



Vlaanderen
is divers

Empowering newcomers through social integration and networking initiatives

AGENTSCHAP
INTEGRATIE &
INBURGERING



Medegefinancierd door
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IEDEREEN MEE



Sint-Niklaas
Oh zo verrassend

European Conference
19 april 2024

Immigration to Belgium – Lessons (I)earned

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Who are we ?

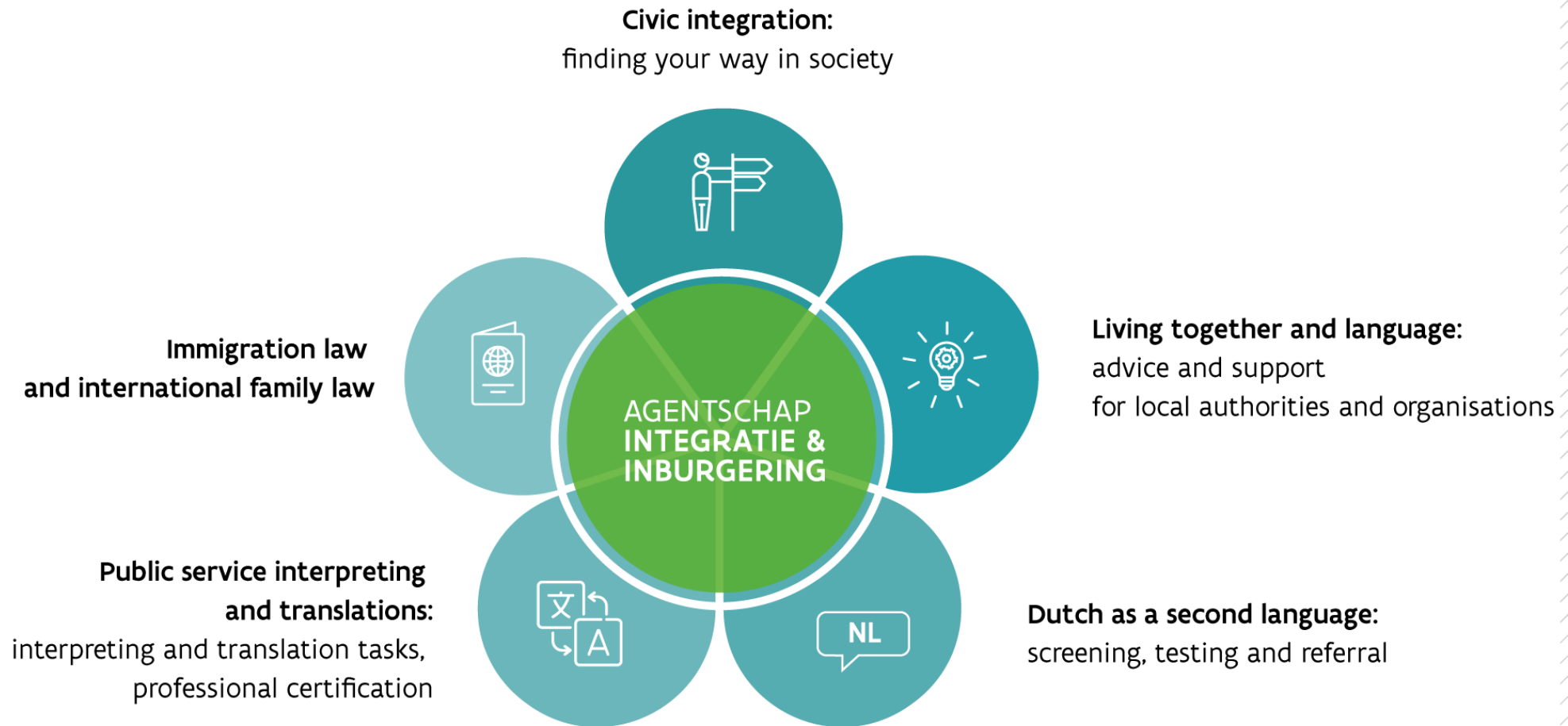
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Who Are We?

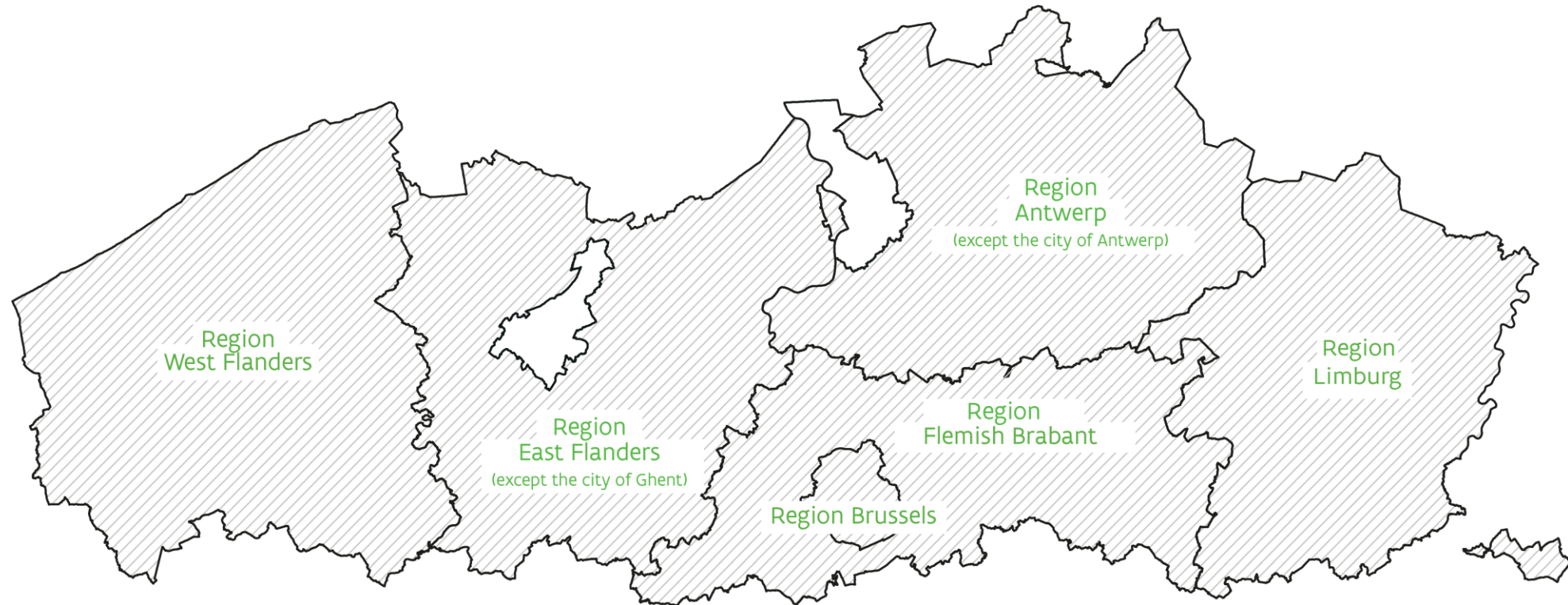
- A **government agency** (since 2015)
- Our **mission**:
implementing the Flemish social and civic integration policy
- Our **clients**:
local authorities, organisations, and citizens
- Independent **partners**:
 - ▶ City agencies Atlas (Antwerp) and Amal (Ghent)
 - ▶ *Huis van het Nederlands Brussel* (Brussels House of Dutch)



What Do We Offer?



Where Can You Find Us?



- About **70 offices** spread across six regions in **Flanders and Brussels**
- **Head office** in Brussels
- **Not** in the cities of Ghent (Amal) and Antwerp (Atlas) and no Dutch language courses in Brussels (*Huis van het Nederlands Brussel* (Brussels House of Dutch))



What is the participation programme?

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PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
IMPROVES
HEALTH AND
WELL-BEING



our help and all you need to start living healthy

What is the civic integration programme (in Flanders)?

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Civic Integration Programme




Social Orientation course



Learning Dutch



Pathway to Employment programme



Participation and Networking Programme

Civic integration programme



CIVIC INTEGRATION CONTRACT



PROGRAMME COUNSELLING



Learning Dutch



Dutch language levels A1 and A2



Course and test



Social orientation



Information on living in Belgium



Course and test



Pathway to work



Information on the labour market, jobs, training, orientation,...



Registration with VDAB/Actiris within 2 months from signing the civic integration contract



Participation programme



Buddy, internship, volunteer work, alternative broadening social network



Attendance: 40 hours



CIVIC INTEGRATION CERTIFICATE



Dutch language level B1 oral (compulsory integration)



Programme Counselling

- Every person integrating has its own **programme counselor**
 - ▶ Point of contact for questions
 - ▶ Director of the track
 - ▶ Coach in future orientation
 - ▶ Bridge builder to society
- Tailored to the **needs and preferences** of the **person integrating**
 - ▶ Testing, orientation and guidance
 - ▶ Assisting with diploma recognition

Who plays what role in the participation programme?

Agencies for civic integration:

- Programme counseling
- Platform 'Ikdoemee.be'
- Provides different formations

Department WSE:

- Flemish government agency
- Accelerating local integration policies (European funds)

Local authorities:

- Director role on local integration policy
- Unlock the offer for the participation programme

Test grounds en decree

2021-2022: 26 test-grounds (local authorities)



January 2023: participation programme started everywhere (legislation)



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Genk

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“Welcome Desk for newcomers” in Genk

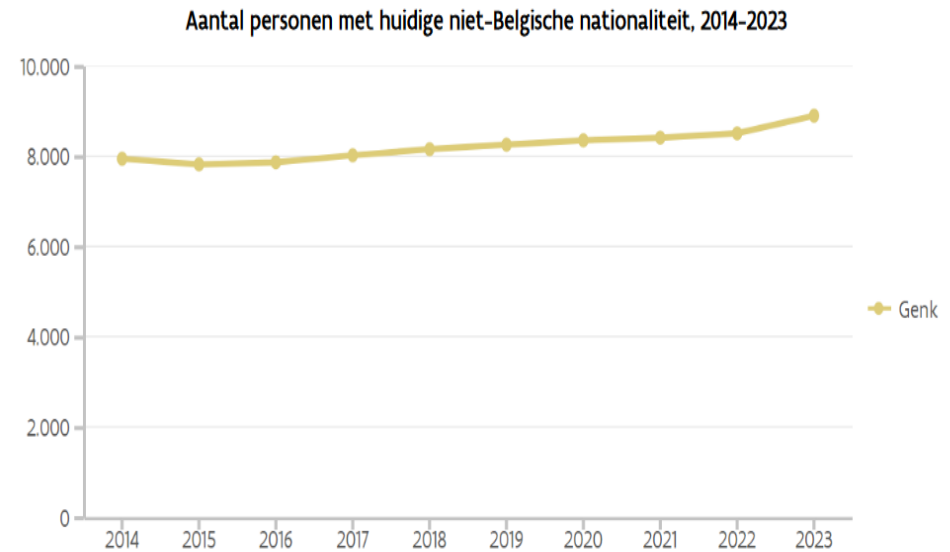


Dr. Adila Aliyeva

19.04.2024

Genk – a superdiverse city

- **67.072** inhabitants and **119** nationalities;
- Yearly approx. **500** new residents;
- **371** people have right for integration and **247** people decided to sign the Integration contact;
- **More than 59.6%** with migration background: Turkish, Moroccan, Italian, East-European...etc.
- **13.2%** do not have BE nationality;
- Neighbourhood identity.



Source: Local Integration Scan

Accessible

via: [https://gsminfo.blob.core.windows.net/\\$web/Rapporten_outputs/JouwLokaleIntegratiescan/GSM_JouwLokaleIntegratiescan_Genk.pdf](https://gsminfo.blob.core.windows.net/$web/Rapporten_outputs/JouwLokaleIntegratiescan/GSM_JouwLokaleIntegratiescan_Genk.pdf)

How to build a cosmopolitan and well-connected city?

- Long-term policy plan 2020-2025:
 - **Policy objective 10:** Based on mutual respect and connection among the population of Genk, we build a city and world together:
 - **Action plan 2:** Every inhabitant feels at home in Genk;
 - **Action 3:** Expand the secondary integration policy with a focus on activation, extra opportunities for practicing Dutch language and self-reliance.
- “Leisure-time coaching for integrators” test-ground project
 - 2021 → 2022 → 2023
 - Changes in legislation regarding the Flemish integration policy (Decree of 7 June 2013 – expansion of the integration process)
 - 4th pillar – a 40-hours traject of social participation and networking:
 - AMIF / ESF call for applications for projects from city governments (Genk being one of the 26 test-grounds in Flanders)

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Welcome Desk for newcomers

2024 → 'Structural anchoring' of the 4th pillar in Genk



The scope

Target group

- Integrators (contract with Integration Agency + 1.1 Dutch language level) + all other new inhabitants of the city

Opening hours

- Tuesdays and Wednesdays

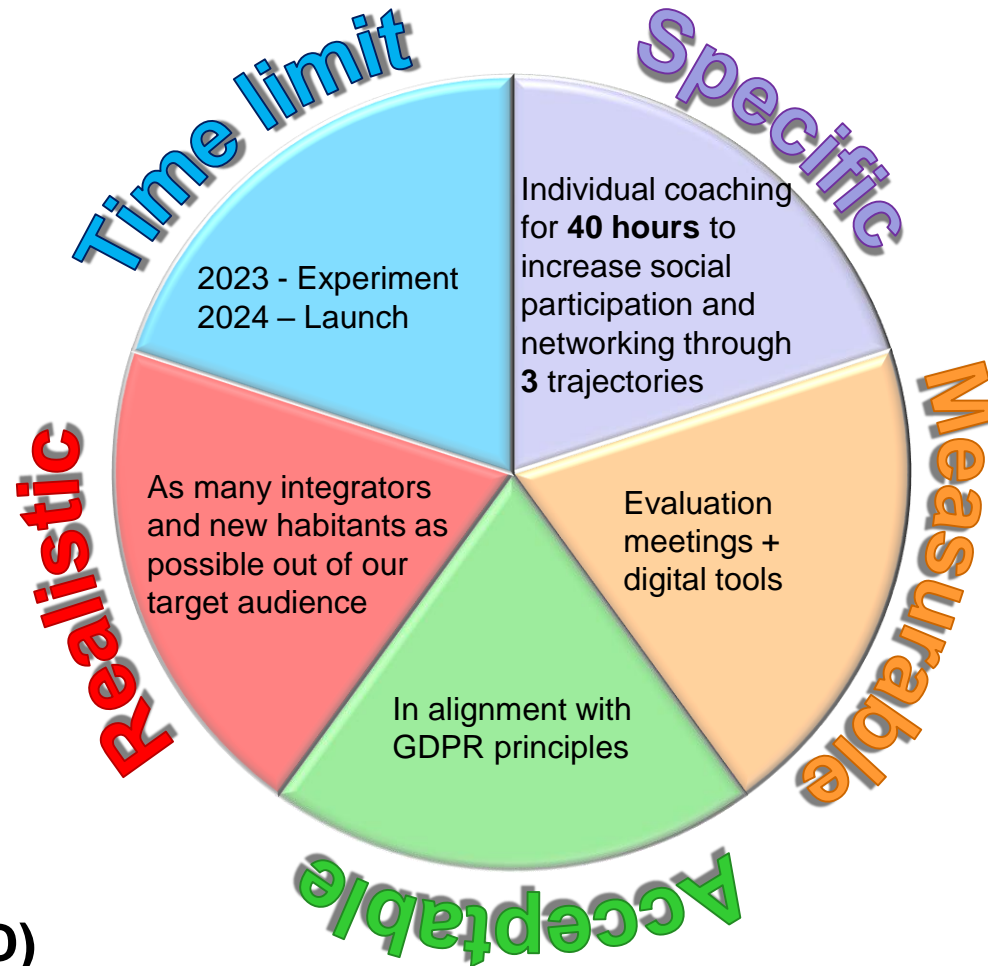
Budget

- City Genk

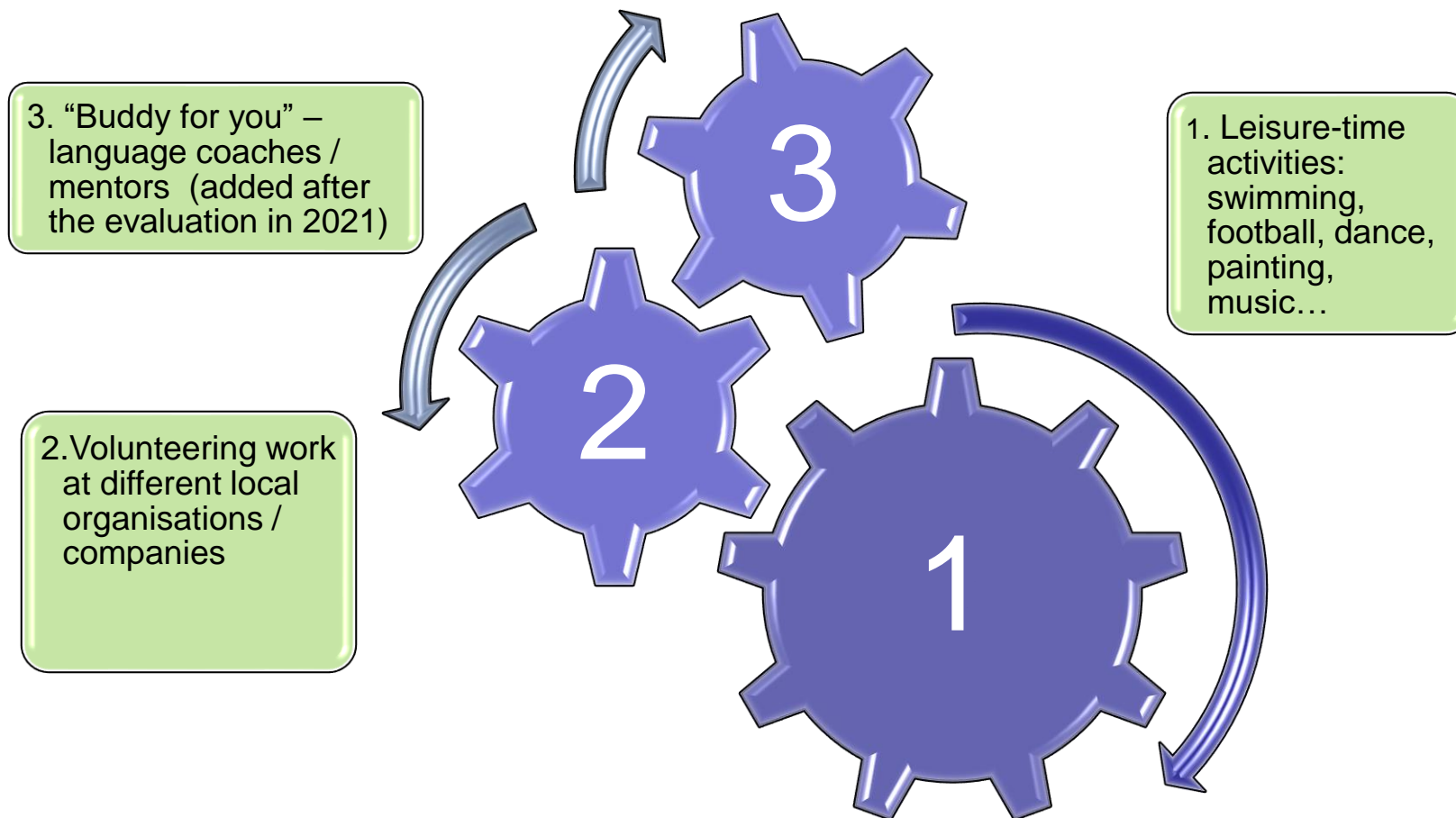
SMART principles

PDCA circle

Human Centered Design (HCD)



PDCA: Planning



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Examples



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PDCA: Planning Project team & Partners

Project-team (3
colleagues) within
the team Diversity &
Equal chances

The Integration
Agency

OCMW (Public Center
for Social Welfare)

Team 'Neighbourhood-
based
approach'

Language schools

VDAB (Flemish Service
for Employment and
Professional Training

Team 'Growing
up in a learning
environment'

Team 'Social well-
being'

House for children
– Campus O3

Team Sport

Team Culture

Public library

Team Youth

All relevant volunteering
work & leisure activities
organisations (+ youth
clubs + GIGOS +
Overkop + Villa Basta)

Working at different levels:

With integrators

- Correct information + Communication to the target group & beyond
 - Youtube + Facebook + City newspaper + Official websites of the city
- Accessibility (WhatsApp + Viber ...)
- Expert as a 'leisure –time coach': inspiring and cultivating self-confidence, empowerment, support in terms of their mental well-being
- Empathie + translation / interpretation when necessary
- Voluntarily stepping-in + receiving candidates via all possible chanel
- First interview (HCD) + “smart screening” + follow up + evaluation
- Individual coaching for 3 months (longer if requested)



Working at different levels:

With other testing grounds (until 2024) + other local governments (since January 2024) at Flanders level

- “Lerend Netwerk”, webinars & workshops;
- Brainstorming within smaller groups of local city governments.

With other departments & services / local partners within Genk

- Building up a network of the agencies & organisations offering leisure-time activities & volunteering work;
- Data collection & analysis + reporting to all relevant partners, to the leadership and to ESF (when necessary) 5 focus groups



Figures:

- 274 appointments;
- 87 integrators under 1 on 1 supervision;
- More than 350 new residents asked for more information

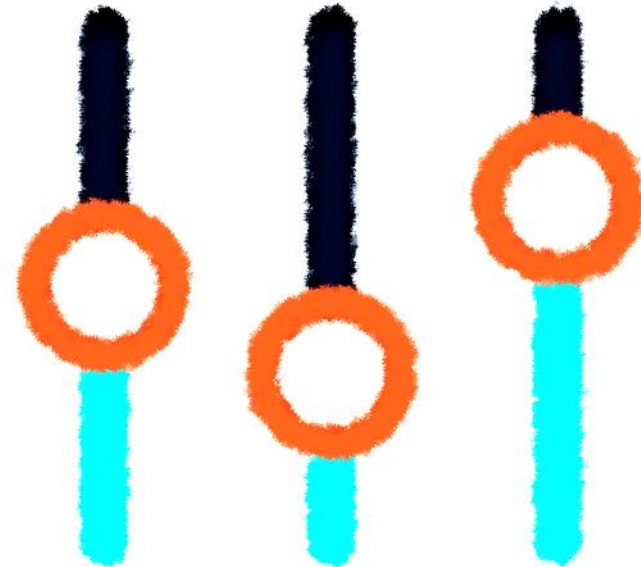
Observations:

- 75% of the participants ask for a buddy / language coach;
- With 1.1 Dutch language level not many integrators are ready to start with volunteering work;
- Family members of the integrators and ex-integrators also ask for support and coaching;
- Integrators with university degrees and who speak other European languages integrate sooner and easier; Sub-target group – a more direct path to VDAB.
- **11** different life domeins where they experience difficulties.



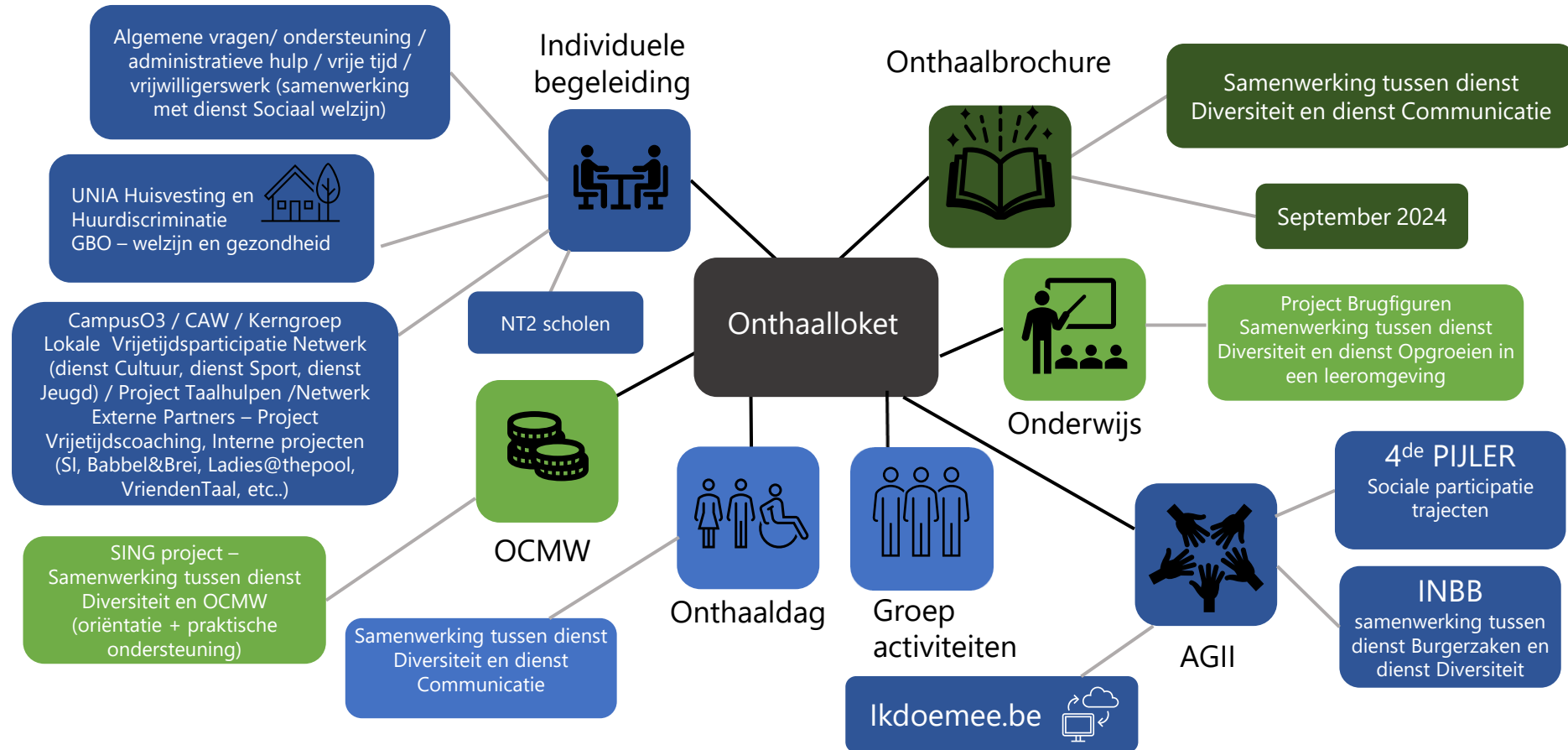
PDCA: Act / Adjust

- More investment into the recruitment campaign for new volunteer buddies;
- Keeping them engaged, i.e., creating alternative projects, activities, networking events during the summer period (june – august);
- Communication: Welcome brochure and Welcome day;
- More opening days;
- Internally more uniform and transparent working and communication amongst teams and departments.



Onthaalbeleid

voor de komende 5 jaar streven we naar een meer uniform en structureel onthaalbeleid in Genk



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The future: “Welcome house for newcomers”

“If your dreams don’t scare you, they ain’t big enough!”

“1 window system” - avoiding double-work for departments & teams + fostering the integration process for every new resident + building a city-identity



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Questions & Comments





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DEMOGRAPHICS

- ▶ 81.973 inhabitants
- ▶ 34,6% with migration background
- ▶ 140 countries of origin: Netherlands, Turkey, Morocco, former Yugoslavia,..
- ▶ 1246 refugees on our territory and 2 Red Cross refugees centers
- ▶ 384 civic integration trajectories, of which 203 civic integration participants are currently following the participation trajectories

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY IN SINT-NIKLAAS

- ▶ In the policy period from 2020-2025: diversity program and strategic program **'iedereen mee'** - **'everyone included'**
- ▶ A new view on diversity towards more inclusion
- ▶ Inclusive where possible, specific where needed!
 - ▶ Also separate policy around: LGBTQ+, age-friendly policy, newcomers, etc.
- ▶ Clearer direction within certain themes: local integration policy in the hands of the city
 - ▶ Working with the wicked problems



VISIE IEDEREEN MEE

Inclusive society

Ensuring equal opportunities

Multiple identities

Intersectionality

4th PILLAR IN SINT NIKLAAS

- ▶ We bundle the offerings for the newcomer in our city
- ▶ Actively contact (leisure) organizations ourselves to ask if they want to open up their offerings to newcomers
 - ▶ Clear agreements
 - ▶ What's in it for them?
- ▶ Also create offerings ourself if there are still gaps: buddy work for newcomers, finance discussion groups for newcomers, bicycle lessons, etc.
- ▶ Currently: still a lot of regular offerings. Goal is to create as wide as possible offer that fit the needs and wishes of newcomers: in co-creation with them!

ORGANIZATIONS NEED MORE SUPPORT

- ▶ Fact: we live in a rapidly changing society
- ▶ Not all organizations/leisure associations and internal departments is up to speed with these changes and do not have sufficient tools to work on inclusion and accessibility.
- ▶ They are looking for examples, ways to make their offer and services more accessible, for everyone, but also specifically for newcomers
- ▶ Some are also not yet aware of invisible barriers that people may experience
- ▶ In Sint-Niklaas, the choice has been made to put a lot of effort into raising awareness about inclusion and accessibility, and to offer support to their partners.

DIVERSE ACTIONS OF SUPPORT WITHIN THE PROGRAM 'IEDEREN MEE'



Learning network



City conversations



Subsidies



User groups



Process management



LEARNING NETWORK

- ▶ 4 X a year for professional organizations that want to learn about diversity, inclusion and equal opportunities
- ▶ Several sessions have already taken place, including on the following topics
 - ▶ Dekolonizing our city
 - ▶ Inclusive volunteering
 - ▶ Inclusive communication
 - ▶ Polarization



CITY CONVERSATIONS

- ▶ Once a year
- ▶ A networking event for residents and associations in Sint-Niklaas
- ▶ To learn about the themes of inclusion, diversity and equal opportunities
- ▶ Through workshops, walks, etc.
- ▶ To get to know different projects in the city and meet new people



SUBSIDIES IEDEREEN MEE

- ▶ To support activities and projects that want to contribute in inclusion
- ▶ Which are not regular operations of the association - innovative
- ▶ For non-profit and associations
- ▶ From 300 euro – 10.000 euro
- ▶ Via low-threshold form



USER GROUPS



- ▶ We also try to align our policies, projects and services with our residents
- ▶ User groups have come to hear the voice of vulnerable citizens as they often do not participate in general participation events
- ▶ Always revolve around a research question from our internal services
- ▶ Specific methodology developed for this purpose

PROCESS MANAGEMENT

- ▶ Supporting internal departments in diversity and inclusion through process management
- ▶ Team local social policy provides process guidance and brings in expertise
- ▶ 4 sessions per service
- ▶ A customized action plan for each internal organization that they actively engage with



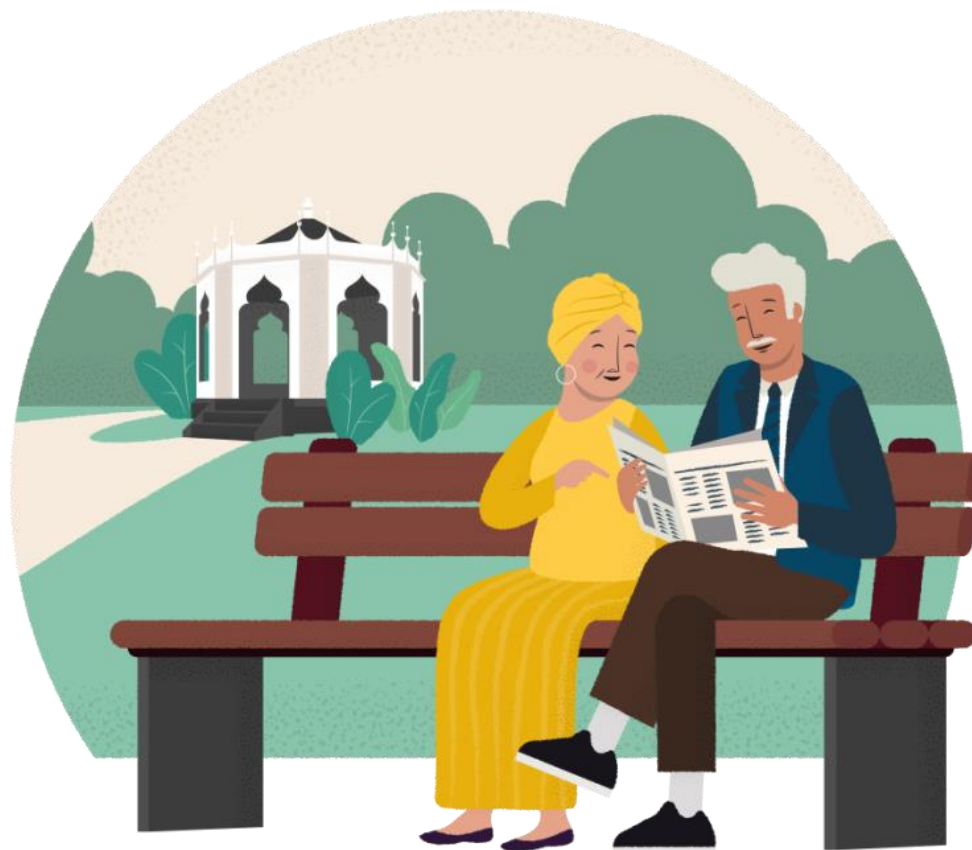
PROCESBEGELEIDING

- ▶ Objective:
 - ▶ Making our internal departments inclusive for all residents
 - ▶ Increase support for the everybody along themes
 - ▶ Ensuring everyone feels ownership of the everyone along program
- ▶ internal departments we have already covered:
 - Childcare
 - Youth service
 - Sports service
 - HR
 - Museum
 - Police
 - Library
 - ...

PROCESS MANAGEMENT

- ▶ In addition, we also provide:
 - ▶ Expertise sharing: workshops "inclusion for beginners," lecture decolonization, accessible events, inclusive language,...
 - ▶ Consultation: internal departments can contact us with ad hoc questions
 - ▶ We make links between different policy themes and documents

QUESTIONS?



EU as accelerator for local integration policy



Strategy AMIF-program 2014-2020

Pilot projects

- Experiments with different types of initiatives
- 26 pilot projects with participation of 55 local authorities
- Learning Network and evaluation by HIVA-Hefboom



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL hiva.kuleuven.be/sites/vierdepiljerinburgering/Inspiratiedag. The page is from KU Leuven and is titled 'Vierde pijler inburgering - AMIF'. The main heading is 'Participatie- en netwerktraject: inspiratiedag'. Below the heading, it says 'Participatie- en netwerktraject (vierde pijler) voor inburgeraars: inspiratiedag 26 januari 2023'. There is a photograph of three people sitting at a table, and a text box that reads: 'Op 1 januari 2023 ging in Vlaanderen en Brussel het 'participatie- en netwerktraject' van start als nieuwe vierde pijler in het Vlaams inburgeringsbeleid. Om dit nieuwe traject voor te bereiden, experimenteerden 55 steden en gemeenten de voorbije 2 jaar volop met dit traject in [proefprojecten](#).' The photo credit is 'Foto: ©Erigenia Sednera'. At the bottom of the page, there is a blue banner that says 'Laat je inspireren'.



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What have we learned?

3 main challenges

- Create a sufficiently diverse offer: how do we enthousiasm local actors “beyond the usual suspects”?
- Every municipality is different and not every municipality has the same expertise/resources: on what scale should the supply be organized?
- Good matching demands a good knowledge of demand&offer: how do we organize cooperation between stakeholders?



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Strategy AMIF-program 2021-2027



Achieving a diverse, high-quality, accessible offer is complex and requires:

- Extensive cooperation from different actors in society

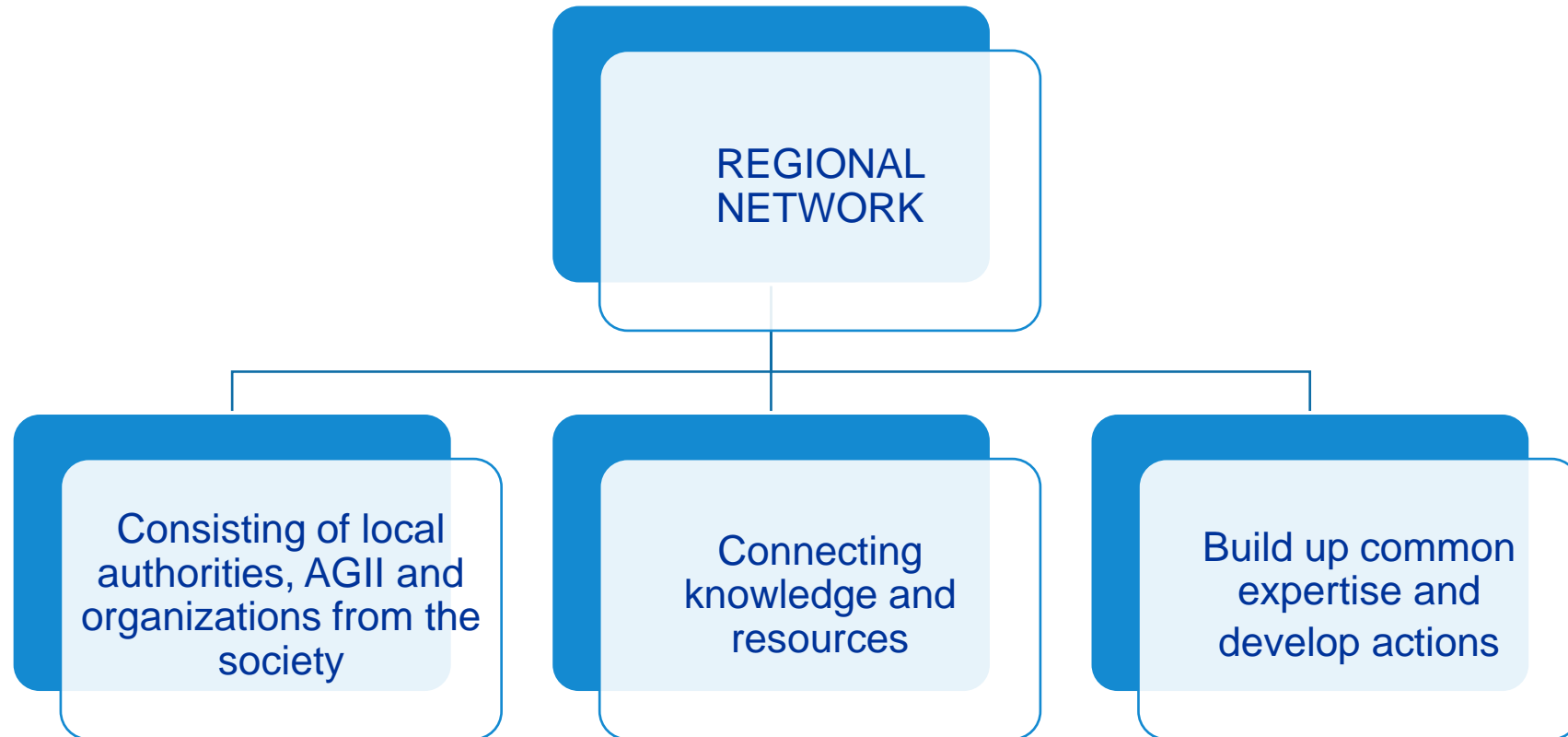
Create time and space to:

- gradual expansion of initiatives that covers the needs
- put the interests and needs of the newcomer in the center
- build up common expertise and tackle common challenges
- taking into account different local contexts/speeds
- limit administrative burden for individual local authorities



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18 REGIONAL NETWORKS



Strategy AMIF-program 2021-2027



18 networks in 15 Flemish regions + 3 cities
(Antwerpen, Gent, Brussel)



Per region
Budget for 2 network employees

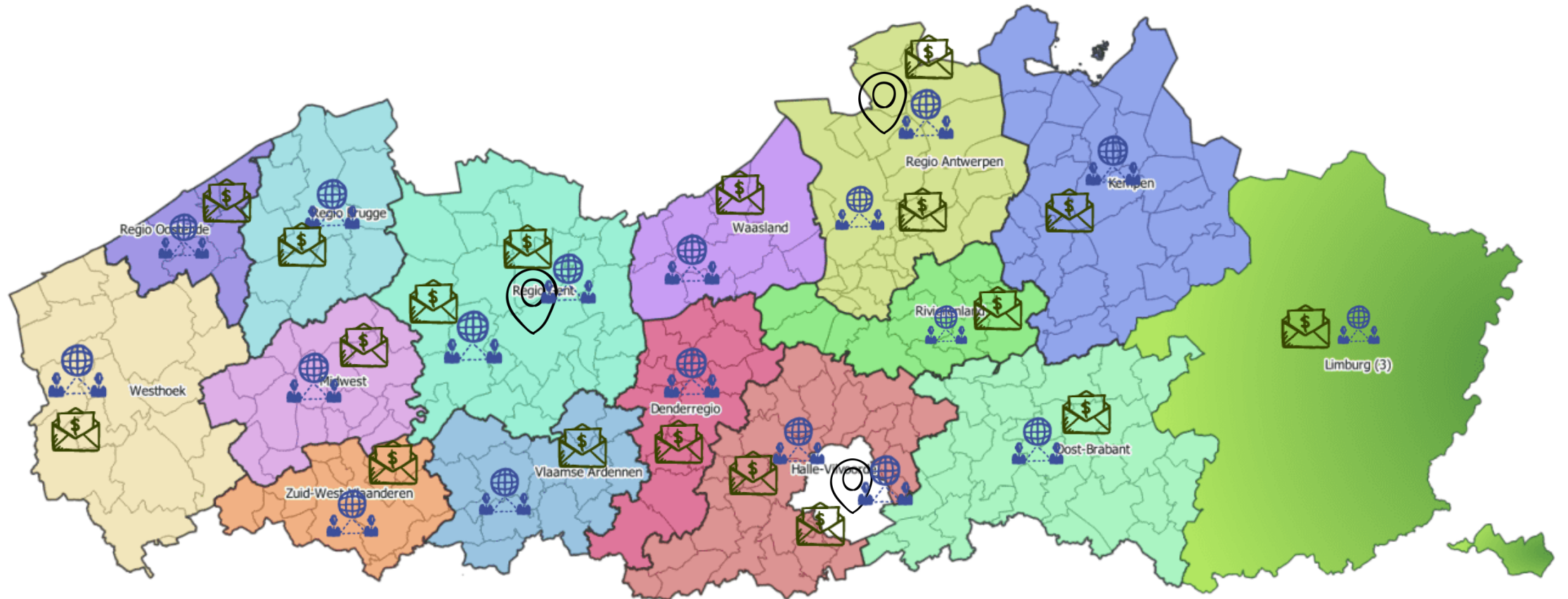


Per region
Budget for action plan



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18 regionale organisatienetwerken



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Where are we today?

Regional network start-up

- 18 regions applied for network startup
- 16 regions network staff active
- Learning process started in all regions

Preparation of regional action plans

- 1 action plan approved
- 1 action plan submitted
- 16 action plans in preparation - submission deadline 15/09



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Experiences from the ground

- ✓ "We learn from each other as local authority and exchange good examples."
- ✓ "We have to sit together with other municipalities. And we get to know them this way."
- ✓ "It is inspiring to see how local politicians and mayors themselves tell the story at the city council for their mandate at the network."
- ✓ "We can really learn something from newcomers. Especially how we ourselves can become more inclusive."
- ✓ "We see different departments in the municipality working together. They are challenged by the purpose of this network to do so."
- ✓ "Working together from a common goal is different from what we are used to, i.e. solving problems."
- ✓ "We thought we had all the knowledge, but we don't. Other stakeholders bring in different views."
- ✓ "Now if we let children come along when newcomers do their internships. Surely we can adapt the working we are used to here to that."



How do we see the future in 6 years?

- ✓ Connect local governments and organizations through organizational networks around this common objective.
- ✓ More citizens and organizations from host society show interest in newcomers coming to live in their city or municipality and offer opportunities for newcomers to create a social network.
- ✓ A diverse, qualitative and accessible range of initiatives that give newcomers opportunities to build a social network and participate in society. The newcomer looks optimistically to his/her future in Belgium and feels welcome in his/her neighborhood.
- ✓ Welcoming society and newcomers connect in a positive way. Tolerance and tolerance increase in society.

More information on the AMIF-program: [here](#)



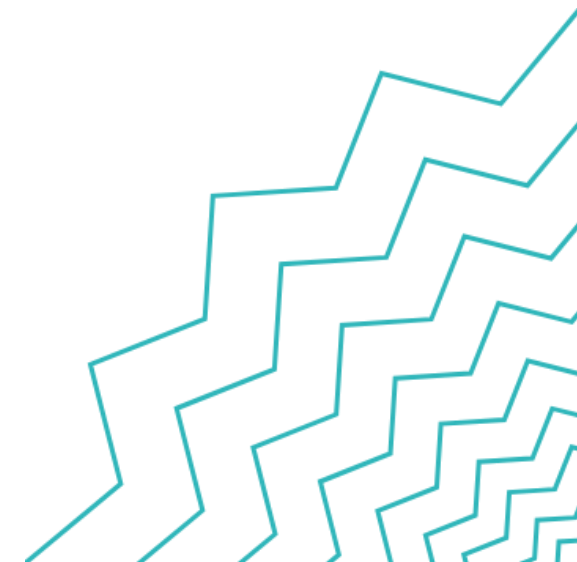
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“Real integration does not happen in the classroom, but in everyday life.”



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Contacteer ons



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www.vlaanderen.be/europawse



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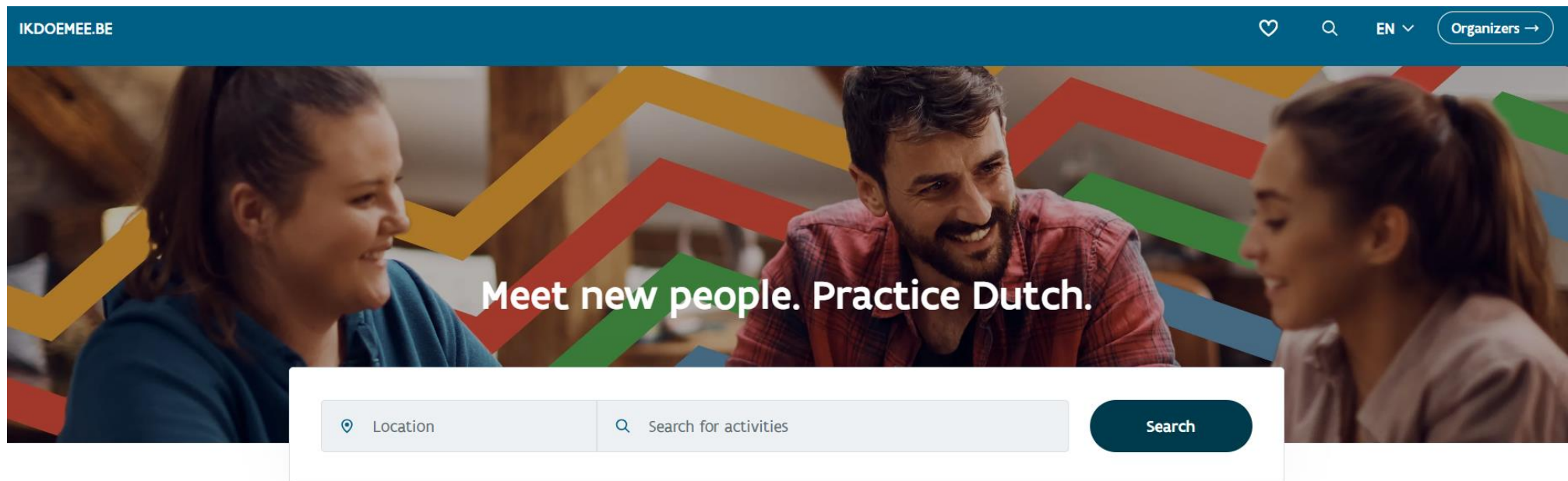
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A short experience with your smartphones

Ikdoemee.be





All activities



Mechelen, België



Search for activities



Fields of interest ▾



Goal ▾



MEET NEW PEOPLE ✕

CLEAR FILTER(S)



153 results



HIKING

FOOD AND DRINKS

TALKING

Buddy werking Samen Inburgeren

📍 Mechelen (0 km) 📅 Flexible

Together with a buddy you will discover...

Level of Dutch

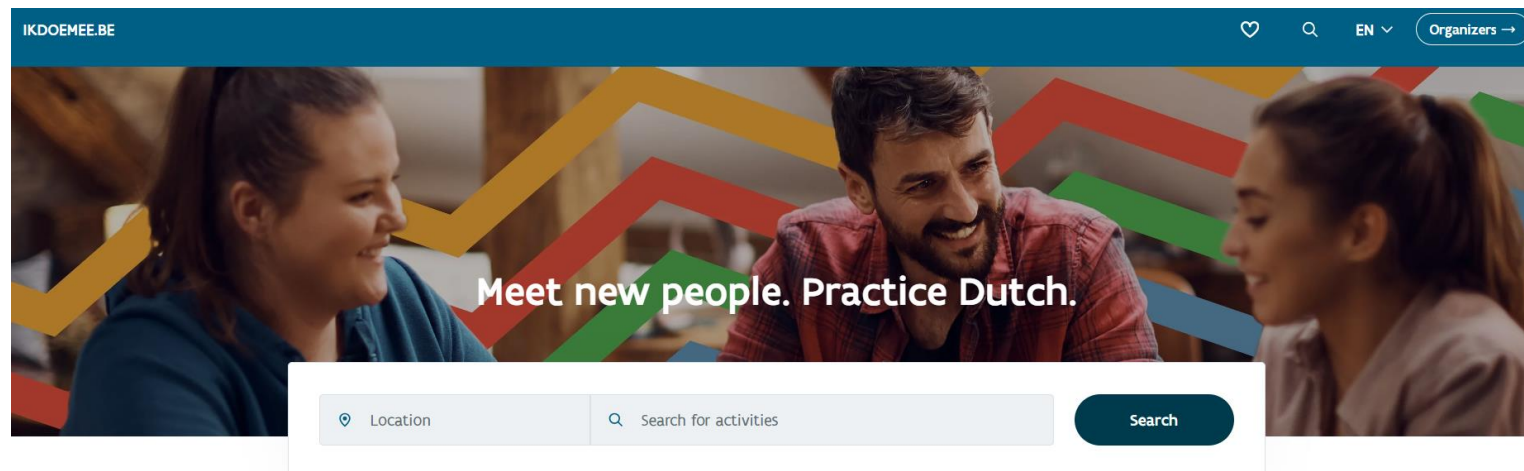
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Ikdoemee.be: achievements

- 1000 activities are published
- 76 local authorities are playing the director role
- 44.000 visitors





Vlaanderen
is divers

Questions? Experiences?



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