these challenges. By bringing together a range of coordinated services and actors, they aim to provide a clearer and more accessible entry point to support systems. They can help to identify needs earlier, improve coordination between services and create a more joined-up and welcoming approach to integration.

One-stop-shops take different forms, depending on the local and national context. Some focus primarily on access to public services, while others combine integration support with community participation or neighbourhood-based activities. What they have in common is the intention behind them to organise services around people's needs rather than around institutional structures.

Drawing on examples from across Europe, this report explores how one-stop-shops can strengthen coordination, improve access to services and support integration from day one. It looks at different partnership models, service offers and target groups; presents examples of successful one-stop-shops; and concludes with a set of practical recommendations for public authorities and other stakeholders interested in developing the model further.

One-stop-shops: purpose, potential and design principles

»The Welcome Points are visible as neighbourhood places of encounter and integration. They encourage and empower joint action within the social space.«

Düsseldorf's guiding principle for Welcome Points.

A one-stop-shop is a service delivery model that brings together a range of interlinked services and actors. In the context of migrant integration, the one-stop-shop model provides a common framework for services from local, regional and national governments and civil society to support people in their integration into a new society and labour market.

Usually, they provide access to **multiple services in one place** (physical, digital or networked), are based on **cooperation between diverse service providers**, and share elements of **common infrastructure**, such as reception or interpretation.

Potential advantages

The potential advantages of a one-stop-shop are evident on three levels: for the places of arrival, for service providers and for the newcomers themselves.

With regard to places of arrival (neighbourhoods, cities, regions and states), a one-stop-shop can:

- reduce costs through early and integrated support: by developing synergies and reducing duplication of procedures (for example, registering details, outlining issues), one-stop-shops can lower overall demands on services and contribute to cost-saving and more efficient integration support;
- develop a joined-up approach: different services sharing the same structure can help in the development of a shared reception model;
- provide a visible commitment to inclusion: as an essential arrival infrastructure, one-stop-shops symbolise a shared culture of welcome;
- provide services to all residents and have the potential to support interaction and contribute to community cohesion;
- help places of arrival to detect emerging needs earlier and respond more quickly to changes or new demands. This supports a shift from reactive to more proactive approaches to integration and improves readiness for future developments.

For service providers, a one-stop-shop can contribute to:

- More efficient use of time and resources: services can focus on their core role and rely on partners for complementary support. This reduces repeated enquiries, avoids duplication of effort and makes better use of staff time.
- Clearer pathways and less fragmentation in day-to-day work: working within a coordinated system improves information sharing and helps individual services to improve their understanding of the wider support system. This can strengthen referrals and reduce the risk of users falling between gaps.
- Responsiveness: regular interaction with partnering service providers allows services to identify issues earlier and adapt their support more quickly.

For newcomers and the host community, a one-stop-shop provides:

- A clear and accessible entry point that simplifies »navigation«; where to go and what to do next.
- Simpler navigation and coordinated support: bringing services together reduces complexity and ensures that people receive consistent, joined-up guidance rather than being passed between providers or having to provide the same information over and over again.
- Improved experience and trust: a more coherent and welcoming system reduces frustration and helps to build confidence and trust between newcomers and host community, as well as in public services and institutions.

Design principles

One-stop-shops are based on a series of design principles. They include:

- A people-centred and empowering approach, putting the goals, needs and ideas of visitors at the centre, and focusing on resources such as skills and networks.
- Accessibility and open doors: a low-threshold first contact point that is accessible without prior appointment and provides multilingual staff and information can make one-stop-shops truly inclusive.
- A welcoming community space: creating a friendly atmosphere, for example, through play areas for children, adding spaces for cultural events or offering language classes and workshops for the whole population can increase the potential role of one-stop-shops as spaces of interaction.

At Rågsved Civic Centre in Stockholm, staff focus on helping visitors build the confidence and skills they need to navigate systems independently rather than solving problems for them. The environment is designed to support participation and learning, including shared computer stations where users complete tasks themselves with guidance from staff.

A similar approach can be seen in Dortmund's MigraDo, which includes a self-service workspace where visitors can search for information, print documents and complete administrative tasks independently, with light-touch support when needed.

Local vs national initiatives

One-stop-shops are launched and developed on the basis of different governance models. Their design and maturity often reflect the wider structure of multi-level governance and funding frameworks.

One-stop-shops initiated locally represent local leadership in strengthening newcomer support. They often take different forms depending on how services are organised locally. In some cities, one-stop-shops focus on better coordination of public services, often in contexts with a tradition of decentralised service delivery. This approach can be seen in Stockholm's Welcome House and Dortmund's MigraDo. In other cities, one-stop-shops focus on strengthening cooperation between public services and NGOs already working closely with migrants. Examples include Barcelona's SAIER, the Casa de las Culturas in Zaragoza, the Baobab Centre in Lublin and Sofia's Bureau for Information and Advice for Third-Country Nationals.

Increasingly, one-stop-shops are also set up top-down as a key element of national migrant integration frameworks, where states closely define which services local implementers from civil society or other tiers of government should provide. Examples of this model include the Czech regional integration centres and the brand new one-stop-shop programmes in Poland and Lithuania, which are financed by the European Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and the European Social Fund.

Nationally-led one-stop-shop models create a standardised minimum level of service delivery across the territory. However, they sometimes also duplicate or replace existing locally-led and locally adapted one-stop-shops or may leave city administrations, with their knowledge of local context and its opportunities and challenges, out of the picture.

Many one-stop-shops de facto combine a local initiative to set up one-stop-shops with a loose national framework and funding for some of the activities. The Portuguese »CLAIM« one-stop-shops (see case study below) are set up on the initiative of local authorities, regions, NGOs or higher education institutions, while the national government provides IT infrastructure for registering cases and some funding. Similarly, the Finnish »international houses« are set up by bigger municipalities across the country with some national-level funding and services provided by national authorities (see case study below).

The kind of governance structure underlying these models determines how easily national, regional, and local services can be brought together. Locally-driven one-stop-shops are often better adapted to local contexts and actors, but may find it more difficult to get partners from other levels of government on board, who may hold key competencies on residence permits, employment or health care.

International organisations such as UNHCR and IOM have also been key in initiating local one-stop-shops by funding pilot services in emergency situations or regular service providers, for example, in Athens' Migrant Integration Centre and Milan's Welcome Centre. However, their engagement may fluctuate more as funding may shift to other emerging hot spots.

Barcelona's SAIER, established in 1989, is one of Europe's longest-running one-stop-shops for migrants and refugees. The model combines municipal coordination with specialised services delivered by NGOs and trade unions.

The structure allows users to access both general guidance and more specialised legal, social and employment support through one coordinated entry point. In 2024, SAIER supported around 21,000 users, around 70 per cent of whom were in an irregular administrative situation.

Partnerships, coordination and funding

Whoever sits in the driving seat of a one-stop-shop, the real value of the model lies in how well partners work together to provide a coherent and accessible system for users. Otherwise, users may continue to be passed between services.

The first prerequisite for this is a **shared vision** laid out in a strategy, a vision document or a memorandum of understanding between key partners.

Coordination between the partners must be organised on two levels. First, a **strategic coordination** function, usually a dedicated person or team responsible for maintaining relationships between partners, identifying gaps, ensuring consistency across services and supporting decision-making when coordination issues arise. And second, **operational coordination** dealing with day-to-day problem-solving and joint handling of complex cases.

Case management does not necessarily refer to a single shared IT system or software. Essentially, it involves coordinating support around an individual user. Depending on the maturity of the partnership and the legal framework in place, this can range from structured referrals between services to joint case discussions for more complex situations, or more formalised approaches where information is shared across organisations.

Data sharing can strengthen coordination and referrals, but it is often one of the most complex aspects of a one-stop shop to implement. IT systems and software pro-

grammes need to comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and be agreed across multiple services and levels of government. However, when establishing a one-stop-shop, rather than starting with technical solutions, partners should begin by agreeing on what information needs to be shared, for what purpose and between which partners.

Closely linked to data sharing is the protection of vulnerable users, especially migrants without regular residence status. This must be built into the design. »**Fire-walling**« personal data from immigration enforcement can help to remove barriers hindering people with precarious status to access essential services such as health care and education. Where municipal and national services operate in the same space, clear agreements are needed to ensure that one-stop-shops remain places of support rather than of enforcement.

Developing a one-stop-shop requires an up-front investment not only for premises but also for the work involved in initial planning and coordination. **Funding** models often pull together a variety of sources for the different services provided. Therefore, building sustainability into this essential arrival infrastructure remains a challenge. Many one-stop-shops depend on European funding cycles and, further downstream, NGO service providers often work under short-term contracts to deliver services.

Services and target groups

In order to ensure that a one-stop-shop offers the services that are needed, it is important to **map existing services**, **understand the needs** of the local migrant and non-migrant populations and keep in mind that those needs, as well as the target groups initially identified, might change over time. Regularly **reviewing and revisiting** the service model is therefore indispensable.

The services that one-stop shops across Europe offer depend on the local and national context.

The **most common services** include:

- **General help desk** – a first point of contact that welcomes newcomers, explains the one-stop-shop layout and directs users to the appropriate services.
- **Support in community languages** – on-site interpreters or multilingual staff provide information and assistance in the languages spoken by the local migrant community.
- **Local registration** – assistance with registering an address or municipality, a prerequisite for accessing many public services.

- **Residence permits** – help completing and submitting applications for residence-permit issuance or renewal, including preparation of required documents.
- **Legal advice on residence issues** – confidential counselling on rights, obligations and renewal procedures for existing residence permits, including on family reunification.
- **Legal advice for asylum applicants** – specialised support on asylum procedures, interview preparation and appeal processes.
- **Placement in language and civic integration courses** – referral to and enrolment in government-funded language classes and civic-orientation programmes.
- **Registration with child care and schools** – guidance through enrolment forms, document checks and contact with local education authorities.
- **Registration with social security** – support in obtaining a social security number, understanding contribution requirements and accessing benefits.
- **Registration with the health system** – help obtaining health insurance cards, choosing a GP (a doctor's practice) and navigating the public health care network.
- **Anti-discrimination services** – information on legal protection against discrimination, assistance with filing complaints and referral to legal aid if needed.
- **Labour market advice** – for example, counselling on workers' rights, job-matching services, CV workshops and support for foreign-qualification assessment.
- **Housing and homelessness advice** – guidance on finding affordable housing, understanding tenancy contracts and accessing emergency shelter when required.
- **Volunteering opportunities** – matching newcomers with local NGOs or community projects to promote social inclusion and skill development.
- **Digital orientation courses** – introductory training on using public-service portals, registering for online banking.
- **Signposting to community activities run by NGOs** – providing a curated list of local cultural, sport and social events organised by NGOs to foster community participation.
- **Advice on voluntary return** – information on voluntary-return programmes, logistical support and referral to reintegration services in the country of origin.

Ideally, these services are connected through defined referral pathways. However, some services might simply be signposted or provided directly in-house.

While many services are open to a broad population, including the host community, one-stop-shops usually prioritise certain groups or needs, such as economic migrants or people seeking protection, as well as specific areas such as employment or access to legal advice.

To remain effective, however, one-stop-shops need to be able to adapt to changing local contexts and migration patterns. They should therefore be understood as an iterative model that is being constantly developed with partners and service users. Dortmund's MigraDo and Stockholm's Welcome House, for example, conduct user-feedback surveys to identify gaps in information and support, which then shape the development of services.

Other cities have adapted their models in response to changing local realities. Düsseldorf's Welcome Points shifted from a refugee-focused approach towards a broader community-based model informed by neighbourhood data on local vulnerability. Athens' Migrant Integration Centre initially focused strongly on newcomer support, such as language learning and access to benefits, but has increasingly expanded its employment-related services. Zagreb's Welcome Centre has identified growing demand from foreign workers and is exploring partnerships and services that respond to labour-related needs. In Lublin, the city adapted parts of its offer after identifying increasing support needs among international students from African countries.

Migrants with precarious residency status

As a low-threshold, open place, one-stop shops have the potential to reach groups that are generally more difficult to reach for public services. This may include undocumented migrants, women in situations of vulnerability and people who are unable to use digital services.

When run by local authorities, one-stop-shops often serve people without a valid residence permit. For instance, 70 per cent of the users coming to Barcelona's SAIER do not have regular residence status. This is crucial, as one-stop shops are supposed to make access to rights and services more efficient and inclusive regardless of immigration status. Partnerships with trusted community organisations and a well-chosen location can lower the entry barrier for people with precarious status and ensure that their fundamental rights are protected.

At the same time, the funding frameworks and policies of some specialised services, such as labour market advice, might prevent people with a precarious residency status from accessing them.

Highly-skilled migrants and »Internationals«

A range of European cities have created one-stop shops that explicitly target the most qualified tier of newcomers in so-called »expat desks« and international welcome centres.¹ While they usually do not formally exclude people with other profiles, they do so de facto through their branding, the use of English as a working language and the services offered (relocation assistance, tax advice, education, spouse career support, and so on). The partnerships behind these one-stop shops are also specific and often involve international employers and chambers of commerce.

Barcelona, for instance, hosts an International Welcome Centre for highly skilled newcomers in addition to its »general« one-stop shop SAIER. While both services provide integration support, they are based on different assumptions with regard to their target groups' needs and capacities. Such dual structures are problematic from an equality and social justice point of view. The International Houses in Finnish cities and Hamburg's Welcome Centre have found a way to overcome this contradiction by addressing different user profiles related to labour market integration under one roof. They thereby also reflect the fact that cities need a broad range of skills that go beyond university degrees.

Examples of promising practices in Europe

Düsseldorf's Welcome Points

Düsseldorf's Welcome Points are notable for combining NGO-led delivery with strong city-wide coordination. The model also stands out for its community-based approach: rather than functioning only as migrant advice centres, the Welcome Points operate as neighbourhood hubs open to all residents. Their work is guided by principles of low-threshold access, empowerment and »working with, not for, people«.

Structure

Düsseldorf's Welcome Points were first established in 2015 in response to increased refugee arrivals. Today, the model consists of seven locally embedded one-stop-shops, six operated by NGOs and one by the municipality, all funded by the city and coordinated centrally through the Office for Migration and Integration.

The evolution from a refugee-focused neighbourhood service into a broader community-based approach open to all residents was shaped both by evaluation and participatory review processes, and by wider political and budgetary changes affecting integration services. In 2023, the city formally repositioned the Welcome Points as »Urban Centres for Intercultural Coexistence«.

Funding

The Welcome Points are funded by the City of Düsseldorf. Budget cuts in 2023 led to the closure of four centres and reinforced the shift towards a more consolidated and community-based model.

Target group

The Welcome Points are open to all residents, but focus particularly on people with migration and refugee backgrounds and residents facing social vulnerability. Locations are selected using »social sphere« (Sozialraum) analysis, based on city data such as income, housing conditions, age, ethnicity and access to services.

Key services offered

All Welcome Points provide:

- low-threshold counselling and referral to specialised services;
- support with filling in forms;
- language learning;
- employment, housing and education support;
- community activities and volunteering opportunities.

Beyond this, each site has flexibility to adapt its offer to local needs, often including community-based activities such as tutoring, women's groups, cultural initiatives and neighbourhood events. In this way, Welcome Points function not only as access points to services, but also as spaces for participation, connection and local action.

Positive outcomes and key challenges

The Welcome Points provide a clear and accessible entry point into services and strengthen links between local communities and the city administration. A 2021 evaluation found that they played an important role in social integration, reducing isolation and supporting access to employment, housing and education. In 2020, the Welcome Points recorded over 18,000 participants in counselling and group activities, around 23,000 participants including food and clothing distribution and 143 network partners across the city.

Key challenges include demonstrating long-term impact, maintaining stable funding, recruiting volunteers and balancing consistency across sites with flexibility to respond to local needs.

The Portuguese network of Local Support Centres for the Integration of Migrants (CLAIM)

Set up in 2003, the Portuguese Support Centres for Migrant Integration (CLAIM) form the longest-running nationally coordinated network of local one-stop shops. The 150 CLAIM were initially complemented with three »National One-Stop

¹ Examples include Barcelona's International Welcome Desk, Copenhagen's International House, the Utrecht International Centre, Bologna's Talent Welcome Desk and the Brno Expat Centre.

Shops« (CNAIM) with a stronger presence of national services. The presence of intercultural mediators was a key element of the Portuguese one-stop shops from the outset. Another distinctive feature is their focus on improving administrative coordination through data sharing and the digitalisation of documents.

Structure

Network of around 150 Local Support Centres for Migrant Integration (CLAIM) launched in 2004 with the objective of fostering the welcoming and social integration of migrants and refugees through information and advice.

Run by municipalities, regions, NGOs or higher education institutions, the CLAIM network is coordinated by the national Integration, Asylum and Migration Agency, AIMA (previously the High Commissioner for Migration) and uses a common IT platform for registering services provided. CLAIM provided 186,000 services in 2022.

In the course of the current restructuring of integration services in Portugal, some CLAIM now directly support and process applications for residency permits and regularisation on behalf of the National Migration Agency, which had run up a significant backlog. For these services, they receive training and funding and use a common IT platform to upload biometrical information and digitalised documents. These services complement AIMA's digital one-stop shop on residency matters.

Funding

Regular social integration support is funded by municipalities and regions themselves. Third-sector organisations operating a CLAIM can apply for European funding (AMIF).

Centres receive direct funding from AIMA if they provide services related to residency.

Services offered

Centres can vary according to the services they provide. Main services include:

- regularisation of migration status and residency matters;
- nationality and family reunification;
- housing and health care;
- work, training and entrepreneurship;
- education and Portuguese language learning;
- voluntary return support.

Target groups

CLAIM serve migrants and refugees free of charge, regardless of residency status. Together with their previous »national«-level counterpart CNAIM, they were set up because existing citizen shops for administrative procedures in Portugal were perceived to be failing to reach migrants.

Key challenges and positive outcomes

Because of their decentralised and flexible structure, CLAIM have been successful in reaching and supporting

migrant integration, including for vulnerable populations across the territory.

Not all municipalities engage in the new cooperation with AIMA on residency, because they do not feel responsible or are averse to potential legal risks related to the joint handling of personal data with AIMA.

Previous reviews have identified challenges regarding coordination and referrals between the national and local levels, particularly around how information and cases move between locally embedded CLAIM centres and more centralised migration services.

Oulu International House

Oulu's International House is a locally designed and managed one-stop-shop model that was set up with the help of national co-funding related to attracting and retaining international workers. The model was co-created through workshops involving city services, employers, migrants, service users and other Finnish International Houses. This has helped to ensure that the service was designed around user journeys and practical needs rather than institutional structures. Another distinctive feature is its low-threshold approach. Most services are available without prior appointment and different user groups may access support through the same front door.

Structure

Oulu International House is a locally coordinated one-stop-shop set up with the support of Finland's national »Talent Boost« programme, launched in 2018 to strengthen international recruitment and integration.

The International House is run jointly by Business Oulu and the city's education and cultural services. It combines employment and talent attraction services with broader migrant integration support within a shared space.

Funding

The model initially combined national »Talent Boost« funding with municipal funding for integration and employment support. Today, IH Oulu's operations are funded entirely through city funding.

Target groups

Oulu International House serves a broad range of users, including migrants and refugees with different support needs, international jobseekers and entrepreneurs, future Oulu residents and companies interested in recruiting international workers.

One of the model's distinctive features is that different user groups access services through the same front door, reducing the separation between »international talent« services, more traditional integration support and services for the wider population.

Key services offered

Services include:

- multilingual low-threshold guidance on everyday life;
- integration support and individual integration plans;
- employment and entrepreneurship guidance;
- skills and career support;
- support for relocation and settlement in Oulu;
- networking and community events;
- support for victims of discrimination and racism.

The model also includes regular pop-up services from national and regional actors, including immigration services every two weeks and social and health services once a week.

Key challenges and positive outcomes

The collaboration between the city's different representatives has improved significantly since the one-stop-shop was established. The BusinessAsema ecosystem has also developed over the years and is now well known. IH Oulu is recognised as an integral part of it. Low-threshold networking events are an effective way to help people feel at home in Oulu. A remaining challenge is to make the existence of the services known more widely among groups that are harder to reach.

Stockholm Welcome House

What sets Stockholm's Welcome House apart is the way it brings together different municipal administrations to build a more holistic and coordinated reception system around the needs of newcomers. The model combines employment, welfare, health, digital inclusion and community participation within one shared structure and was developed through a large co-creation and needs-analysis process involving public services, civil society and newcomers themselves.

Structure

Welcome House was established by the City of Stockholm following a city-wide review launched in 2019 into how newcomer support could be better coordinated. The process involved workshops with more than 200 representatives from city departments, national agencies, civil society organisations, employers and newcomers.

The review identified that services were fragmented and that self-settled newcomers and family members often received less support than municipally allocated refugees. In response, the city created a coordinated »one way in« model, bringing together services from the labour market administration and social services administration under one structure. The model was formally launched in 2021.

Funding

The model combines municipal funding with ESF-funded projects, including the »Sustainable Establishment« project. Additional activities, such as the community meeting space, are funded through the County Administrative Board.

Target groups

Welcome House targets newly arrived migrants living in Stockholm within their first 36 months after receiving residence permits, including self-settled newcomers and family members. Priority groups include women, people with low levels of education and people facing barriers to labour market integration.

During the period following the arrival of people fleeing Ukraine, Welcome House reportedly received around 100 visitors per day. More recently, visitor numbers have decreased to fewer than 300 per week, reflecting lower arrival numbers and changes in Swedish migration policy.

Key services offered

Services include:

- initial social guidance and orientation;
- support with registration, benefits and contacts with authorities;
- employment and study guidance;
- mentoring, recruitment events and labour market support;
- health information and psychosocial support;
- digital inclusion activities;
- links to civil society and volunteering;
- networking and community activities through »Meeting Place Welcome House«.

The model combines drop-in support with longer-term individual guidance and referral pathways across city services.

Positive outcomes and key challenges

The Welcome House model has strengthened coordination between city administrations and created a more equal and accessible reception structure for newcomers across Stockholm. It has also improved the city's ability to reach groups who had previously received less coordinated support.

The model highlights the importance of building trust and working relationships between services before introducing more formalised shared systems. At the same time, changing migration patterns, evolving national legislation and lower arrival numbers continue to shape and challenge the future direction of the model.

Conclusions and recommendations

The evidence gathered in this report demonstrates how one-stop-shops are being set up across Europe as one response to a fragmented institutional landscape which newcomers find difficult to navigate. One-stop-shops tackle this issue by providing a visible first entry point and people-centred, coordinated support.

One-stop-shops represent an essential arrival infrastructure that proactively supports settlement processes in times and places where larger numbers of migrant ar-

rivals have become the norm. They have the potential to improve integration outcomes through earlier and more efficient support, make services more effective through better coordination and strengthen a joined-up approach between different levels of government and civil society organisations.

If one-stop-shops are to succeed in practice and convert their potential benefits into tangible outcomes, several key features must be present:

1. A common vision and coordination mechanism between all partners involved

This is less about who leads than whether partners share a common vision and clear ways of working together. Without coordination and shared ownership, users may continue to experience fragmented and disconnected services.

- The partnerships behind one-stop-shops should be horizontal and able to adapt flexibly to local actors, governance structures and needs rather than relying on a top-down one-size-fits-all model.

2. A capacity to identify and adapt to new migration trends, needs and target groups

Migration patterns, local context and target groups change over time. The examples in this report show that effective one-stop-shop models continuously review and adapt their services to user feedback and changing realities.

- One-stop-shops should be designed as open, iterative service models, based on co-creation, continuous mapping of needs and regular review of services and target groups.

3. Accessibility and capacity to focus on user needs

A low entry threshold, multilingual support, a welcoming environment and trusted partnerships are essential to enable people to effectively access support early and without fear. The strongest models also organise services around people's journeys and practical needs rather than around institutional structures.

- As a tool to improve access to rights, services at one-stop-shops should aim to be accessible for everyone, empowering and people-centred and avoid exclusively serving certain groups, such as highly-skilled migrants, in separate structures.

4. A capacity to create opportunities for interaction with the wider community

Many of the examples in this report show that one-stop-shops can play a role that goes beyond service coordination. By creating welcoming and accessible spaces open to a broad range of residents, they can also support interaction, participation and a shared sense of belonging within neighbourhoods and cities. In this way, one-stop-shops become a visible expression of a shared »culture of welcome« between public authorities, civil society and local communities.

- One-stop-shops should support social integration and interaction by serving as a hub connecting newcomers with established residents and civil society initiatives.

5. An understanding of one-stop-shops as a long-term investment in coordination, inclusion and social cohesion

One-stop-shops require long-term investment in coordination, relationships and infrastructure. However, many continue to rely heavily on short-term project funding despite performing functions that are increasingly part of mainstream local integration systems.

- Reflecting their partnership model, one-stop shops should be funded by joining national, local and, where relevant, regional sources and not rely exclusively on temporary EU funding.

About the authors

Dirk Gebhardt is a director of MigrationWork with close to two decades of experience in working with city councils across Europe on migration and urban development. He holds a PhD in Urban Geography from Humboldt University Berlin and is an associate lecturer at Universitat Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona.

Bella Kosmala is a director of MigrationWork and an independent consultant specialising in migration and integration. To date, she has supported nine European cities in developing, strengthening and improving their one-stop-shops for newcomers, helping local authorities and partners design more coordinated, accessible and inclusive support systems. Beyond that, Bella has over 15 years' experience working with local authorities, civil society organisations and funders to improve outcomes for migrants and refugees.

Imprint

Published by

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung e.V.
Godesberger Allee 149
53175 Bonn
Germany
info@fes.de

Issuing Department

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung | European Union & Global Dialogue |
Brussels Office | Rue du Taciturne 38 | 1000 Brussels | Belgium
<https://brussels.fes.de/>

Responsibility for Content

Tobias Beylat | Policy Officer | Migration & Integration
tobias.beylat@fes.de

Contact

brussels@fes.de

Design/Layout

pertext | corporate publishing
www.pertext.de

The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES). Commercial use of media published by the FES is not permitted without the written consent of the FES. Publications by the FES may not be used for electioneering purposes.

July 2026
© Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung e.V.

Further publications of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung can be found here: www.fes.de/publikationen



FES EU Office Brussels