



# MERGING

INTEGRATION FOR MIGRANTS

**HOUSING FOR IMMIGRANTS  
AND COMMUNITY INTEGRATION  
IN EUROPE AND BEYOND:  
STRATEGIES, POLICIES,  
DWELLINGS, GOVERNANCE**

## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



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MERGING CONSORTIUM MEMBERS



→ THE MERGING PROJECT

→ ANNA  
a houseboat  
in Gothenburg (Sweden)

→ CALIU URBÀ  
8 flats in the city center  
of Valencia (Spain)

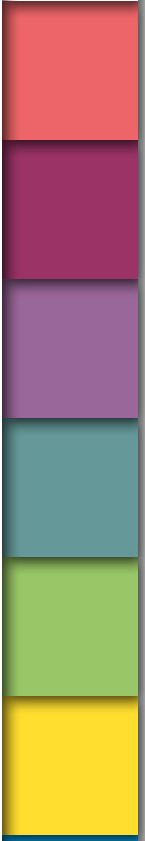
→ COCON  
a village of 7 tiny houses  
in the 8<sup>th</sup> district  
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→ RECOMMENDATIONS  
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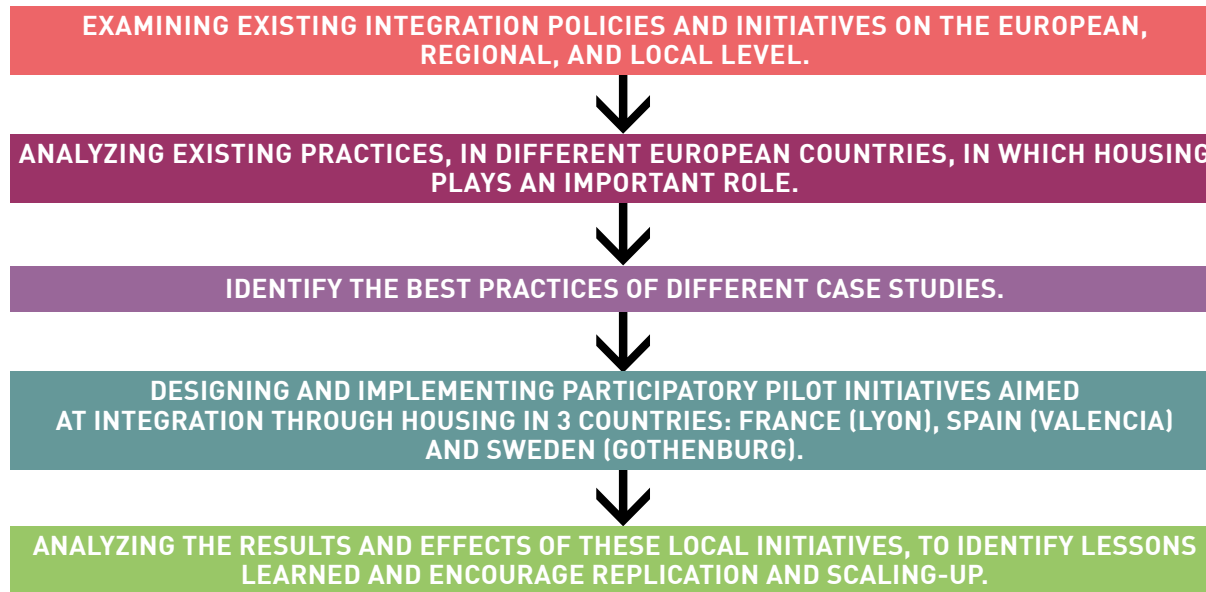
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changing the narrative



# THE MERGING PROJECT

MERGING is an international and interdisciplinary study of migrants' integration through participatory housing initiatives, coordinated by University Jean Moulin Lyon 3 (France) and gathering 10 universities and organisations from the civil society from 6 countries (France, Belgium, Spain, Italy, Sweden, and Switzerland). The project has been awarded 3M€ by the European programme H2020.

**FROM JANUARY 2021 TO APRIL 2024, MERGING HAS BEEN DEVELOPED THROUGH DIFFERENT STEPS:**



With this brochure, we aim to demonstrate the factors which favour or block pathways for migrants' integration through housing and to propose practical recommendations.

# CONCRETELY, WHAT DID WE ACHIEVE?

The internal participative evaluation that has been led assessed that the three pilot projects:

→ **Address real needs**, with a **holistic strategy** combining housing, social follow-up, and social integration (relevance).

→ Are articulated and/or in line with **different level-governance frameworks, local legislation, and local dynamics** (coherence).

→ Address **various and complex issues** by proposing **innovative social models** (innovation).

→ Have used their **budget efficiently** and managed to optimize the costs (efficiency).

→ Have realized **significant achievements**, considering the short timeframe and the technical and political challenges to face (effectiveness).

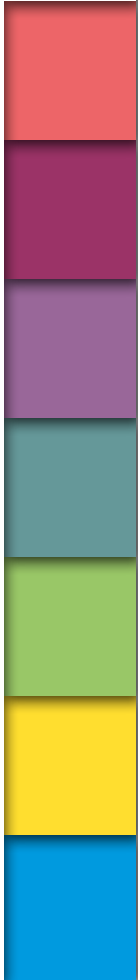
→ Propose **new housing models adapted to local issues**, promote participation, strengthen skills, change perceptions and behaviors.

→ Ensure that the beneficiaries **live in better conditions, improve physical and mental well-being, evolve** positively, and support them to project themselves in the future (impact).

→ Have produced learnings and achievements that **can last thanks to capitalization, promotion, developing various scenarios** at the local level and **relying on the mobilization** of the local networks (sustainability).



# 3 INNOVATIVE HOUSING SOLUTIONS TO WELCOME MIGRANTS



# ANNA, A HOUSEBOAT IN GOTHENBURG (SWEDEN)



ANNA is an individual accommodation in an ecological floating home, preserving personal privacy and autonomy while reducing human carbon footprint. Located close to the historical centre of Gothenburg, it facilitates access to employment and urban amenities in a neighbourhood with a fierce sense of community.

Regarding the shortage of available housing or land in Gothenburg, ANNA is providing an innovative response to the local housing crisis, as well as a proof of concept that is to be disseminated thanks to further partnerships that have been consolidated through on-site collaborative workshops.

This pilot project supported the consolidation of a network of social companies, NGOs, professional orga-

nisations, individuals and neighbours to support its development and future tenants.

Several steps were necessary to design and implement this initiative, and much especially:

→ **The elaboration of feasibility studies to define** what could be built according to budget and existing urban and building regulations.

→ **The mobilization of a supportive network** of individuals and organisations to co-design the house and establish building methods, including participatory construction.

→ The exploration of potential **locations** and the negotiations concluded to obtain a rental agreement with a private landlord.

→ **The collaboration** with an organisation specialised in rental management and/or social support that facilitated connections between refugees, newcomers, and housing landlords in the open market.

→ **The collaboration with Gothenburg city council** to be part of the development of ecological marinas dedicated to social and environmental sustainability.

In the coming months and years, ANNA will be part of the development of marinas of affordable housings for both students and other target groups such as newcomers, in a movement which has already started in the city.

# CALIURBÀ,

## 8 FLATS IN THE CITY CENTER OF VALENCIA (SPAIN)



Caliu Urbà is a pilot experience to support migrants' integration by providing a three-years free renting housing, a holistic social follow-up and a support to create links with the neighbourhood. It is constituted by eight refurbished flats and one street level venue that have been provided by the regional administration and are located in the historical district of Valencia. 18 migrants have already benefited from this project since June 2023.

This pilot initiative was an iterative experimentation that has been implemented through:

→ **The constitution of a follow-up Committee coordinated** by the Univer-

sity of Valencia, and composed of civil society, local authorities, and regional and national administrations that have been involved in the design and monitoring of the project, as well as in the identification of potential beneficiaries.

→ **The furnishment of the flats** donated by the regional administration of Valencia.

→ **The moving in of the beneficiaries into the flats.**

→ The implementation of a **social follow-up** based on tailor-made integration strategy that relies on access to basic services, socio-economic integration but also on creation of social bonds with local actors.

→ The reflection and **inauguration of a common space** that aims at fostering interactions with the neighbourhood.

→ The **development of a community programme** with initiatives that link the project beneficiaries with the neighbours and with the neighbourhood's social networks.

In June 2026, the initial lease of the flats and the common space will end. To ensure continuity, the pilot project is seeking to explore various sustainable solutions such as external fundings, possible merging with other social programs, consolidation of the economic integration or self-funded mechanisms.



# COCON,

## A VILLAGE OF 7 TINY HOUSES IN THE 8<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT OF LYON (FRANCE)



Cocon is a place for mixed living and solidarity composed by seven individual tiny houses and a yurt co-constructed and installed as part of a participatory worksite with neighbours.

It is conceived as a solution for refugees and people wishing to share in a community project aimed at integrating refugees.

This pilot project aims at providing accommodation for refugees and non-refugees, but also to support a local and participatory dynamic through a dedicated animation of the yurt and the open garden.

Several steps were necessary to design and implement this initiative, especially:

→ The elaboration of **feasibility studies** to decide where to locate the pilot project.

→ The **participatory building of the tiny houses** as part of professional trainings sessions including refugees, and their installation on site.

→ The **organisation of public meetings** with the neighbours throughout the project implementation, with the involvement of the municipality.

→ The construction and installation of a **yurt and the garden design**.

→ The **collaboration with refugees** through associations, to support the settlement of tiny houses.

→ The **hiring of a coordinator** as a site manager.

The local social operator, Foyer Notre Dame des Sans-Abri, will run the village of tiny houses for 5 years.

# RECOMMENDATIONS



Our recommendations come directly from our experience within MERGING.  
They are addressed to decision-makers at the local, national and European levels,  
and they can be summed up in 3 key messages:

- SUPPORT INNOVATIVE INITIATIVES
- THINK IN THE LONG RUN
- DEVELOP RELATIONS AND NETWORKS



# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOCAL DECISION-MAKERS

## SUPPORT LOCAL INNOVATIVE HOUSING INITIATIVES

### RECOMMENDATION 1

#### → OFFER STRATEGIC SUPPORT TO PILOT INITIATIVES ON MIGRANTS' INTEGRATION

*What we did in Valencia: the support of the regional administration as a factor of success*

The Caliu Urbà project in Valencia benefited from the support of the regional administration, which provided seven renovated apartments in the heart of the city, for a free three-year leasing, as well as a common local, for an estimated cost of 72.000€. The support of the regional administration was not only material but also strategic since their representatives participated in the global dynamic of design and implementation. The Municipality of Valencia provided facilities to beneficiaries' registration (a process that opens access to local services).

### RECOMMENDATION 2

#### → DESIGN SMALL, CONTEXT SPECIFIC AND TAILOR-MADE EXPERIMENTATIONS

*What we did in Gothenburg: looking for the very right place and finally finding it*

The three experimentations of MERGING are particularly well-rooted since they have been strongly influenced by provided opportunities and had to adapt to the technical and logistical challenges faced at the local level. In Gothenburg, the location of the houseboat has been identified considering the possibility of accessing a quay, as well as access to sanitation and sewage facilities. It had to move several times, but it is finally located in the right place.

### RECOMMENDATION 3

#### → PROVIDE A HOLISTIC SUPPORT BASED ON HOUSING TO SUPPORT MIGRANTS' SOCIO-ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

*What we did in Valencia: a holistic approach to support integration in all its dimensions*

Besides the provision of a social housing, the migrants involved in Caliu Urbà benefited from a global social follow-up to address their interlinked and targeted needs. After six months, the beneficiaries expressed that they had improved their feeling of safety, as well as their participation to social and cultural activities and their relationships with locals.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOCAL DECISION-MAKERS

## ENSURE A MULTI-ACTOR APPROACH AND A PARTICIPATIVE GOVERNANCE

### RECOMMENDATION 4

#### → MOBILIZE COMPLEMENTARY EXPERTISE TO ADDRESS THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL CHALLENGES RELATED TO MIGRANTS' INTEGRATION AND HOUSING

*What we did in Lyon: when three area of expertise meet*

In Lyon, a social architecture organization, an association and a university worked closely together to develop and implement the pilot. This partnership allowed to mobilize several fields of competences at the confluence of urban planning, innovative building, social work, community management and academical research. The multidimensional character of the pilot project has been assessed as necessary to tackle the main integration challenges.

### RECOMMENDATION 5

#### → ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATIVE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS TO ENSURE INVOLVEMENT, INCLUSION, AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS

*What we did in Valencia: a multi-actor network to support the project*

Under the lead of the University of Valencia, the Caliu Urbà project has brought together local civil society, regional authorities and national administrations who are usually working separately on similar issues.

This multi-actor network supported the joint reflection about the pilot's design and implementation since the participants were involved in making decisions regarding the project (such as the definition of criteria to select beneficiaries). This participative governance ensured that the pilot was well-rooted, sustainable, and relevant, and fostered the appropriation of the project by the stakeholders involved.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOCAL DECISION-MAKERS

## ENSURE A MULTI-ACTOR APPROACH AND A PARTICIPATIVE GOVERNANCE

### RECOMMENDATION 6

#### → ENSURE A FAVOURABLE CONTEXT OF IMPLEMENTATION

*What we did in Lyon: a strong communication towards the local community*

In Lyon, several initiatives have been undertaken to raise awareness and inform about the project.

3 public meetings have been organized with the inhabitants of the neighbourhood; a dedicated mailbox has been created to communicate directly and continuously with them and convivial events have been organized, such as an eggs hunt for Easter.

These activities allowed to engage and mobilize the local inhabitants and to ensure the understanding and the acceptance of the pilot.

### RECOMMENDATION 7

#### → ENGAGE THE HOST COMMUNITIES DURING THE BUILDING PROCESS AND MAINTAIN THIS ENGAGEMENT THROUGH COMMON SPACES AND COLLECTIVE ACTIVITIES

*What we did in Gothenburg: a project supported by the inhabitants of the Ringgön district*

The construction of the houseboat has been supported by “building brigades” composed of 20 local inhabitants of the Ringgön district, accompanied by specialized trainers.

This initiative constituted an opportunity to develop a community of interest on floating houses, to mobilize locals on integration issues, and to gain new individual skills. In Lyon and Valencia, local inhabitants are involved in the activities proposed in the common space.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOCAL DECISION-MAKERS

## DISSEMINATE THE EXPERIMENTATION

### RECOMMENDATION 8

#### → IMPLEMENT EVALUATION, CAPITALIZATION AND IMPACT STUDIES TO IDENTIFY GOOD PRACTICES

*What we did within MERGING: an ongoing support to ensure a participative and continuous evaluation*

As a counterpart of MERGING, COTA Asbl, an organization specialized in providing methodology to any kind of social change actors, mobilized three human resources to accompany the consortium's members in the monitoring and evaluation process all along the project.

They supported the design of a theory of change and a logical framework for each pilot and identify indicators that can inform about progress and gaps. Three specific evaluations have been realized for each pilot, with a strong participation of the stakeholders. A transversal report has also been elaborated, through interviews and interactive focus groups.

### RECOMMENDATION 9

#### → EXPLORE POTENTIAL REPLICATION WITH OTHER PUBLICS

*What we did in Gothenburg: an experimentation for migrants that could be replicated for students*

The ANNA experience raised the interest of representatives of the city council of Gothenburg, which are looking to develop a strategy for development and planning for the usage of non-commercial quays through housing on water.

Through the existence of a network of builders with relevant and high skills, who can help develop housing on water on the technical aspects, the ANNA pilot constitutes a real proof of concept, that can be easily replicated for other publics, as students for instance.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NATIONAL DECISION-MAKERS SUPPORT LOCAL INNOVATIVE HOUSING INITIATIVES

## RECOMMENDATION 1

### → ENCOURAGE INSTITUTIONS TO DEVELOP COMPLEMENTARY HOUSING AND INTEGRATION POLICIES

*What we did within MERGING: a preliminary analysis of national housing conditions for migrants*

At the beginning of the project, six European universities worked together to elaborate a qualitative analysis of the housing conditions for refugees and migrants in terms of accessibility, living environment, satisfaction and affordability in France, Sweden, Spain and Italy.

The objective of this academic study was to gather information about refugees and migrants' needs and share practical recommendations to support and increase the efficacy of public policies that enhance and enable their integration through housing.

## RECOMMENDATION 2

### → PROMOTE HOUSING AS A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT FOR ALL, INCLUDING MIGRANTS

*What we did in Lyon: investing a collective event to promote the right to housing*

In Lyon, Cocon was part of the Biennial of Hospitality, an event organized by the Metropolis and designed to engage a collective discussion around the future of hospitality and housing in the area.

This event is structured around housing as a fundamental right, and being part of it is a way to take a clear position and to link our initiative to the necessary application of rights in the field of housing.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NATIONAL DECISION-MAKERS ENSURE A FAVORABLE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

## RECOMMENDATION 3

### → FACILITATE ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES AND FINANCIAL FACILITIES TO SUPPORT MIGRANTS' SOCIO-ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

*What we did in Lyon: ensuring a continuous social follow-up*

In the Cocon project, a social worker has been hired to help beneficiaries access to basic services and exert civic rights.

This social follow-up is of first importance, since it allows beneficiaries to have continuous support and to be guided in an administrative, medical and professional environment that is somehow complex and new for them.

## RECOMMENDATION 4

### → INTEGRATE MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES AS A TARGET POPULATION IN SOCIAL HOUSING POLICIES, AT THE SAME LEVEL OF PRIORITY THAN OTHER TARGET GROUPS

*What happens in Lyon: securing access to housing for migrants*

In the Rhone area, refugees are considered as vulnerable among vulnerable populations – securing access to 500 social housing in the local stock per year.

This is fundamental not to “forget” this target population while designing housing policies and devices for people in need.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EUROPEAN DECISION-MAKERS BOOST INNOVATION

## RECOMMENDATION 1

### → PROMOTE INNOVATION IN THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF INTEGRATION INITIATIVES

*What we did within MERGING: innovation at the heart of the project*

MERGING aimed at providing a strong theoretical and academic background to support the design of pilot initiatives where migrants' housing is at the core of the integration process. To explore and test new social models and create knowledge, innovation was prioritized.

Each pilot is showing a singularity in its conception, such as innovative buildings for social housing (houseboat in Gothenburg, tiny houses village in Lyon, renovated public flats in Valencia); involvement of local inhabitants in the construction (building workshops in Gothenburg, gardening with locals in Lyon, renovating the common local in Valencia), and new areas of experimentation: on water in Gothenburg, in a central and touristic district in Valencia and in a place previously known for squatting and small trafficking in Lyon.

## RECOMMENDATION 2

### → TEST AND SUPPORT VARIOUS SOCIAL HOUSING INITIATIVES THAT RESPOND TO DIFFERENT CONTEXTUAL CHALLENGES

*What we did within MERGING: three different solutions to tackle the lack of social housing opportunities*

The three pilot projects propose diversified solutions in different contexts, to face a wide range of challenges, especially the lack of available buildings or lands.

Anna managed to create social housings in a place characterized by a lack of land and housing; Caliu Urbà implemented social housing initiatives in a gentrified and touristic district characterized by pressure on the housing market, and Cocon transformed a disaffected place into an open space that fosters mixite between refugees and local inhabitants and support local life dynamization.

As well, attention has been paid to the diversity of the beneficiaries' profile to see what is impacting on whom (such as single mothers, families, single men, people with disabilities, etc.).



# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EUROPEAN DECISION-MAKERS

## CONNECT PEOPLE

### RECOMMENDATION 3

#### → SUPPORT THE ELABORATION OF CONSORTIUM AND NETWORKS FOR MIGRATION, MIXING DIFFERENT SPECIALTIES AND SKILLS

*What we did within MERGING: a place to think, work and learn together*

As a consortium, MERGING constituted an opportunity to create relationships between universities and organizations of the civil society, from six European countries.

With members coming from eight different social sciences, and organizations specialized in social architecture, business development, methodology for social change, project management and international cooperation, the collaboration was an experimental laboratory that allowed the members to learn from each other's expertise and to identify best practises.

### RECOMMENDATION 4

#### → CONSOLIDATE EU-FUNDED PROJECTS' NETWORKS TO FOSTER EXCHANGE OF PRACTICES AND ENSURE SYNERGIES

*What we did within MERGING: a spontaneous collaboration with other H2020 projects*

To put our approach and activities into perspective, links have been created with another H2020 funded project named INTEGRATE.

The two projects participated to a joint workshop to share their conception of the integration process and enrich their thinking with another experimentation. Furthermore, for the MERGING final event, representatives of the EU funded projects MIMY and Embrace have been invited to present their activities, approaches and lessons learned.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EUROPEAN DECISION-MAKERS SUPPORT LONG TERM SOCIAL CHANGE

## RECOMMENDATION 5

### → PRESENT AND HIGHLIGHT THE FUNDED PROJECTS TO EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

*What we did within MERGING: meeting a policy officer to share views and ideas*

We had the opportunity to invite a policy officer from the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG RTD) in our final event and to meet him afterward to present our findings and discuss our preliminary recommendations.

Such a contact is positive for each party and allow both the European institutions and the civil society to understand each other's agenda and possibilities in depth, making the dialogue stronger and the elaborated solutions more relevant.

## RECOMMENDATION 6

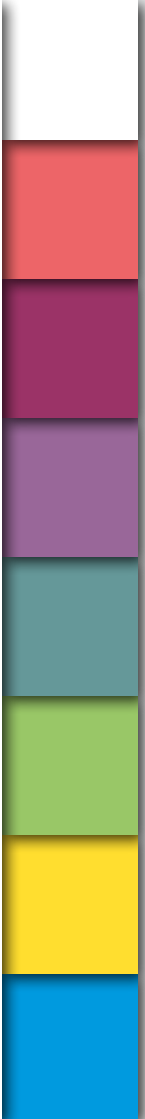
### → DISSEMINATE LOCAL EXPERIENCES AS SOCIAL MODELS FOR ADDRESSING NATIONAL AND EUROPEAN HOUSING ISSUES

*What we did within MERGING: organizing events to advocate through concrete examples*

Several dissemination events have been organized during the project. Our final event was the most important, and we also organized some conferences at a more local level. In Lyon, for instance, we had the opportunity to present MERGING to students at University Lyon 3 Jean Moulin during the festival "Identités croisées".

In Gothenburg, a collaborative workshop has been organized with various local stakeholders interested in living on water, on the topic "Creating climate smart housing and areas on water". Such events are opportunities to present our achievements and findings and to advocate for scaling up this kind of initiatives.

# PERSPECTIVES



# MERGING AS AN EXAMPLE TO CHANGE THE NARRATIVE ABOUT MIGRATION

The academic studies and the three pilot projects implemented within MERGING demonstrate that accessing housing is the cornerstone of any integration process since it opens access to civic rights, enables access to education and to the labour market, as well as supports the development of relationships with locals. Moreover, it means accessing an area of security and protection for private life that helps improve well-being and the feeling of belonging to society.

The project highlights that such integration initiatives are not only beneficial for migrants and refugees, but for the whole hosting community. By strengthening social cohesion and intercultural dialogue, creating local actors' networks, proposing innovative solutions to housing global issues, providing participatory democratic opportunities, and supporting districts' dynamization, initiatives like MERGING participate to enhance the resilience of local communities and demonstrate the positive effects of relevant newcomers' integration projects and policies on global and local development.

**The best practices of MERGING should now be disseminated, scaled-up and duplicated in different areas and towards various publics, to keep exploring innovative social models that meet today and tomorrow's challenges.**





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