Executive summary

Vienna is a fast-growing city that will most probably cross the 2-million-inhabitants threshold before 2030. Its population growth has been positive ever since the millennium and is largely related to immigration from abroad. In 2016, net migration to Vienna amounted to 22 000 persons. Overall, 35% (or 704 902 people) of Vienna’s total population of 1 840 226 people, were born abroad and 50% have a migration background. Some 61% of migrants have been in Vienna for more than ten years. Among the whole population, foreign-born individuals from third countries represent the largest group with a share of 22.8%; EU/EFTA country nationals make up 15.5% of the population. Foreign-born individuals from Serbia (5.4%) and Turkey (4.1%) constitute the largest population share, while Germans represent the third largest group (3%). Furthermore, since 2015, the number of asylum seekers and refugees in the city has increased sharply. Vienna currently hosts 20 500 people in need of basic assistance, 15 000 more than in 2011; most of these are asylum seekers.

Historically, actions to address migrant needs were first initiated at the local level in Austria. Vienna, characterised by increasing migrant numbers for a long time, has learned to accommodate this development also in its administrative structures and local policies. From 1971 onwards the city started having municipal institutions dedicated to the integration of migrants and refugees providing counselling in legal and social issues, language courses, school preparation programmes and healthcare advice, under the name of the “Migrants Fund” (Zuwanderer-Fonds) and later, the “Fund for Integration”. Today, Vienna has defined its own local integration concept, and institutionalised integration and diversity into policy making. These engagements are oversight by the Municipal Department for Integration and Diversity (MA 17) which leads integration mainstreaming across public policies through dialogue with internal and external stakeholders and providing training. Most importantly since ten years this department monitors integration results by producing the Integration and Diversity Monitoring Report of the City of Vienna.

As a federal province Vienna has additional competences compared to a city, it can directly negotiate agreements with the federal government. Some of these agreements have direct implications for migrants. For instance a recent agreement between the state and the provinces made compulsory kindergarten for all children for one year, including migrant kids, with important consequences for their early language integration.

The main aim of this case study is to reflect upon and analyse how the city of Vienna organises and implements integration and reception measures for migrants and refugees across levels of government, across city departments, as well as in interaction with other local stakeholders.
Key findings

This report presents key findings according to the Checklist for Public Action to Migrant Integration at the Local Level. Some of the remaining challenges, accomplishments and potential improvements are summarised here.

Some of the remaining challenges

Integration into the labour market

Data collected through the Integration and Diversity Monitoring of the city of Vienna (City of Vienna 2014, 102) highlight the significant gaps in labour market inclusion between Austrian and non-Austrian citizens as well as between Austrian with a foreign education or training certificate. In Vienna, third-countries migrants not educated in Austria have 11 percentage points difference in employment rate than those born abroad, but trained in the country of residence. Further foreign-born people educated abroad run a greater risk of being employed in poorly paid positions despite intermediate or higher education. In Vienna, persons with foreign diplomas frequently occupy positions below those of Austrians with similar qualifications. Currently, 56% of foreign persons in employment holding higher education qualifications from third countries are employed as unskilled or semi-skilled workers. In order to especially target unemployment of young people who have not had any schooling, regardless of their origins, the city and other important stakeholders such as the Trade Union and the Public Employment Service have collaboratively set up the “Vienna Qualification Plan” (Chapter 6). The plan aims to close the gap between low-qualified people and a labour market that requires well-qualified staff. Migrants are over-represented among youth with low qualifications thus this plan might have a strong impact on integration.

Education

To complement federal policies and initiatives for the recognition of qualification obtained abroad, the city offers counselling as part of the city’s integration programme “Start Wien” to guide migrants through the process of recognition. Further, the Vienna Board of Education has established transitional classes with the aim of harmonising education levels reached abroad with Austrian standards so as to facilitate the possibility to continue education in Austria and obtaining Austrian qualification.

Additional multi-lingual resources and training for teachers are necessary to ensure the successful integration of migrant children in schools. Challenges resulting from the growing diversity of the Vienna population further require an increase of educational facilities and staff for migrant pupils in schools and for adults. As part of the city’s responsibility concerning social inclusion policies for youth, Vienna offers options for the education of pupils beyond mandatory schooling age. These so-called “youth colleges” fill gaps in educational provision. Language courses in Austria are not structured in a coherent system. As there is a great variety and diversity among language course providers, the situation is often non-transparent for migrants and refugees who struggle to find courses that fit their needs and are of good quality. To address this, the city of Vienna has established a database of all courses, and advises migrants in coaching sessions that are part of the municipal welcome programme “Start Wien”, on which course fits their individual needs. For asylum seekers, the city has introduced a tool that ensures placement into available courses funded by the city.
What is already accomplished and how could it be improved?

Policy coherence and co-operation

A National Action Plan for Integration (NAP.I) was agreed on in 2010 with the aim of pooling all integration policies existing at local level (Vienna had one since 1971) and ensuring co-operation across levels of government. This is an important mechanism to structure co-operation better and build coherent policies. Important steps to improve implementation of this mechanism have been to set up co-ordinating structures on integration based on dialogue with different levels of government. They have been developed since 2010 (i.e. Advisory Board on Integration). Vienna’s dual position, as a city and a province, provides the administration with the ability to engage with the federal level from two standpoints, giving it greater access to decision-making processes than other cities have.

Evaluation and capacity building

The establishment of MA 17 institutionalised diversity and integration management as a central topic within the city administration. It helps to promote intercultural competences and sensibility across all sectors of the administration and further monitors other departments’ work in incorporating integration-sensitive approaches. For instance, it published a guideline to implement diversity management and offers training and seminars on intercultural and integration issues.

Vienna has established very developed evaluation mechanisms for measuring migrant integration. Produced every two years since 2010, the integration evaluation framework of Vienna, the Weiner Integrations- & Diversitätsmonitor, is a holistic approach that encourages constant reviewing of the current policies. This includes analysing how politics and administration (43 departments and institutions are monitored) are meeting the needs of its diverse population and monitoring developments over time. In its last analysis in 2017, it observed a positive tendency with a rising number of departments offering multi-lingual services as well as embedding diversity management in their strategic priorities. It also found that shares of employees of foreign origin in city’s management positions, and among youth, were still fairly low.

On the downside, evaluations of the individual projects the city undertakes, such as “Start Wien” do not take place comprehensively; thus it is difficult to assess their specific impact on integration dynamics. Also, it remains unclear how far the results of the monitoring are used to adapt policy making according to the evidence generated. To enhance the effectiveness of the monitoring and to benefit from the data collected, a structured feedback mechanism to policy making could be beneficial.

Participation and consultative methods

Vienna has no institutionalised measures for the participation of migrants in the city’s political life and is lacking a permanent co-ordination platform with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) on strategic integration questions since the Vienna Integration Conference was abolished in 2009. However, MA 17 largely engages in informal communication with more than 400 migrant associations, organising meetings at the district or city level covering specific topics. Further, major projects (e.g. Start Wien) and the evolvement of the local integration concepts are developed in consultation with the respective communities. Adding to these consultations, more formalised representation could make sure migrants’ needs are not overlooked.
**Good practices that could be replicated**

**Starting integration from Day 1**

Vienna’s ambition is that integration measures start from the first day of arrival. The city has created a one-stop called “Start Wien” to facilitate the settling process of newly arrived migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. It functions as a comprehensive information and coaching programme combining counselling and information modules on administrative processes as well as city life, with advice for language courses. According to the migrant’s legal status and needs, a personal integration trajectory is designed, carefully drawing on the migrant’s past experiences and skills. This for example involves a competency check. For young asylum seekers, recognised refugees and migrants beyond compulsory school age (15-21), the programme includes a “youth college” aiming to qualify youth for entering into secondary schools or vocational training. Asylum seekers were recently included among the beneficiaries of these services, acknowledging the need to start integration as early as possible and use the time they have while awaiting asylum decisions. However, StartWien is explicitly designed for people who have resided in Vienna for less than two years. All others are not eligible to benefit from the approach of StartWien and have to rely on other measures.

**Enhancing proximity by creating spaces where interaction brings migrant and native-born communities closer**

Compared to other cities analysed, segregation is less of a problem in Vienna, as migrants usually have access to social housing after a certain time living in the city and are largely represented in the private housing market thus dispersed across the city. The municipal administration is very engaged in highlighting the added value of migration for the city and building proximity between different groups. On this note, the city facilitated the creation of the “Vienna Charter”, a document that defines a framework for good neighbourhood relations, developed through a unique public participation process open to everyone. It involved 8 500 participants of different backgrounds and 12 700 hours of discussions. Further, “Wohnpartner”, has been established to promote peaceful cohabitation and prevent neighbourhood conflict. Contact points are available in 22 locations in Vienna to assist when conflicts arise and support community work within social housing. In order to also reach migrants, the service employed people who speak 23 different languages.

**Notes**

1. Citizens holding Austrian citizenship who have a migration background are persons who have at least one parent that was born abroad or holds foreign nationalities. These will also be referred to as native-born children of migrant parents.

2. Non-EU/EFTA.

3. In Austria, asylum seekers are among the group of foreigners who receive so-called “basic assistance”. There is an agreement between the federal state of Austria and the federal provinces about support provided to foreigners in need of protection called “Grundversorgungsvereinbarung - Art. 15a B-VG”. Target groups are people who have applied for asylum and await the decision, those have not been granted asylum but cannot return to their countries of origin, as well as those who were granted asylum for the first four months after recognition.
4. The term “federal provinces” is used here as a generic term to refer to the constituent regions of a federation. They have specific names depending on the federation: states or provinces in Austria (Bundesländer). In Austria’s federal system, provinces have their own legislative bodies, executive organs and financial management. Certain legislative matters are also reserved for the provinces.