
**Working Together, Better:
Engagement between Local Authorities &
Humanitarian Actors in Athens**

Athens – a capital under pressure



City of Athens: The main pillars of the City's strategic plan for integration

Recording of current situation & identification of stakeholders for the development of synergies

Establishing a collaboration framework

Needs assessment and planning of interventions (institutional and service provision)

Vice Mayorship for migrant & refugee affairs, Integration Directorate, Centres for Migrant Integration

Evidence-based development of new tools, processes and services

(AORI, language courses, vocational support, contingency planning)

Development of a collaboration framework (with IOs, NGOs, other municipalities)

ACCMR, European Cities Networks, Cities Integration Network, co-funding partnerships

The City of Athens Coordination Centre for Migrant and Refugee issues – ACCMR (est. June 2017)



**Strategy and
Implementation**



ΙΔΡΥΜΑ ΣΤΑΥΡΟΣ ΝΙΑΡΧΟΣ

Funding



**Coordination
and funds
management**



ACCMR adopts an innovative, bottom-up, participatory approach and has become the physical and institutional space where a local authority (City of Athens) meets and develops synergies with civil society & IOs.



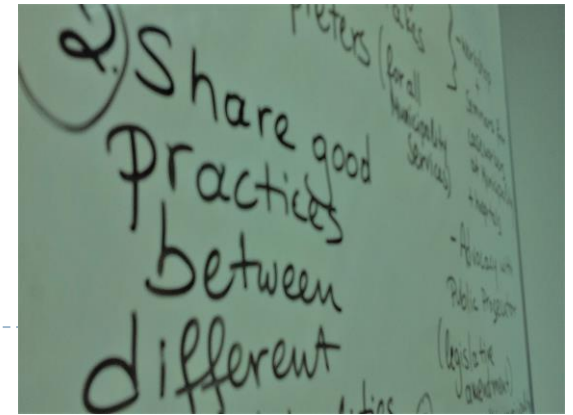
The Structure of ACCMR

6 Working Committees **co-chaired by NGOs and municipal bodies**

- Access and Legal Rights
- Livelihoods and access to the labour market
- Urbanisation and peaceful coexistence
- Education and Learning
- Health and Wellbeing
- *Women refugees and gender issues*

90+ member organisations

300+ representatives



ACCMR: Achievements after less than 2 years of operation

- ▶ ACCMR recognised as a **best practice** at European level (OECD report, World Economic Forum report)
- ▶ **Development of strategic tools for the City of Athens through collective, inclusive, bottom-up and transparent processes** (1st Preparedness mechanism for future refugee flows, 1st Strategic Action Plan for integration, **25+** proposals for integration initiatives, **10+** trainings and capacity building events with refugee & migrant communities, **ACCMR Digital Platform**)
- ▶ Establishment & promotion of a **culture of collaboration and co-creation** between a local authority (traditionally 'introvert') and local & international NGOs and IOs (often 'deprecatory')
- ▶ **Cities Network for Integration**: Setting the basis for the first network of Greek municipalities (**currently 13 city-members**). Capacity building, exchange of know-how, support for the development of integration initiatives, advocacy for institutional change at national and European level

The Cities Network for Integration (CNI)

CNI founding pillars

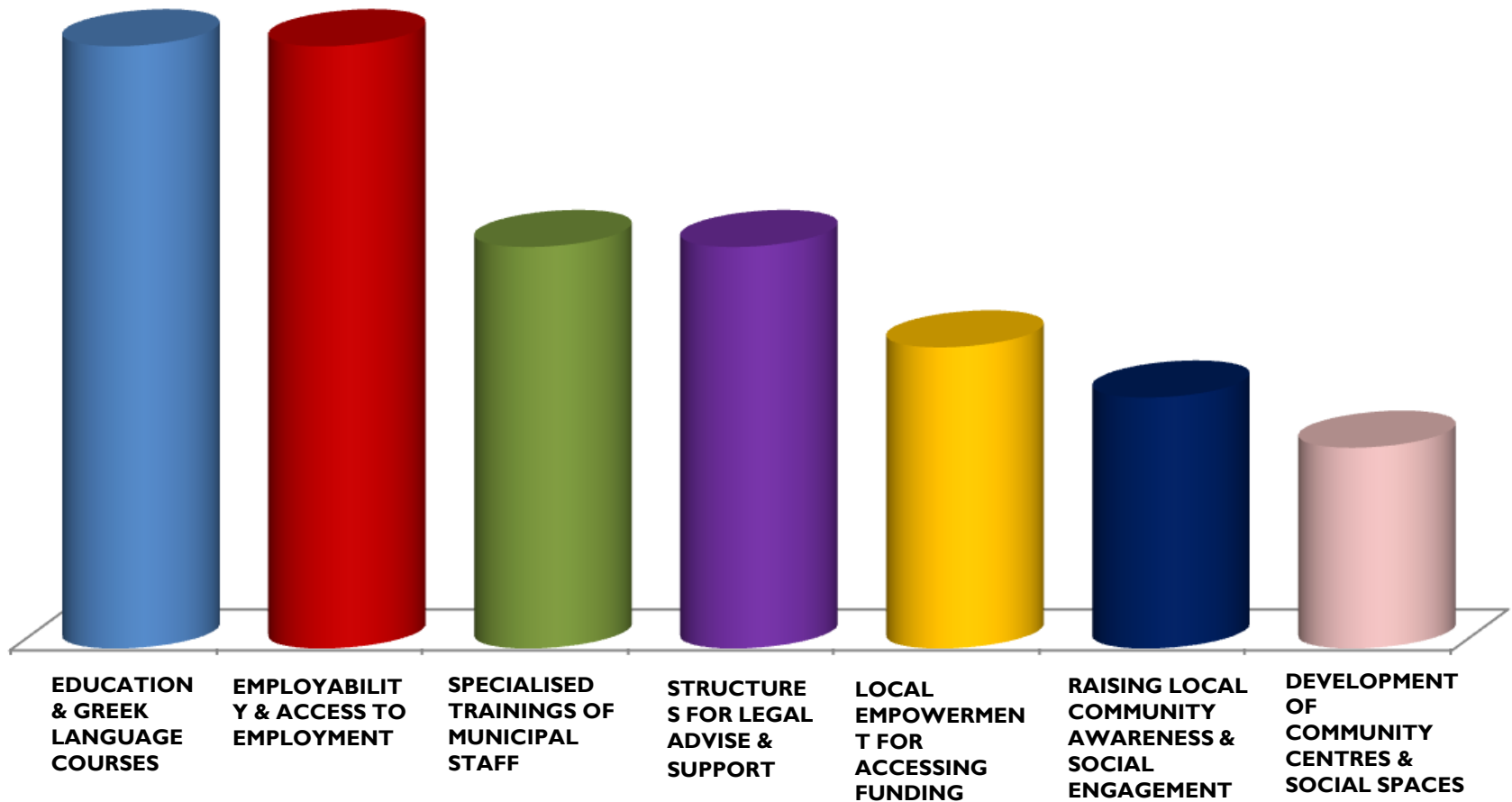
- Make the most of **local** knowledge and expertise
- Develop collaborations based priorities identified **locally**
- Develop tools based on a bottom-up approach, according to **local** needs. Update tools/set new goals as local circumstances change
- Enhance **local** services and making the most of existing local structures and agencies
- Promote **joint advocacy** for institutional change at national and European level

IOM Greece supporting CNI

- ▶ Facilitate the formulation of coordination and tools, and the development of local integration strategies
- ▶ Organization/provision of training sessions/workshops and specialized consultancy to municipal staff
- ▶ Develop an inter-municipal information-sharing platform
- ▶ Support to Cities Network members in advocacy issues. Participation in national and international fora



Priority areas of intervention based on local needs identified

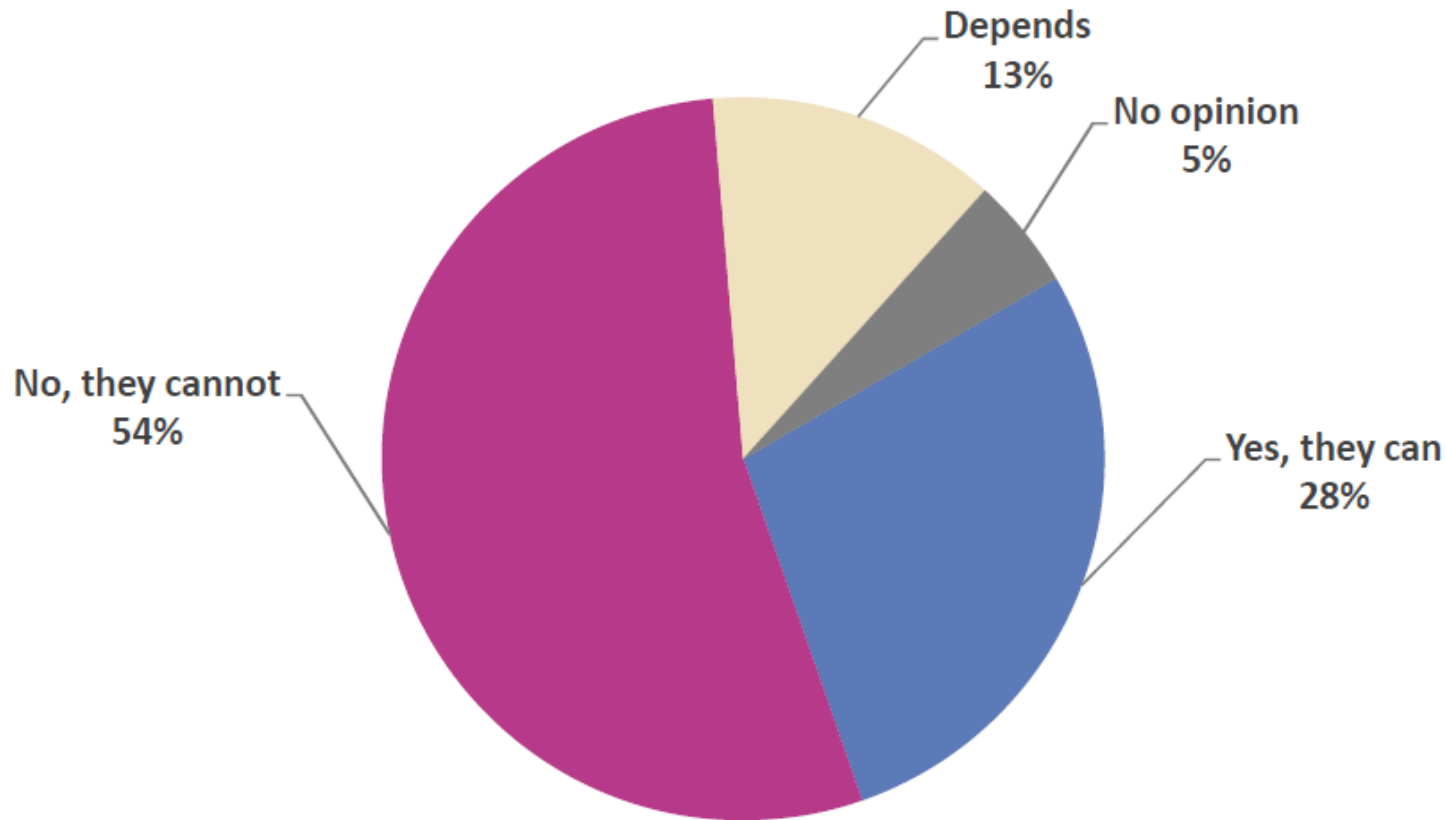


Final thoughts on local authorities - humanitarian actors engagement

- ▶ IOs and NGOs have **complemented** the work of many Greek municipalities, in a range of arrangements and partnerships. This is increasingly reflected in several donor-funded initiatives that encourage IO/NGO and local government collaboration.
- ▶ Local governments and NGOs are most likely to work together in the area of **social services** – but there are more areas for collaboration & capacity building

Public opinion in Athens – (AORI data 2017)

- ▶ *‘Do you think that refugees that will remain in Greece could or could not be integrated in the Greek society?’*



Some of the challenges ahead

- ▶ **Project-based approach to integration**
 - ▶ Significant risks linked with short-term solutions which jeopardise the viability of effective, low-cost initiatives (especially following possible changes in political priorities)
- ▶ **Building trust and understanding between all stakeholders involved**
 - ▶ Involve middle-management in meetings and decision making processes
- ▶ **Understand the important role that local authorities can play and support accordingly**
 - ▶ Consider municipalities in the design of funding flows. Advocate for international funds or loans to flow directly to cities.
- ▶ **Migrant-led NGOs need further empowerment in order to be in a position to complement effectively local government initiatives**

