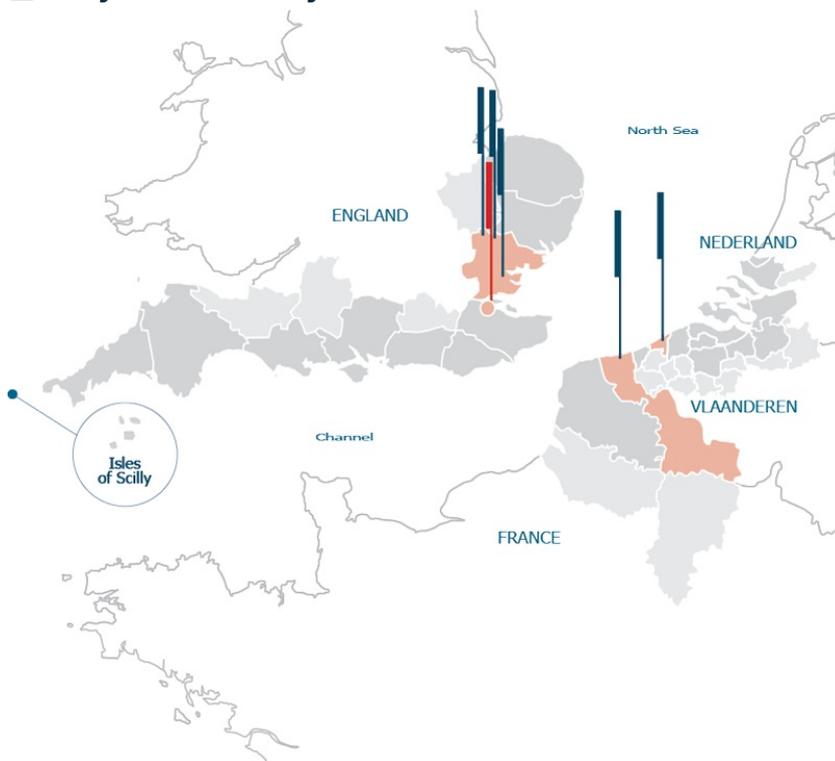


# AIMER

## Achieving the Integration of Migrant communities and Ethnic Residents



### ■ Project summary



AIMER focuses on the challenge facing local authorities and community organisations in integrating newly arrived migrants and in enabling established ethnic minority communities to improve access to jobs and services. The overarching aim is to demonstrate a model approach to assist local areas across the crossborder zone to integrate ethnic minorities. The partners are coming together to address an issue which is specific to the 2 seas area and which needs to be looked at from all angles. With migration issues being so topical, AIMER hopes to define good practice examples of how ethnic minority community organisations can come together to engage in

dialogue with the local authorities. They will first examine existing approaches to the welcoming and integration of new migrants. Partners will also look at the design of new methods and actions to welcome new arrival communities and communicate effectively to them the protocols of the host community. AIMER will then concentrate on both legal and cultural mediation, working with ethnic minority communities to create new community organisations.

### ■ Activities

#### What was the project trying to achieve?

The AIMER project aimed to tackle the challenges of population migration within the Programme area. It focused on the challenge facing local authorities and community associations in integrating newly arrived migrants and in enabling established ethnic minority communities to improve access to jobs and services. Ultimately, our aim was to demonstrate a model approach to assist local areas in the cross-border zone to integrate ethnic minorities. 5

main objectives: 1: To facilitate the integration of migrant communities by delivering training actions in language and skills for life 2: To engage in welcoming and integrating new migrants and to draw up a 'welcome pack' 3. To establish legal mediation services to migrant communities 4. To implement a Programme of cultural mediation to overcome mutual mistrust between different cultural communities hence strengthening integration 5. To build the capacity of support services for newly arrived communities and existing migrants. the AIMER project's aims and objectives were delivered to a large extent. Project partners through the AIMER project contributed significantly to addressing the challenges of migration in their respective geographical areas. Migrant ""Welcome Packs"" were developed in English, French & Flemish and promoted widely. E.g. In Essex, the Welcome Pack will be given out at new Citizen Registration ceremonies.

### What were the activities implemented?

The project was split into 3 main activities, each with a number of key sub-actions. For Activity 1, "Welcome & integration of migrant communities", each partner developed a "Welcome Pack", a guide containing the most relevant information and contacts required by many new arrivals. This was widely disseminated and promoted. Accredited language training (English & Flemish) was also delivered to migrants at community venues and residential care homes in tandem with ICT training to improve their computer literacy. Study visits were arranged for partners to observe each other and compare approaches. "Train the trainer" and voluntary sector training were other key sub-actions, where migrants were trained to become advisor to their communities (as part of Citizens Advice Bureau) as well as supporting staff who had "Skills for life" needs. The final sub-action around citizenship was built into the previous sub-actions for each partner.

## ■ Results

### What were the key results of the project?

For Activity 1, 399 migrants were given English and Dutch language lessons in Medway and Ostend. 44 migrants were supported to get their overseas qualifications recognized. There were also a phenomenal 4037 attendances noted at IT classes mainly in Ostend. 3 migrants from Polish, Russian and Czech (Roma) communities were trained but only 2 qualified as IAG advisors. Over 500 local residents participated in dozens of cultural awareness / community cohesion type activities. A Welcome Pack containing useful contacts and information for new arrival migrants was produced in English, French and Dutch. For Activity 2, a cultural awareness course for care home staff setup online. A Signposting ESOL toolkit developed (Essex) to benefit social care employers for staff. 365 care homes in Essex were engaged for the cultural awareness training with many committing to participate. 162 Managers and supervisors from Essex's care homes successfully completed the formal Cultural Awareness training as a result of AIMER. 14 Young migrants were trained to become mentors and support other migrant young people in Cambridgeshire. Over 25 voluntary / community organisations and over 500 migrants benefited from cultural awareness training and events. SDV supported the EHBO helpdesk to give legal advice to 51 beneficiaries. For Activity 3, 9 new migrant organisations were created. 4 ethnic minority and migrant ""umbrella"" organisations were developed and supported in Medway and Ostend. A DVD recording migrant stories ""A Sentimental Journey""

was produced and promoted amongst care homes in Essex. A French / English Fundraising guide was produced for migrant organisations, following intensive training for 27 groups in Medway and Dunkirk. 4 major cross-border exchanges were organised, including the visit of Ostend colleagues to Medway for the Roma cultural awareness event study visit around teaching ESOL. 42 residents engaged to support new migrant organisations.

### **Did all partners and territories benefit from the results?**

The AIMER project had the following target groups: Local authorities (enabling better service delivery), health and social care providers (more appropriate services to the communities), community and social organisations (not for profit organisations were involved in the project as well as local agents of delivery). Migrant groups such as Eastern European Communities (supported to better welcome and integrate their fellow nationals), local residents in general (more understanding of migrant communities), and also economic actors (access to qualified labour related to the needs of the employers). All these groups directly benefited from the project and considered "improvements" thanks to AIMER. The beneficiaries of the AIMER project included local residents from "host" communities and of course were mainly residents from both existing ethnic minority communities and "new arrival" migrants: Thanks to project AIMER, the general level of integration was increased. Migrants primarily benefited from the project as they had access to language training, improved services, health care training and advice. Migrant workers were also enabled to look at a broader range of jobs improving the quality of their life. Young people received better support and mentoring to gain access to and prosper in mainstream education thus avoiding isolation. The residents from the "host" communities gained greater awareness of the cultural background of migrant communities and vice versa. Project AIMER brought together migrants with the "host" communities and addressed sensitively barriers of mistrust caused by a mutual lack of awareness and understanding.

### **What were the effects / outcomes for the territories involved?**

There has been a contribution to the promotion of social inclusion for people of migrant backgrounds across each territory. The language (English and Dutch) skills and basic IT courses, community cohesion activities as well as support given to migrants to get their overseas qualifications recognized has increased their access to services, employability and understanding of the "host" communities' cultures. Unfortunately project partners were not able to directly evidence the impact post project as no evaluation or follow up of beneficiaries was done. All the events, tools and training delivered by AIMER to the target groups has proven to be a vital lifeline for organisations and residents to help deal with the impact on (mainly) economic migration across Europe and from beyond. Particularly for Medway, AIMER allowed for tailored activities to promote education and social cohesion for Roma communities. In the Nord region, migrant organisations were trained and supported to secure funding. In Essex, migrant care home workers learnt English to develop their job prospects and their employers became more aware of their and their clients' cultures to improve services. In Cambridgeshire, young migrant mentors trained through AIMER provided support to their peers to settle in. Ostend delivered a massive migrant support Programme around language and computer skills.

### **■ Distinctiveness**

### **What was the real added-value of doing this cross-border project?**

All our cross-border interaction both formal at partner meetings and study visits as well as informal has been extremely valuable for everyone. Original pre-conceived ideas about which model of integration is the best changed over time to actually learning from different approaches to migrant integration, e.g. around how the teaching of languages (English & Flemish) is important for access to employment and civil society not just citizenship. Individual partner expertise such as the "Welcome Pack" developed by SDV was shared across the partnership enabling others such as CEFIR, Medway & Essex to quickly compile and disseminate theirs without long periods of consultation to decide the contents. Unfortunately public sector cuts in the UK affecting job losses and with voluntary organisations traditionally reliant on public funds ceasing to exist (COVER and Young Lives), led to much less co-ordination (by the Lead Partner) and networking as originally planned.

### **Have any synergies been developed with other projects or networks?**

In Medway AIMER worked very closely with the INSPIRER project because both projects focus their delivery on the priority neighborhoods. INSPIRER's healthy eating activities and "community clean ups" included residents from the target groups of AIMER. We were able to get migrant communities cooking some of their healthy recipes for others and enhance the community cohesion aspect. A key result was involving Roma young people in the neighborhood clean-up activities to demonstrate migrants also care about the look of their neighborhoods. Also, for some AIMER cohesion activities, participation from INSPIRER's beneficiaries (settled communities) enabled us to attract white British people to join our migrant residents. Some connection was made with EU ROMA networks in Spain through the ACCEDER project. The Lead Partner contributed somewhat to the South East bid to the European Integration Fund and will continue to explore working with European partners on these agendas.

### **What are the key messages , key lessons learned you would like to share?**

Planning and participating in cross-border meetings does take serious effort for those that have to travel. Delays and disruptions to travel do happen, so maybe e.g. combining a study visit with a steering committee meeting would maximise partner interaction but minimise travel fatigue. Please anticipate delays at the start of the project - a lot can happen between project submission and actual project start following approval. Having strong working relationships is crucial to the smooth running of a project so allow adequate time for partners to get to know one another as they develop project activities from "paper" into "practice". Acknowledging, particularly when you have multi-sector partners, the environments everyone works in and their flexibilities and limitations, e.g. ERDF payment delays and how they affect smaller not-for-profit partners or e.g. the political environments of Local Authorities. Good communication with the JTS is absolutely necessary (as soon as issues are encountered) and will help to mitigate against major blockages later.

## ■ Project Information

<b>Title</b>	Achieving the Integration of Migrant communities and Ethnic Residents
<b>Total project budget</b>	€ 2 468 403
<b>ERDF</b>	€ 1 234 201
<b>Priority &amp; objective</b>	Priority 3 a. Promote and allow for social inclusion and well-being of different groups in society
<b>Timeframe</b>	2008-11-01 - 2012-12-31
<b>Lead partner</b>	Medway Council
<b>Project Coordinator</b>	Solène FERREIRA(solene.ferreira@medway.gov.uk)

