

Plan Einstein Utrecht and Groningen region

Third country national's Integration
in local communities





Utrecht 374.238 people

Groningen 206.010 people





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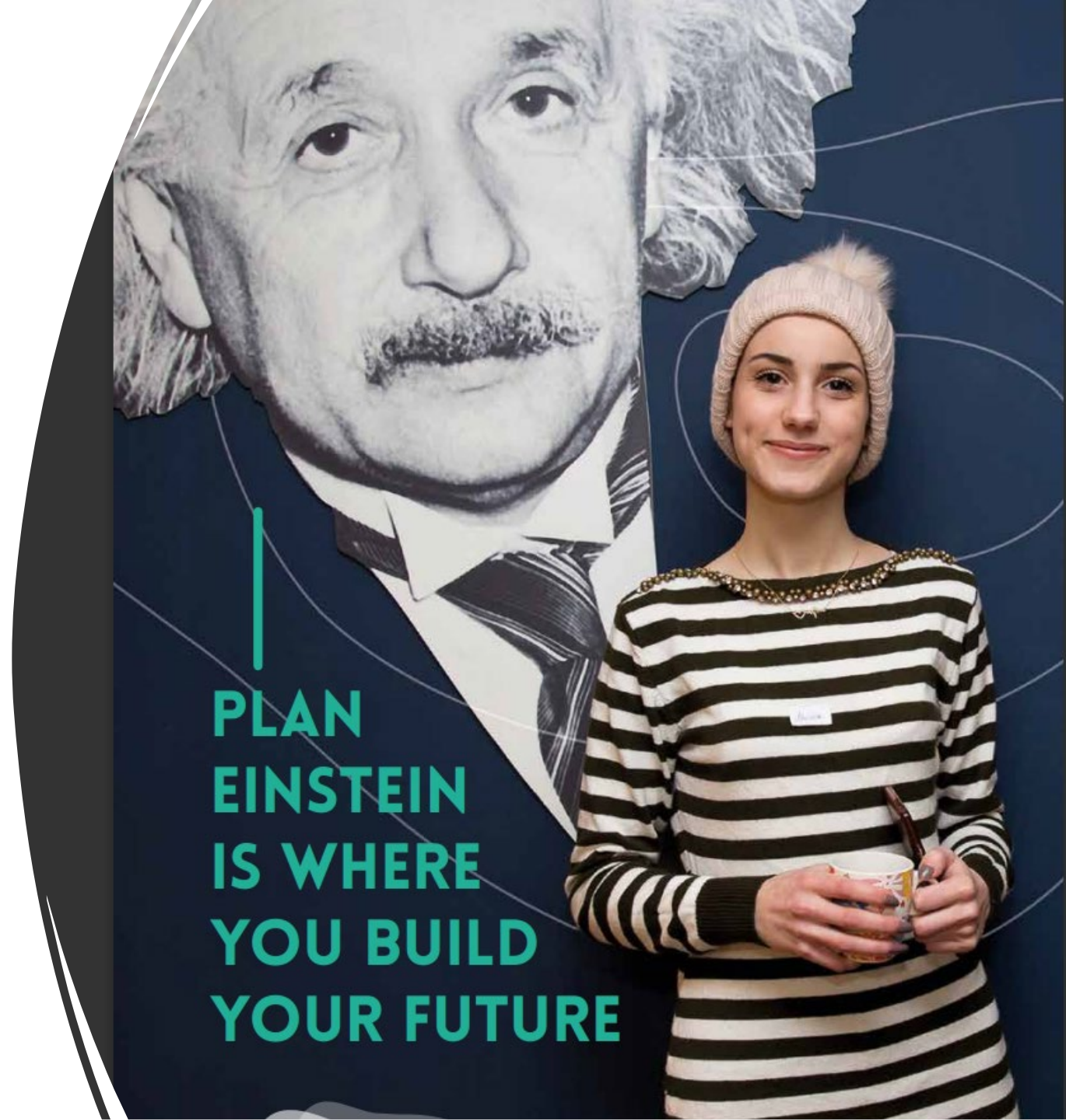
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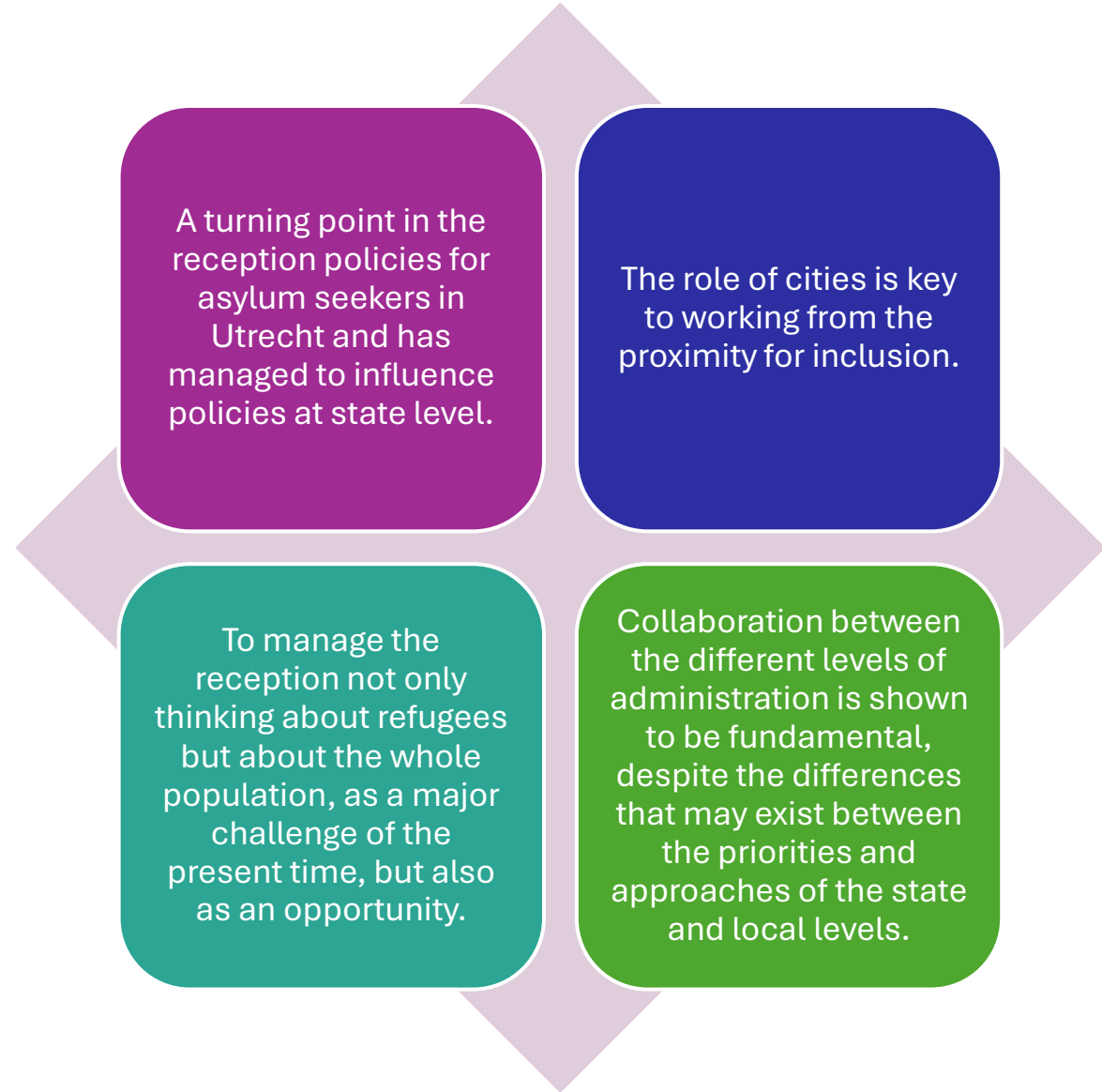
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- The background of the slide is an aerial, top-down view of a city, likely Utrecht, showing a dense grid of buildings and streets. A semi-transparent blue layer is overlaid on the image, and white text is placed on this layer. In the bottom right corner, there are several thick, light blue curved lines that resemble a stylized signature or graphic element.
- Cities play a crucial role in the integration process of asylum seekers. The way we receive newcomers into our society has an impact on its future shape and prosperity. The Utrecht Refugee Launchpad (U-RLP) offers an inclusive approach to facilitate integration from day one, involving residents and social networks within the neighbourhood. The experience of living, learning and working together creates a shared social capital between newcomers and residents to launch social change and provide new work opportunities. People draw strength, inspiration and courage from the many meaningful encounters.
 - Maarten van Ooijen, Deputy Mayor of Utrecht



Challenge addressed

- Cities play a crucial role in the reception and integration of asylum seekers in local communities. Within Europe there has been a growing number of welcoming voluntary activities combined with sometimes openly hostile but at least concerned reactions towards the reception and integration of refugees.
- Especially in deprived neighbourhoods there is a risk of poor social inclusion of new migrants where residents already themselves face problems of high unemployment and lower levels of education.

Turning point in the reception policies for asylum seekers




Develop asylum seekers' social networks with neighbours

The co-housing and co-learning reception facility, known locally as 'Plan Einstein', aimed to develop asylum seekers' social networks with neighbours, while providing opportunities for participants to develop their skills, to enhance wellbeing and improve community cohesion in the neighbourhood.

As such, the project aimed to engage with concerns from receiving communities, activate asylum seekers 'from day one', as well as reverse the negative spiral of boredom, anxiety, and worsening mental health that existing approaches to reception generate.

Solution



The Utrecht Refugee Launchpad seeks to develop a new way to deal with reception facilities for refugees in neighbourhoods by introducing an inclusive approach.

Their common ground is the intent to create a community with the asylum seekers within the neighbourhood. Neighbourhood members are invited to follow international entrepreneurship training or Business English classes together with the asylum seekers, followed by peer to peer coaching and introductions to local businesses.

The results

The results of the project show that the commitment to inclusion from day one is a wise choice that must be maintained, reinforced and adapted to different contexts and profiles.

Promoting open spaces for positive interaction, offering free training, advice and support, and promoting activities based on shared interests and objectives for both asylum seekers and other residents and the neighbourhood as a whole, is the project's DNA.

Beyond the data on the number of participants and the objective outcomes, the results have shown that this approach provides many benefits to favour inclusion and generate a more positive atmosphere that also may be effective to counteract the more negative and hostile narratives about the arrival of refugees.

Holistic approach

- The holistic approach also emphasizes early intervention, where stakeholders are encouraged to engage with the labour market as quickly as possible, with a focus on practical experience and on-
- the-job training. By starting the process early, both challenges and successes can be addressed in real time, ensuring a smoother and more adaptive integration process.

- A key component of the report is the holistic approach advocated for the integration process. This approach recognizes the complex challenges that statusholders face—including language barriers,
- unfamiliarity with Dutch work culture, trauma from displacement, and the difficulty of navigating bureaucratic systems. Milestone Groningen emphasizes that these challenges must be addressed in an integrated manner, combining education, employment, language training, and social support into a unified framework.





MBO Wijkleerbedrijf Entree: Example

A vocational education program that provides students with a practical learning environment. The combination of learning and working are provided in a neighbourhood-based setting, allowing students to gain practical experience while receiving education. The unique value proposition of this programme is the suitability for people with a distance to the labor market, including statusholders, but also Dutch citizens, enabling integration and social connection. Additionally, the type of education is suitable to students with limited understanding of the Dutch language and provides an opportunity for immersion learning (or content-based language learning) that is particularly helpful to statusholders.

Grotius Route:

- Grotius provides students with multiple opportunities to further education and/or career opportunities: continued vocational education on mbo-level 4 for technical professions; the continued higher vocational education for a stronger academic foundation and preparation, and; a preparatory year to ready students for higher vocational education (hbo). For statusholders, these routes provide integration into society through education and employment, access to the labor market, and support and guidance while statusholders are adapting to a new environment.



Conclusion

Early in the process

Interventions

The power of the local
community