
BUILDING NEW NARRATIVES: MIGRATION AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO EUROPEAN SOCIETY

THE MAX PROJECT FINAL EVENT

25 /26 NOVEMBER
📍 BRUSSELS



WWW.MAXAMIF.EU

BUILDING NEW NARRATIVES

Migration and its contribution to European society

Over the last 3 years, the [MAX project](#), an initiative funded by the European Commission, has been working to change the narrative around the migration discourse. A total of 6 policy and research reports, two training courses on a solution-focused approach to migration reporting for over 100 journalists in 20 different countries, an online Diversity Film Festival and Award Ceremony with hundreds of candidates and more than 20 online and physical events are some of the outcomes of that work.

The MAX team believes that well-managed migration to Europe contributes to our societies, culture and economy. The integration and social inclusion of people with migrant backgrounds, refugees and asylum seekers is crucial for cultural exchange, economic development, fighting against the downward demographic slope and community cohesion. It also helps address skills gaps and labour shortages, and to boost economic performance overall. Currently in the EU, too many migrants face challenges in terms of unemployment, discrimination, non-recognition of certificates and diplomas, lack of educational and training opportunities, language barriers and limited social interaction with other local communities.¹

European societies are, and will continue to become, increasingly diverse. Notwithstanding the efforts and progress made, many third-country nationals across the EU continue to fare worse than EU citizens in terms of employment, education, and social inclusion outcomes.²

The 25th and 26th November the MAX project invites you to hear and debate with us the findings of the MAX project and, most importantly, the voices and experiences of the migrants, as well as all those actors working on social inclusion and migration policies at local, national and EU levels, to continue working together for real inclusive societies. On the 26th, the role of art, culture and creativity in changing the narrative will be highlighted through film screening, music, food, literature and art exhibitions.

¹ EC press release 22 July 2020, Integration of migrants: Commission launches a public consultation and call for an expert group on the views of migrants, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1364

² See Eurostat data: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migrant_integration_statistics_-_overview and OECD/European Union (2015), Indicators of Immigration on Integration 2015 – Settling In: <http://www.oecd.org/els/mig/Indicators-of-Immigrant-Integration-2015.pdf>.

Programme 25th at Les Ateliers des Tanneurs, Rue des Tanneurs 60A, 1000 Brussels

- 09:00 - 09:30** **Welcome coffee and registration**
Come early and start networking with us!
- 09:30 - 10:00** **Official opening & welcome**
Presentation of the MAX Journey
- 10:00 - 11:00** **Migration landscape and voices**
Presentation of the main project results, policy recommendations and lessons learnt from the last 'crisis', how to make Europe a safe place for migrants
- 11:00 - 12:00** **Migrants' voices: Nothing about us without us!**
There is no inclusion without representation. In this panel, migrants will share their stories, ideas, opinions and recommendations for a more inclusive society benefiting all.
- 12:00 - 13:30** **LUNCH BREAK**
- 13:30 - 14:30** **Parallel sessions - Round 1**
- How solutions journalism can help change the narrative
 - Migrant women's journeys
 - The role of the social economy in supporting diverse ecosystems and migrants' integration
 - The impact of mass media on the migration discourses: how to counterbalance misinformation and wrong perceptions
- 14:30 - 15:30** **Parallel sessions - round 2**
- Integrating cities: access to local services for all
 - Migration & Education: shaping the discourse about diversity in the classrooms
 - Beyond the "old" normal. A fresh look to migrant labour integration after the pandemic
 - ICT and Digitalisation: towards integration of migrants and refugees. Stories around Europe
- 15:30 - 16:00** **COFFEE BREAK**
- 16:00 - 16:45** **The strategy going forward**
Panel discussion with representatives from several European Commission DGs and United Nations to discuss how all the lessons learnt, policy recommendations presented and feedback received from migrants and civil society.
- 16:45 - 17:15** **Closing words**
- 17:30 - 18:30** **Networking drinks**

**Programme 26th at the Museum of Natural Science of Belgium,
Rue Vautier 29, 1000 Brussels**

- 16:30 – 17:00** **Welcome**
- 17:00 – 17:30** **Opening & keynote speech**
- 17:30 – 18:15** **Panel discussion: The importance of art, culture and creativity in
changing the narrative**
- 18:15 – 21:00** **Art, culture, music, film & creativity exhibitions & open buffet**

18:15 - 20:00 Art Exhibitions

An exhibition of migrants and migration captured in drawings and cartoons.

18:15 - 20:00 Gastronomy Fair

Dishes that describe the traditions and rituals of migrants living in Europe

18:15 - 20:00 Film screening

Both amateur and professional films showcasing the voices, stories and experiences of migration – embracing diversity, discussing challenges, inequalities and discrimination, but also celebrating the power of multiculturalism and communities united in diversity.

18:15 - 20:00 Media

Social media corner

Interviews & Live broadcasting

19:00 - 21:00 Concerts

Tatyos Ensemble 19:00 - 19:45

Tatyos Ensemble takes you to southern rich and varied journey through both classical and popular music <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PcEuElvz-dw>

In C 20:00 – 21:00

Fourteen musicians with as many instruments as different cultural influences reflect the wealth of music with colorful projections. Expect a magical concert, a kind of tantric experience that enraptures you and lets you escape for a while <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aX96z7AulCs>

PROGRAMME 25TH

PANEL SESSIONS

Title of the session	Opening & welcome to the MAX project final event!
Time & place	9:30 am, Brussels (Les Ateliers des Tanneurs, Rue des Tanneurs 60A, 1000 Bruxelles/main conference room)
Description & objectives of the session	<p>Migrants are very often portrayed by the media and politicians as a threat to national unity and social cohesion, and a burden on public finances. This rhetoric has led to an increasingly hostile environment and debate. The reality is in fact quite different. Overwhelming evidence suggests that migrants are a benefit to society, contributing more in taxes and social contributions than they receive in benefits, boost the working-age population, bring in skills, create enterprises, form a bridge to global markets and enrich culture. A change of narrative is thus essential to work jointly towards a future in a peaceful, cohesive and booming Europe. The MAX project have implemented a set of actions to help create a momentum, provide more visibility and a fairer account in the media of the positive contribution of third-country nationals to our societies. To set the scene for the rest of the conference, the project will present the audience the key activities and results achieved through the MAX journey. Such a project would have not been possible without the commitment and financial support of the Directorate-General Migration and Home Affairs.</p>
Speakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Adem Kumcu, President of UNITEE, Project Coordinator of the MAX project ● Patricia Martinez, AEIDL (European Association for Information on Local Development), Project Manager for Local Engagement of the MAX project
Moderator	Anya Sitaram

Title of the session

Migration landscape and voices

Time & place

10:00 am, Brussels (Les Ateliers des Tanneurs /main conference room)

Description & objectives of the session

MAX partners conducted for more than a year a literature and research exercise about the benefits (economic, social, cultural) of a diverse society and about the image of migrants as channelled in the news, associated fears, experiments and solutions. Such an intense exercise, led by the experts from Idea International AISBL Professor Umberto Triulzi (University of Rome "La Sapienza"), Dr Charlie Dannreuther (University of Leeds) and Ola Nord (international expert Idea AISBL), culminated with the publication of six thematic reports and one set of policy recommendations.

Dr. Charlie Dannreuther from University of Leeds will present the main conclusions and lessons learned and what are our main policy recommendations to make Europe a safe place for migrants. Three of those main policy recommendations will be presented more in detailed:

- How to extend Human Corridors into EU policy strategies and lessons learned from the Afghan crisis
- A strategy path for research mobility and self-entrepreneurship with third country nationals
- A success story of inclusion of refugees and migrants in depopulated rural areas

Speakers

- [Charlie Dannreuther](#), researcher at Idea International AISBL and Doctor at the University of Leeds
- [Giulia Gori](#), [Federation of Protestant Churches in Italy \(FCEI\)](#)
- [Professor Monder Ram](#), Director of the Centre for Research in Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship (CREME)
- [Laura Barranco Miranda](#), Co-coordinator of the Rural Development area of Cepaim Foundation in Spain presented the "New Trails/Nuevos Senderos", project

Moderator

Anya Sitaram

Title of the session

Migrants' voices: Nothing about us without us!

Time & place

11:00 am, Brussels (Les Ateliers des Tanneurs /main conference room)

Description & objectives of the session

A dynamic two-way process on integration means not only expecting third-country nationals to embrace EU fundamental values and learn the host language, but also offering them meaningful opportunities to participate in the economy and society of the Member State they settle in, and have their voice heard. Actively contributing to and being allowed to contribute to the political, cultural and social life are both at least as important as one another to creating a sense of belonging and feeling fully anchored in the host society, as well as to building socio-economically thriving societies. Developing welcoming, diverse and inclusive societies is a process that needs the engagement both of the third-country nationals and of the receiving society.

In this session we will have the opportunity to hear the voices, opinions and recommendations of newcomers in Europe, to get to know in first person how they perceive the current integration programmes and services, what they think about the recommendations presented by the MAX project and what they would recommend to make EU countries better placed to actively include migrants in all spheres of society.

Speakers

- **Gina May**, Syrian interpreter and cultural mediator living in Rome sharing her experience with the Humanitarian Corridors project
- **Razan Ismail**, Founder of [Kudwa](#) and member of the Migration Expert Group of the European Commission and the [New Women Connectors](#)
- **Oksana Pestrykova**, founder of [Nasz Wybór \[Our Choice\] Foundation](#)
- **Agnieszka Kosowicz**, founder and president of the board of the Polish Migration Forum

Moderator

[Anya Sitaram](#)

PARALLEL WORKSHOPS ROUND ONE

Title of the session	How solutions journalism can help change the narrative
Time & place	13:30 pm, Brussels (Les Ateliers des Tanneurs /workshop room)
Description & objectives of the session	<p>Across Europe, reporting on migration is often over-simplified, portraying migrants as victims, as threats, or as heroes and creating polarised narratives.</p> <p>There are several different strategies the media can take to add nuance to migration reporting. As part of the MAX project, the European news organization The Local developed a curriculum for solutions-focused migration reporting and used it to deliver training and workshops to journalists working across the EU. Throughout 2020, The Local offered training on a solution-focused approach to migration reporting for over 100 journalists.</p> <p>This workshop will discuss the solutions journalism approach. Solutions journalism is reporting on initiatives that aim to help solve the problems facing migrants and their communities, by exploring what is being done, how it works, and evaluating how well it's working and why.</p>
Speakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Catherine Edwards, Award-winning digital editor and content strategist at The Local Europe• Jessica Phelan, journalist, editor and trainers
Moderator	Catherine Edwards , Award-winning digital editor and content strategist at The Local Europe

Title of the session

Migrant women' journeys

Time & place

13:30 pm, Brussels (Les Ateliers des Tanneurs /workshop room)

Description & objectives of the session

Women represent half of the world's population and thus, half of its potential. However, gender inequality persists in all spheres of society. When it comes to migrant women, such inequalities are even higher due to a double discrimination based on gender and migration status. While in past decades migration flows towards EU countries were predominantly men, this tendency has drastically changed, with an increasing arrival of migrant women, though family reunification but also with their own personal project or as labour migrants, high-skilled workers or asylum seekers.

Despite the adverse situations, migrant women around the world have shown strength and resilience. Each year, some 100 million migrant women send remittances to their countries of origin.

To empower migrant women to feel secure and independent and develop a sense of belonging that encourage them to fulfil their aspirations it is essential to protect their human rights, boost their social inclusion and self-support that, in return, will mean the unlocking of an enormous potential for themselves and for our societies. A way of achieving that is to design support, accompaniment, education and training services and projects that effectively take into account the actual needs but also the experiences and points of view of migrant women in their design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Evidences show that there is a lack of policy, action plans and strategies with particular focus on migrant women or gender issues

The main objective of this session is to understand effective ways of incorporating migrant women lens into the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects so that they are planned not only for them but with them.

To do so, we will:

- Present and analyse a case study where a migrant women users' journey approach has been applied to understand: a) what worked and what needs to be improved and b) how it could be replicated in other initiatives
- Debate about ways of promoting migrant women's meaningful participation
- And most importantly, to hear from migrant women what their experience being part of such a process have been and what are their recommendations

Speakers

Moderator

- [Sinem Yilmaz](#), Integration Policy Analyst at [Migration Policy Group](#)
- [Razan Ismail](#), Founder of [Kudwa](#) and member of the Migration Expert Group of the European Commission and the [New Women Connectors](#)
- [Liudmila Gasina](#), [Youth Included](#)

Hakan Aycicek, Secretary-General at European Professionals Network (EPN)

Title of the session

The role of Social Economy in supporting diverse ecosystems and migrants' integration

Time & place

13:30 pm, Brussels (Les Ateliers des Tanneurs /workshop room)

Description & objectives of the session

By definition, the social economy enterprises respond to the needs of communities and societies. Therefore, they have always been involved in the assistance and support to the integration of migrants in Europe. They do so by providing many different services: social and legal assistance, housing, training and education, job integration, etc.

This session will showcase some good examples of how social economy enterprises contribute to migrant integration in EU countries.

Speakers

- [Chiara Ginanni](#), project manager at [Consorzio Communitas](#)
- [Marco Visintin](#), educator, and Camilla Giannetti, educator, [Agenzia Duemilauno](#)
- [Hans-Gerd Nottenbohm](#), netz.NRW
- [Denis Sabanadze](#), Lecturer of [Youth Included](#)

Moderator

[Gianluca Pastorelli](#), Executive President at Diesis Network, [Eleonora Lamio](#), Project Manager and Policy Officer at Diesis Network

Title of the session

**The impact of mass media on the migration discourses:
how to counterbalance misinformation and wrong
perceptions**

Time & place 13:30 pm, Brussels (Les Ateliers des Tanneurs /workshop room)

**Description &
objectives of the
session**

The objective of this session is to understand the impact of media on the public opinion, diversity and culture, and learn from organisations carrying out different initiatives how community-led initiatives can work to overcome misconceptions, prejudices and stereotypes in the spirit of triggering a more nuanced debate about migration, avoid xenophobia and strength social cohesion.

The session will start with a short lecture, followed by panel presentation of initiatives and roundtable debate with the audience.

Speakers

- [Giacomo Toffano](#), PhD fellow of the Research Council – Flanders (FWO) and a member of ECHO, the research group on media, culture, and politics at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium
- [Madeleina Kay](#), Social media campaigner for the [Media Diversity Institute](#)
- [Frankie Reid](#), Research and Production Assistant at [Migration Matters](#)

Moderator Anya Sitaram

PARALLEL WORKSHOPS ROUND TWO

Title of the session **Integrating cities: access to local services for all**

Time & place 14:30 pm, Brussels (Les Ateliers des Tanneurs /workshop room)

Description & objectives of the session

The percentage of foreigners living in many of Europe's cities has considerably increased over the last couple of decades and it is likely more migrants will be arriving in urban areas of the EU in the coming years. Urban areas are therefore on the front line of migrant reception and subsequent integration. They play a significant role in managing migrants' integration but they face several challenges such as lack of resources or a top-down multilevel governance. Nonetheless, many of them have recently been doing efforts to deploy innovative strategies to try to reduce barriers for newcomers and make their cities a welcome space for all. In this session, we will hear the experiences of those integrating cities, the process they have been setting up to make their local services more accessible and inclusive, the impact that COVID19 has had on them and the way ahead to continue building more inclusive cities for all.

Speakers

- [Maria Grazia Montella](#), Project and Policy Officer IncluCities and Migration and Integration Task Force CEMR-CCRE
- [Katharina Bamberg](#), Migration Policy Advisor at [EUROCITIES](#)
- [František Bradáč](#), Head of the social assistance and prevention department at Office of city district of Prague 14.

Moderator Patricia Martinez, Project Manager and Policy Officer at AEIDL

Title of the session

Migration & Education: shaping the discourse about diversity in the classrooms

Time & place 14:30 pm, Brussels (Les Ateliers des Tanneurs /workshop room)

**Description &
objectives of the
session**

The right to education is often taken for granted, but for newly arrived migrants to access and exercise this important right means very often to be able to short out many barriers. For migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, receiving an education is the best way to become independent full members of their new countries.

In order to promote a supportive ecosystem able to make the access to education for migrants easier, the education system needs to take into account diversity in the classroom and therefore, to adapt the existing curricula to such diversity. In this session we aim to discuss how to shape the discourse about diversity in the classrooms.

To do so, we will

- Present how the MAX partner Polish Migration Forum implements subjects of migration and diversity to school curriculums,
- Propose a discussion about linking the curriculums to the topics such as migration, inclusion, diversity among different age groups.

Speakers

- [Agnieszka Kosowicz](#), President of the Board, [Polish Migration Forum](#)
- [Karolina Czerwińska](#), Project Manager on Training, Informal Education and Migrants' Integration at [Polish Migration Forum](#)

Title of the session

Beyond the “old” normal. A fresh look to migrant labour integration after the pandemic

Time & place

14:30 pm, Brussels (Les Ateliers des Tanneurs /workshop room)

Description & objectives of the session

Labour market integration has been broadly discussed in academia and by civil society and policymakers as the cornerstone for the integration of newcomers. While many barriers have been identified and debated, the Covid-19 pandemic shown that regardless of their skill levels, migrants play a crucial role for the functioning everyday life. Key sectors such distribution, food processing and health care strongly rely on migrants for their workers. Migrant workers fill the labour gaps, providing essential services within European economies.³ Covid -19 has transformed nearly every aspect of our life. It has changed how we work, learn, and interact in social distancing. Our lives have been altered and we are forced to get used to so called the “new normal”. Likewise, given the fact above, we need a change in “narrative” when it comes to labour market integration of migrants. We need a fresh approach to achieve a business life and labour market that utilizes the potential of all people. Because as it is well put by the OECD, “this is about all of us – not ‘us and them’”. In this session, we will try to discuss the alternative practices and projects that can help changing the narrative regarding labour market integration of migrants and how we can better guarantee that the skills migrants are bringing are dully assessed and matched with the host country needs, guaranteeing they do not end up by default in job positions for which they are overqualified. Secondly, we will discuss the role that key stakeholders (private sector, NGOs, public administrations) plays in paving the way for the access to the labour market of migrants

Speakers

- **Mubarik Abdirrahman**, Business developer from the Malmö National Department, Unit Socially Sustainable Cities
- **Sedat Arif**, Deputy mayor, City of Malmö
- **Massimo Buccarello**, Founding member of [IPAD - Cooperativa Integration peace and development](#)
- **Dionke Konate**, Founding member of the [Coop Ipad Mediterranean](#)
- **Pietro Boriotti**, project manager at [Legacoopsociali](#)

Moderator

Mahmut Kalkan, Board member of [SweTurk](#)

³ [COVID-19 and key workers: What role do migrants play in your region? \(oecd.org\)](https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/covid-19-and-key-workers-what-role-do-migrants-play-in-your-region/?isRedirected=true)

Title of the session

ICT and digitisation: towards the integration of migrants and refugees. Stories around Europe

Time & place

14:30 pm, Brussels (Les Ateliers des Tanneurs /workshop room)

Description & objectives of the session

The link between social and digital exclusion is particularly obvious for migrants, who usually enter a new country with few local resources, less knowledge of how to access these resources, and cultural and linguistic barriers to understanding how to access help and engage in the digital economy.

Digital technology can play a positive role in building social capital and hence social inclusion among refugee and migrant groups. Initiatives supporting digital inclusion therefore benefit migrants' integration to society, wellbeing, and their potential to contribute to the digital economy.

Speakers

- [Frohar Poya](#), Project Officer at [European Network of Migrant Women \(ENoMW\)](#)
- [Liudmila Gasina](#), Youth Included
- [Iffat Rose Gill](#), Founder of the Code To Change

Moderator

[Vesa Latifi](#), Diesis Network

PANEL SESSIONS & CLOSING

Title of the session	
The strategy going forward	
Time & place	16:00 pm, Brussels (venue to be confirmed/main conference room)
Description	<p>Panel discussion with representatives from several European Commission DGs and United Nations Institutions to discuss how all the lessons learnt, policy recommendations presented and feedback received from migrants and civil society can be implemented in their institutions' strategy and work.</p>
Speakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Miriam Toplanska, Policy Officer in the Unit Skills & qualifications, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion• Dennis Van Gessel, Policy Officer in the Unit Disability and Inclusion, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion• Isabelle Annie J. Durant, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)• Michael Shotter, Director for Migration, Asylum and Visa at the Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs
Moderator	Anya Sitaram

Title of the session

CLOSING

Time & place

16:45 pm, Brussels (Les Ateliers des Tanneurs /main conference room)

Description

What are the main findings and messages of the conference? The panellists reflect and debate about it to wrap up the day

Speakers

- **Stefano Manservigi**, Chair of the governing board at GCERF (Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund) and former Director-General for International Cooperation and Development (DEVCO)
- **Adem Kumcu**, President of UNITEE, Project Coordinator of the MAX project

Moderator

Anya Sitaram

Following the national measures in place, we remind you the need to show a "Covid Safe Ticket" (CST) at the registration desk. This is proof (via a QR code) of a complete vaccination (prior to 2 weeks), a negative PCR test (less than 48 hours old) or a recovery certificate (less than 6 months).

If a person participating in the conference is not in possession of one of these certificates, the organizers of the final MAX event will not be able to allow me to enter the conference venue.

Wearing a face mask inside the venue while not eating or drinking is also mandatory.

More information on:

<https://covidsafe.be>

<https://www.masante.belgique.be/#/>

The MAX final event is an activity of the MAX project, funded by the European Union's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF-2017-AG-INTE-821672)

The content of this publication represents the view of the author(s) only and is his/her/their responsibility. The EC does not accept any responsibility for use that may be made of the information it contains.

