



**HUMBOLDT-VIADRINA
Governance Platform**

Manifesto

Relaunching Europe Bottom-Up

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1. Context of the Manifesto

The European Union desperately needs a realistic and human rights oriented border and migration policy. The EU's present approach leads to a dangerous dependency on the Turkish President Erdogan, presumes African countries as safe which are clearly not safe and supposes Northern African countries as possible migration-policy partners, which are neither coherent states, safe or adhering to minimal human rights standards. The idea to "outsource" the migration control into countries outside the EU is not realistic in the long run. As long as there is no guarantee for the preservation of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law it also undermines the fundamental values and thus the credibility of the EU.

The current focus on the political objectives to help overcome the causes for migration, to support countries close to migration origins in hosting refugees and to realize the Europeanisation of the border regime are necessary but insufficient steps.

The urgent need for a sustainable value-oriented migration policy – which in the long run needs to be combined with a European immigration policy – is aggravated by the incapacity to find a European solidary solution for refugee integration. The European national governments presently cannot find a solidary solution within the European Council, however, they hold the legal power to decide on the matter of immigration and the political power on decisions regarding European financing.

The cooperation between the state- and the municipality level needs to be deepened and improved. By showing the possibilities to integrate refugees, cities and municipalities can help their national governments to fulfill their duties. This will have a positive impact on their cooperation and communication.

For many reasons an only top down distribution is condemned to fail. Therefore, we need a bottom-up strategy by municipalities and cities that have an interest to voluntarily integrate refugees for humanitarian purposes and for own prospects.

Several cities all over Europe have already declared their readiness to welcome refugees, including cities in Central Europe. What they need is a publicly financed fund from the EU that would cover two points: 1.) the costs created by integration and 2.) investment in the local infrastructure of the cities for their own needs. Thus, avoiding destructive competition between foreign and domestic poor this strategy would encourage a broad social support within the cities to undertake the long-lasting process of integration.

A European funding tool for integrating refugees which cities and municipalities could apply for directly, would realize three objectives at once:

1. Find a humanitarian solution for the settlement of refugees in Europe,
2. Revive a European commitment by bottom-up citizen participation, and
3. Start a decentralized sustainable growth initiative at local level to overcome unemployment.

The obstacles to overcome are:

- To convince the national governments that this strategy is in their interest and helps them to fulfill their legal and moral duties and to revive their economy without risking to strengthen right populist parties;
- To find simple and uncomplicated ways for financing the integration costs for cities and municipalities;
- To create infrastructures for refugee integration in smaller and medium-sized municipalities as well and thereby make it reasonable for refugees to also settle outside of major cities.

The application of the municipalities should include the following minimal standards:

- In order to reach a broad support within the cities the application should be prepared by a multi-stakeholder governance including politics, business and organized civil society;
- it should include an integration strategy for the whole municipality;
- it should include an anti-corruption strategy;
- it should include a macro-economic idea for creating jobs and sustainable growth

In a longer perspective (for the financial framework 2021 to 2027), the European Council should give the permission to create a fund which makes it easier to European municipalities to apply for the direct and holistic financing of refugee integration and of necessary infrastructure accordingly. In a shorter perspective, a “demonstration” project could be launched by creating a “test”-fund out of resources which have not been spent since the beginning of the European Financial Frame 2013 to 2020.

This could be a decentralized deepening of the EU through citizen’s participation on the municipality level, thus avoiding centralization as well as renationalization.

The conference “Relaunching Europe Bottom-Up” (June 7, 2017 in Gdańsk) was organized to discuss the main goals of the strategy, publicly promote the issue and take a step toward implementing this concept politically. The conference participants agreed on the fundamental ideas of the following manifesto “Relaunching Europe Bottom-Up”. Its aim is to mobilize for the political implementation of the initiative.

2. Manifesto “Relaunching Europe Bottom-Up”

Despite President Trump and Brexit bringing Europeans closer together - the ship EU is still in turbulent waters. Narrow-minded nationalist politicians, frustrated citizens, provocative social inequalities, loss of trust and vision for sustainable solutions are threatening the most important and promising political project of our time. We, the citizens in organized civil society, business, and municipalities have the responsibility to join forces and relaunch Europe bottom-up.

We are aware of the problems, but we are even more aware of the extraordinary chances the European Union has for all of us. And **we have ideas, hope, energy and a vision on how to overcome the present stalemate for a better Union and to newly ignite citizens’ identification with the European project.** As a promising first step and as **an answer to the most urgent challenge for European solidarity,** we want to introduce an open-minded, comprehensive, inclusive and realistic European **funding for Refugee Integration which would help with voluntary decentralized relocation.**

A new European holistic approach that supports municipalities with integration and local development and gives direct access to EU-Funds opens the chance to transform the challenge of the incoming refugees into a European Growth Initiative – benefiting the local communities, leading to successful integration and strengthening the European Union.

Our idea is in line with initiatives of the European Commission¹, the European Parliament², the European Social and Economic Committee³, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions⁴, the EUROCITIES, the Solidarity Principle⁵ and the LEADER/CLLD⁶ method in European Regional Policy. **It helps the necessary simplifying of European financing and reduces double-spending effects that occur through overlapping areas of different funds.**

What do we need practically for relaunching Europe bottom-up? Starting with the next European Union Financial Framework in 2021, which is now in preparation, **the European Union should create a publicly financed fund for which municipalities can apply and receive direct and holistic financing for the refugee integration and – additionally to be**

more inclusive – the communities’ general social integration and economic development. Creating such a fund would also be in line with the Commission’s recent reflection paper on the “Future of the EU Finances” (June 2017) stating that “(...) it is necessary to shift towards new, sustainable growth models that combine economic, social and environmental considerations in a holistic and integrated way.”

To generate as **much support** as possible **from the broad community**, the application should be prepared by a **multi-stakeholder-group of representatives of the community**, organized civil society (including refugee representatives, social partners and religious groups), and business (thus benefiting in the long run from an enlarged and qualified work force). These multi-stakeholder groups should be built on equal footing of all partners, so that **sustainable solutions based on common ownership** can be found and implemented.

The application from municipalities for these holistic EU funds should include:

- a plan for the **integration strategy** and for the general communal development strategy (sustainable infrastructure, education, employment, housing, cultural and sport activities, “ownership” opportunities, etc.)
- a **timetable** for the strategy’s **implementation**
- a **comprehensive input from business communities**. For the project to achieve its purpose, a detailed action plan including employment schedule, internship programs, procedures of mutual professional qualification recognition, training for newcomers (e.g. cultural, language) should be drafted.
- **expected results** (sustainable growth and employment benefits, general social and cultural integration and future development perspectives of the community, share of best practices between bodies for a better integration, added value for Europe by solidarity and participatory identification)
- **evaluation procedures**
- an **anti-corruption strategy** (for instance the “Integrity Pact” of Transparency International which has experience in that field).

The decision about the municipalities’ applications should also be made by multi-stakeholder governance.

The European Commission should initiate a “demonstration project” soon that follows these promising parameters. The preparation of the new Multiannual Financial Framework (2021-2027) is an excellent opportunity for this. There are several options that can be combined to initiate this process. In their recent reflection paper on the future of EU finances, **commissioners Corina Crețu and Günther Oettinger** underlined: „The design of the future EU budget must be underpinned by a clear vision of Europe’s priorities and a determination to invest in the areas that will secure economic strength, sustainability, solidarity and security for the future.“ **They also suggested radically new financing instruments for the new financial framework in order to be more effective, especially in overlapping programs.**

- Corresponding to the idea of president Juncker, who has suggested to create a Fund out of not used financing from the AMIF Fund in order to help Italy with the management of refugees, the European Commission could also build a fund by combining remaining funding of several Directorates-General. This would help to test the holistic approach for integration and development on the municipality level as well as its new evaluation following the multi-stakeholder governance principle.
- A new fund could also be financed by a new initiative for investment as proposed by the recently elected French president Emmanuel Macron, by the former Italian Prime Minister Renzi and other European politicians to overcome unemployment as soon as possible.

All ideas fit together very well and could lead to a successful combination of integration and municipalities’ development. Municipalities all over Europe could apply under the above-mentioned conditions.

We invite the European Commission, the European Parliament and the European Council to follow our proposal and to realize it as soon as possible. **We have a new chance** – all we need is **the political will of the EU to seize this opportunity and relaunch Europe bottom-up.**

1 [Reflection Paper “Future of EU Finances”](#): The European Commission suggests that the EU could create “a ‘single rule book’ governing all processes and instruments or application of the same rules and conditions for the same type of project. This can lead to a reduction of the administrative burden for beneficiaries (with the help of simplified rules) and promote better coherence across different EU investments.

[Pact of Amsterdam \(2016\)](#)

2 [The situation in the Mediterranean and the need for a holistic EU approach to migration](#): The European Parliament welcomes the additional funding provided by the EU in 2016 to deal with migration. However, it touches on the issue that this funding represents funding under the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) (2014-2020). The EP stresses that medium- and longer-term funding need to be addressed and accompanied by a revision of global resources to guarantee funding in the long term.

3 [Opinion of the EESC on "Integration of refugees in the EU" \(exploratory opinion\)](#): The EESC stresses the importance of housing and employment for successful integration. It also calls for direct economic aid for every refugee and migrant for member states of initial reception (Malta, Spain and Greece) and an increase in financial resources of the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) as well as the Regional Development Fund.

4 [Nicosia Call April 2016](#)

5 [Article 80 TFEU](#) “On the principle of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility, including its financial implications, between the Member states.”

6 [LEADER/CLLD](#): LEADER is a local development method that aims at developing integrated bottom-up approaches to engage local actors in the design and delivery of strategies, decision-making and resource allocation for the development of their rural areas. It has been in use for 20 years. In the 2014-2020 programming period, the LEADER method has been extended under the broader term Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) to three additional EU Funds (European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund).