



MEDITERRANEAN CITY-TO-CITY MIGRATION

## CITY CASE STUDY MADRID

'CUIDEMOS CENTRO': A MUNICIPAL EMPLOYMENT  
PROGRAMME PROMOTING MIGRANT INTEGRATION IN MADRID

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

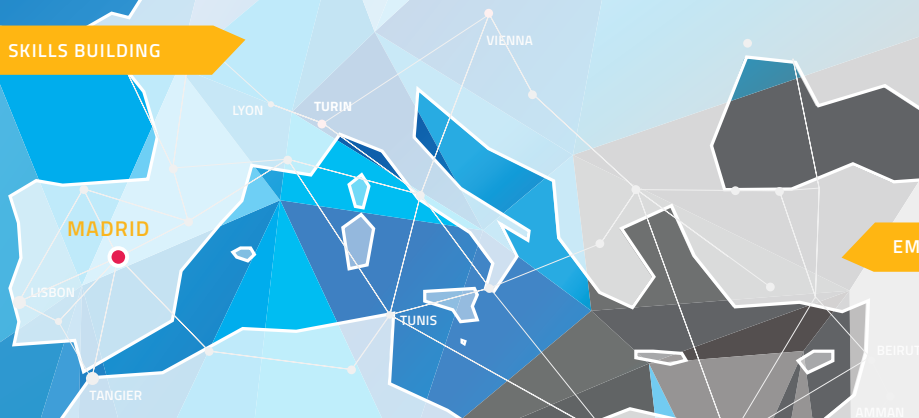
MIGRANTS

SKILLS BUILDING

ENVIRONMENT

INCLUSION

EMPLOYMENT



Implemented by



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*project has sought to nurture a peer-to-peer dialogue and mutual learning on specific urban challenges such as social cohesion, intercultural dialogue, employment and provision of basic services for migrants, among others. This case study was selected by the Municipality of Madrid in order to showcase a practice that contributes to social inclusion of migrants at the local level.*

## **'CUIDAMOS CENTRO' – A MUNICIPAL EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME ENGAGING WITH MIGRANTS TO PROMOTE ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS AND CITY-CENTRE CLEANING INITIATIVES**



### **ABSTRACT**

**'Cuidamos Centro'** ('We Take Care of the Centro District') is an employment training and practice programme that targets groups at risk of exclusion and long term unemployment in Madrid. The programme is coordinated by the Madrid Municipal Employment Agency and District Board. The initiative provides training and paid employment opportunities for those deemed most excluded from the city's labour market. Whilst it does not exclusively target foreign-born migrants, the latter group are over-represented among the project's participants (also known as dynamizers).

Going beyond an attempt to incorporate migrants as marginalised population through social programmes, this initiative recognises the potential for migrants to make a meaningful contribution to city-life. Within the programme, the dynamizers act as active mediators for social cohesion, leveraging their home languages and cultures to build relationships between local government actors and the wider migrant population. Overall, the project attempts to mobilise Madrid's diversity to achieve the policy objective of increased environmental awareness in the city.

## BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

Centro district is Madrid's historical centre and its main cultural and leisure centre. Characterised by diversity, Centro is home to 150,000 inhabitants, 27% of whom are foreign-born. In the Lavapiés area of the Embajadores neighbourhood alone, 88 different nationalities are represented, giving life to the popular saying: *In Lavapiés one travels the world without leaving the neighbourhood*. Drawing life from this diversity of nationalities, Centro district is also home to Madrid's largest concentration of neighbourhood and cultural associations.

Madrid's diversity is recognised as an important asset for the city which does, nonetheless, require managing. As such, the city commits significant resources to promoting inclusion across the city. As a city, Madrid recognises that facilitating the swift entry of migrants into the labour market – whether as employees or as self-employed entrepreneurs - is an important mean of ensuring effective city-level integration. Mainstream employment is often a prerequisite to accessing essential services and, as such, provides a route to reducing migrant poverty, decreasing demands on the welfare system (wherever it exists), and reducing opportunities for exploitation and criminal activities. Conversely, the City recognises that obstructing access to the labour market over a prolonged period can spur the emergence of informal and, in certain cases, illegal activities. Systematic labour market exclusion can also have profoundly negative consequences for children who may be pushed onto the street as

a livelihood strategy for the family, instead of going to school.

Compounding the challenge of labour market exclusion is migrants' frequent reluctance to claim available municipal support and services due to a pervasive lack of trust between migrant communities and local authorities. In order to reach out to and communicate with migrants effectively and facilitate their inclusion in the life of the city, differentiated strategies are required. This is where '**Cuidamos Centro**' comes in.

Responding to the twin challenges of underemployment and mistrust, Madrid's Agency for Employment first mapped the city's economy to identify labour-intensive sectors. Based on this assessment, the Agency offered tailored employment/capacity building programmes in areas such as gardening, hospitality, cleaning, hair and beauty services, building maintenance and environmental awareness/waste management. As part of this wider employment programme, '**Cuidamos Centro**' was piloted in 2017. The initiative engaged a team of formerly-excluded job seekers (including 4 non-nationals) as dynamizers to build collective awareness around the importance of waste management and environmental protection in Madrid Centro.

Working through a one to one engagement methodology, the programme leveraged the language skills of their dynamizers to build bridges between Madrid's diverse population and City-Hall. By targeting individuals from diverse national backgrounds, the initiative also helped to counter misinformation and cultural misrecognition.

Through incorporating migrant workers as temporary official municipal employees, in a small way, the programme recognised the rights of migrants to full/equal participation in city life.

## IMPLEMENTATION

Madrid Agency for Employment offers a specific training programme to populations at risk of exclusion and long-term unemployment – including migrants – who are excluded from the labour market. It supports long-term unemployed individuals to overcome barriers through the provision of technical training, practical work experience and individual mentoring. Over the course of 9 months, participants become employees of the Agency, receiving the national minimal wage, and benefitting from an official employment contract/potential future reference.

Part of this broader employment programme, the ‘**Cuidemos Centro**’ project takes aim at the challenge of street cleaning and waste management practices in Madrid’s historic neighbourhoods. Targeting long-term unemployed residents of Madrid’s Centro district, the project aims to promote environmental awareness and good waste management practices. Known as “los dinamizadores” (the dynamizers), the team comprises 15 employees (4 of whom are foreign born) who are tasked with preparing reports on street cleanliness and carrying out awareness raising campaigns with individual households, hotels and shop keepers in the neighbourhood.

Working alone or in pairs, the dynamizers aim to “inform and galvanise” their neighbourhoods.

Overall, employment as a dynamizer comprises two dimensions:

**1. Local relationship building:** Within the Central District of Madrid the dynamizers are responsible for building relationships with local business owners and households in order to promote the initiative and outline the programme’s goals and objectives. Likewise, they are responsible for monitoring public health and waste management issues as well as reporting more generally on attitudes towards the environment.

**2. Ongoing Communication:** Dynamizers are also involved in running regular information and awareness-raising activities, engaging directly with households, employees and business owners in the district. This involves preparing and translating information leaflets for the different activities and programmes proposed by local government, promoting and demonstrating good practice in the areas of recycling and waste management (pest control, food storage, recycling, etc.).

Beyond contributing to increased environmental awareness, the dynamizers fill a gap in municipal action. For many residents of Madrid, the municipality can appear somewhat detached from their day-to-day reality. Against this, the dynamizers represent a human link between the municipality and the inhabitants, helping to strengthen the bond between residents and their city.

As one dynamizer says: “We want to foster a sense of belonging, of rooting and making the Centro District the hallmark of Madrid”.

Embracing Madrid’s diverse population, the programme has reserved a number of places for speakers of Bengali, Wolof and various Chinese languages in order to improve communication lines between the municipality and the area’s diverse population. In addition to strengthening the programme’s inter-cultural dimension, this targeted approach recognised the need to adapt municipal messaging to forms accessible to all members of Madrid’s diverse society. Capable of translating between their native language and Spanish, the dynamizers have become a crucial resource for awareness-raising campaigns. Multi-lingual and trained in conflict mediation, the dynamizers are valuable interlocutors for their communities, playing a part in improving inter-cultural communication within the city.

## FINANCING AND RESOURCES

Coordinated by municipal officers, the total budget for the ‘Cuidamos Centro’ programme is €225,000. This cost is born entirely by the municipality. Participants in this initiative are employed by the Madrid Agency for Employment and receive a nine month contract worth €700 per month. During the 9-month pilot, 4 migrants were employed as dynamizers, accounting for a proportional cost of €60,000.

## RESULTS AND IMPACTS

The impact of the Cuidamos Centro pilot programme can be assessed at different levels. On the one hand is the impact of the nine-months pilot on the dynamizers themselves. In that respect, the project has developed two streams for monitoring its impact: 1. Assessment by programme staff of skills acquisition by individual dynamizers (evaluated via direct assessment tests and on-street observations); 2. Assessment by dynamizers themselves regarding both their satisfaction with the programme and recommendations for future development.

On the other hand, is the impact of the pilot programme on the inclusion of groups (including migrants) vulnerable to exclusion at the city level. In particular, the project sought to explore the possibility of working with such groups in order to improve communication and relationships between inhabitants and local authorities. It did so by creating opportunities for their participation in city-management. In practice, the pilot has tested and demonstrated the value of an innovative approach that recognises migrant cultures and languages and seeks to incorporate these into every day city planning practices and service delivery. The work of the dynamizers has helped to build relationships between inhabitants, settled communities and local authorities, by creating new and diverse channels of communication and translating / adapting local policies.

Finally, each of the dynamizers has had an opportunity to shape their role, based on

their unique opportunities, potentialities and limitations and their connection with specific neighbourhoods/communities. In turn, this approach has enabled the dynamizers to encourage diverse city centre communities to take collective responsibility for their environment.

## BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES

Although offering an innovative approach to the inclusion of vulnerable groups in municipal employment – and migrants inclusion in particular – the **“Cuidemos Centro”** project has so far been limited in duration. As a result, the level of interaction between dynamizers and full-time municipal employees working on related issues has been minimal. Going forward, efforts should be made to draw stronger linkages between programme participants and full-time staff working on similar issues to embed the dynamizers’ innovative engagement practices. Similarly, the lack of a systematised post-project follow-up obscures the extent to which such initiatives have helped facilitate long-term inclusion of dynamizers into the labour market.

Despite the above shortcomings, the employment of migrants as dynamizers has nonetheless offered a number of key learnings for the City of Madrid, both in terms of how to engage diverse employees and, in turn, how to harness the potential of diversity to create new communication channels between residents and City Hall. The project has demonstrated that without active migrant participation, awareness raising

messages may fail to resonate with those marginalized groups understandably wary of local authority structures. To entrench the programme’s exciting potential, there is a need to resource and scale up the initiative, incorporating foreign-born migrants as community facilitators responsible for a range of municipal issues.

## LESSONS LEARNED

Migrants, especially those in irregular situations, are often reluctant to interact with local authorities [or report exploitative labour situations]. To this end, improving communication and trust between migrants and city authorities is a crucial first step towards migrant integration.

The dynamizers employed within the **‘Cuidemos Centro’** project highlight the value of engaging migrants to act as mediators between the local authority and their respective communities. Dynamizers have helped translate official information into foreign languages, in the process building bridges across inhabitants of different nations and cultures that share the same space. The **‘Cuidemos Centro’** programme has focused on the human aspect of this coexistence. In that sense, it speaks to the importance of developing alternative spaces and methods of communication in the context of diverse cities.

This initiative shows an opportunity for integration that starts from the human rights perspective. Not only does it build new opportunities for migrants to access the

formal labour market, it also promotes the idea that migrants have a significant role to play in supporting local planning and social cohesion objectives. Although small in scale in its pilot phase, this initiative offers an exciting opportunity for upscaling and transferability, both within Madrid and to other urban contexts.

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This case study has been prepared by Paz Mackenna under the coordination of Barbara Lipietz and Tim Wickson from the Bartlett's Development Planning Unit (DPU), University College of London (UCL) and the UCLG Committee on Social Inclusion, Participatory Democracy and Human Rights, in the framework of the MC2CM Project.



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@urban\_migration  
 icmpd.org/mc2cm  
 mc2cm@city-to-city.org