



SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

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1. Introduction

The APProach project was a success and leaves a legacy of knowledge, experience and factual improvements in support EU mobile citizens and European citizenship in all our communities.

It leaves a lot in all the APProach community in terms of lessons learned and in terms of potential of development, which some are (a) technological and connected to the Eco Digital platform and (b) others are more in terms of priority highlighted.

The sustainability plan highlights potential and ways to make it lasting in our community.

Added value and how to make it last:

- We formed a community of knowledge and experience: numerous steering committees, endless bilateral meetings, capacity building activities, exchanges and calls and interaction took place to bring all partners on board and to exchange between small and bigger municipalities. This alignment was a lesson learned and brought an immense added value, also among difficulties. The community lengthy exchanges on the way to assess and improve the efficiency of provided services and existing challenges faced by each local authority when welcoming EUMCs. That also brought to different solution as for the Digital ecosystem. The community, and then within the partners themselves, we developed exchanges of practices.
 - It is proposed to continue the dialogue between the partners of the consortium on regular basis to see how they are progressing in including EUMCs in their communities with evaluations of instruments on regular basis. ALDA can use its dedicated working group on citizens mobilization and the one in inclusiveness in order to maintain the connection and the community living and therefore creating a learning community out of the APProach Community.
- The **Digital Ecosystem** is operational, and it was used in different ways. It brought added value for its sustainability with elements which were integrated substantially in the digital instruments of the municipalities. The platform momentarily down (since the 22nd of March 2022 till the 13th of June) unfortunately for the contractual reasons, which were not informed about. **In this way and more, we established new direct communication channels between EUMCs and municipalities involving expatriates.**

- The platform is functioning and is now belonging steadily to ALDA. It is proposed to propose to ALDA members and networks to join the platform and to use it, in the same way the consortium partners are doing, keeping the quality of the offer and increasing countries and cities involved. The partners of the consortium will be solicited to continue to upload it. The new partners will also enjoy the proposals and reflections of the solution manual. In this way, we could use the platform and increase its use.
- We trained and involved local authorities and civil society with more limited results than expected (mainly due to the pandemics) but the global results is still very relevant. We disseminated the projects at the European thanks to broad communication instruments of our organizations. The work on local authorities working in co-creation with civil society addressing the EUMCs proved to be difficult but creating good results. The quality of the platform and the information shared are accessible and interesting.
 - It is proposed therefore to focus on the cooperation civil society and local authorities in advocacy issues when it comes to inclusiveness of EUMCs. This advocacy work will be raised by ALDA in its policy work and shared among its networks and it will be proposed in the policy work of the citizens involved, both at local, national and European level. In this way, APProach will also pave the way to policy actions at every level of governance.
- We contributed to better understanding and implementation of European citizenship.
 APProach in its work and partners work deeply in a better awareness of the topics, addressing civil servants and political representatives, associations and citizens engaged in the consultation and in the training. The EUMCS topics proved to be a good for deepening the understanding of European Citizens.
 - o It is proposed to continue working with the institutions established in our organization of the whole community on EUMCs also through the angle of the European identity and to promote this element. In this way, APProach will be able to contribute to the ultimate goal of the EU policy on the matter which is globally to strengthen European Identify.

2. ALDA and the APProach project's consortium

APProach, for the whole community, IS also this:

- ALDA introduced a new path of work in its organization (see <u>the European Support for Local Democracy</u>), bringing the experience of APProach in its intense contribution to the definition of the New Push for Democracy at the European Commission level but also in the recent elaboration of the one-year consultation with members and partners to the <u>Civil Society Convention for Conference on the Future of Europe</u>. ALDA was the coordinator of the Democracy cluster and contributed actively in the Digital Cluster. We took part in the working groups of the Plenary.
 - ALDA will continue to empower the working groups, members understanding and the dimension of technology and European citizenship. It will also actively contribute to the realization of the recommendation on the matter of the Conference on the Future of Europe, ALDA will be part of the CSOs team watching and overlooking the process of implementation of the recommendations.
- Milan Milan empowered substantially its work on inclusiveness of EU mobile citizens strongly working on awareness raising activities to help EUMCs be informed about their rights and opportunities of participating in the city life. APProach led to two very relevant campaigns (2019 EU parliament elections and 2021 administrative elections) and the instruments brought substantial help to engage individual EUMCs living in Milan and relevant stakeholders as Consulates of EU countries, Private sector (Relocation agencies, law firms etc), Schools and Universities, Erasmus students' networks, thus leading to the creation of a very important network of actors.
 - **Milan** will be involved in the networking activities of the whole consortium and will be solicited to continue the work of the digital ecosystem and to use it for the present and future campaigns.
- Paris used the instruments and capacities offered by the project for setting up and empowering the <u>European's Council</u> of the city of Paris. The call for elections, based on the work of APProach, was disseminate broadly also by other embassies (see <u>Italian Embassy</u>) Attached <u>letter</u> from the Paris international office.
 - Paris will be involved in the networking activities of the whole consortium and will be solicited to continue the work of the digital ecosystem and to use it for the present and future campaigns. Their work with the European Council of Paris will be used for information and case study for the EUMCs inclusion among the whole consortium.

- **Nea Smirne** <u>introduced new elements in their own website and IT</u> solutions to make the community more inclusive and service oriented
 - **Nea Smirne** will be involved in the networking activities of the whole consortium and will be solicited to continue the work of the Ecodigital system and to use it for the present and future campaigns. Their work with the European Council of Paris will be used for information and case study for the EUMCs inclusion among the whole consortia.
- **Lisbon** used the project mainly towards the community of Erasmus students, who are the main EUMC in town, but also addressing the even growing number of expats.
 - **Lisbon** will be involved in the networking activities of the whole consortium and will be solicited to continue the work of the digital ecosystem and to use it for the present and future campaigns. A particular place will continue to be dedicated.
- Etterbeek used immensely the work of APProach for changing the website of the municipality oriented to EUMCs and used other instruments and capacity building instruments (see <u>all synergies and follow up established</u>) See here the <u>follow up established</u> with the implementation of APProach. Attached <u>letter</u> of the Mayor. Together we presented the project at the Civil Society Days of the EESC in 2020 (more in dedicated folders in the annexes).
 - Etterbeek will be involved in the networking activities of the whole consortium. Their approach is focused on a revised website, having a particular focus globally on EUMCs very much present in the municipality. They will continue working on that focus. A proposal for liaising their website to the Approach digital ecosystem is to be considered.
- **Vejle** improved the service dimension of its digital instruments supporting EUMCs to <u>find</u> <u>jobs</u> and to be integrated in the community
 - **Vejle** will be involved in the networking activities of the whole consortium. The work on focusing on jobs for EUMCs will be considered as a driving force of the topics and further developed. It will be solicited to continue the work of the digital ecosystem and to use it for the present and future actions. The topics of job and employment could be added in the topics addressed by the platform.

3. Developments and sustainability plan and actions undertaken by the partners

3.1 Proposal and scenarios for Milan

The Municipality of Milan has a population of approximately 1,394,194 inhabitants, 18.2% of whom are foreigners, resident in the city.

During the 3 years of project implementation, the Municipality of Milan has always proved to be a very active and committed partner of the APProach Project.

Indeed, it demonstrated to be particularly attentive to the topic of the inclusion of European Mobile Citizens (EUMCs), through a remarkable work on awareness raising activities to help them, on the one hand, discovering the potential of the digital ecosystem developed by APProach, and on the other, to inform European Mobile Citizens about their rights and opportunities available to take an active part in the civic and social life of the city.

In light of the positive results brought by these actions and the project in general - despite all critical circumstances and obstacles encountered during the way - the Municipality of Milan and its administration are keeping on working on the APProach project, to ensure the efforts undertaken will be properly capitalized and continue after the end of the project itself.

Concerning its sustainability, the Municipality of Milan has clearly stated that among its priorities, a key point consists of keep feeding the digital ecosystem created by the APProach project. This should thus remain a benchmark for all European Mobile Citizens arriving in Milan, providing constantly updated information to assist newcomers in getting started in their new environment, understanding how to exercise their voting rights whenever it is needed, moving forward with school enrolment, finding opportunities to engage in the social context of Milan, as volunteer for instance and discovering the beauties of the city and other leisure activities, such as art exhibitions and museums.

As mentioned above, the core objective is to continue with the promotion and dissemination of the APProach digital ecosystem, in order for it to gain visibility and become a landing point for all newcomers in the city, as well as for Milan expats in Europe.

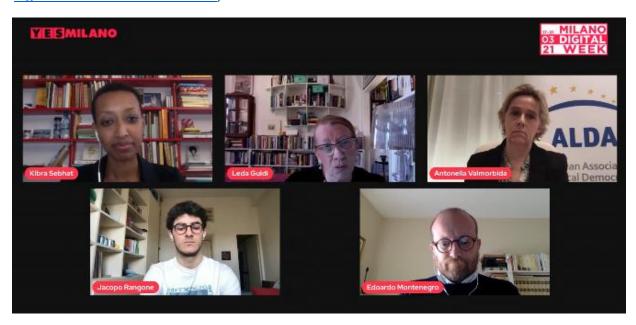
In this respect, various have been the methods used to launch and promote the APProach platform and digital ecosystem:

(1) First of all, a wide **dissemination of communication materials** related to the project and its Platform through offline and online methods, including the Municipality's website and social media;

- (2) Production of multilingual materials¹ focused on conversational English and other European languages, to be used by the staff of the Municipality in welcoming and in the interaction with European Mobile Citizens. The outputs thus produced consist of (2.1) a multilingual "Welcome guide" on Milan services for European mobile citizens; (2.2) multilingual information kits and materials about the voting system and the EUMCs' voting rights.
- (3) A larger-scale communication thanks to the **support of powerful networks**, such as the Lombardy-Region based "Europedirect" (https://www.europedirect.regione.lombardia.it/wps/portal/PROUE/ED/notizie-dall-

ue/DettaglioAvviso/Informativo/News%20UE/ottobre-2019/avv-approach);

- (4) Establishments of **key partnerships**, such as the **Milano digital week**, which featured in 2021 the project APProach and presented it as a good practice in terms of digital transition, inclusive citizenship and civic cooperation and participation (https://www.milanodigitalweek.com/approach-i-cittadini-europei-digitale-partecipazione/). This opportunity represented a significant push towards a greater awareness and a continuous improvement of the project's related actions.
- (5) Local presentations in dedicated events and wide media coverage (https://www.mitomorrow.it/online/primo-piano/progetto-approach/; https://www.radioradicale.it/scheda/631933/approach-i-cittadini-europei-innovazione-digitale-e-cittadinanza-inclusiva)



¹ These outputs proved to be a great added value in enabling the municipal staff to better welcome European mobile citizens when they take contact with the municipality. Disposing of multilingual materials on the precise topics of the APProach platform (getting started, voting system, school enrolment, civic life and social life) and kit about the local voting system with an easy-to-use vocabulary and multilingual vademecums around the above-mentioned topics, in order to explain the local system and regulations to the Eu citizens significantly increased the use and the popularity of the platform itself.

These initiatives have not been implemented only during the project's life, but also and mostly after its conclusion, in order to enhance and support the APProach project's sustainability.

In terms of capitalization of the project, the experience of APProach brought a whole new set of competencies, expertise, and ideas – also thanks to the collaboration and the inputs from the other European Municipalities involved.

Among these, we mention two successful campaigns led by the Municipality of Milan: one in 2019 to raise awareness on the European Parliament Elections in 2019 – at the very beginning of the APProach experience. The other campaign was led in occasion of the 2021 local administrative elections. Both campaigns were conceived to exploit at its finest the tools and techniques implemented for the project APProach. Thus, they represented a substantial help in engaging European Mobile Citizens living in Milan. Moreover, the Municipality undertook a more specific enquiry to reach not only citizens directly, but to also to connect to relevant stakeholders and potential hub of EUMCs. Among these, they managed to involve Consulates of European Countries, citizens' associations, relocation agencies, law firms and other key actors of the private sector. Furthermore, a specific focus was put on the young voters, so that the Municipality tried to enforce precise communication actions in Schools, Universities and carry out campaigns to reach to Erasmus students' networks and other expats in the city – particularly relevant for the 2019 EU Parliament elections.



Concerning the 2021 campaign for local administrative elections, the Municipality of Milan was able to use the results of APProach to implement an original campaign targeting European Mobile Citizens living in Milan, to raise awareness on their right to register and vote or be voted for the local administrative elections. This specific action titled "Siamo Europei e Votiamo a Milano" (We are Europeans and we vote in Milan) was carried out in cooperation with GaragErasmus, a professional network managed by Erasmus generation and dedicated to the promotion of social initiatives. This campaign included the presentation and dissemination of toolkits, social media campaign and the engagement of volunteers/ambassadors coordinated by GaragErasmus, as well as the organization of local pop-up events.

The implementation of this campaign, as an example, has strongly contributed to the sustainability of the APProach objectives and of the project and its digital platform.

Indeed, Milan will continue pursuing, with and thanks to APProach, the projects' objectives in a long-term perspective. The development of a digital ecosystem supporting the integration and inclusion of foreign citizens goes hand in hand with the core priority of the Municipality, namely increase the attractiveness of the Municipality of Milan and strengthen the concept and the practice of European Citizenship.

3.2 Proposal and scenarios for Etterbeek

The Municipality of Etterbeek is located in Belgium, in the Brussels' urban area, with a surface of 3,15 km2 and it counts around 47.000 inhabitants.

Its population is composed by a high percentage of foreigners (46%), of which 36% comes from European countries. The presence of European nationalities in this municipality is due to the proximity with the European district where several European Institutions are located. In addition, being placed very close to Brussels's city centre and to some of the most important Belgian universities, it represents the perfect place to settle for international students.

The diversity that characterizes the municipality of Etterbeek has notably increased during the last 15 years due to the high intra-European mobility of European citizens. Many reasons contributed to the expansion of this phenomenon: students' mobility programmes, youth searching for new jobs and career opportunities abroad due to financial crisis, only to mention a few.

The municipality of Etterbeek tried to keep up with the consequent needs of this new European mobile population, however it encountered several difficulties, among which the fact that EU mobile citizens tend to poorly integrate in welcoming cities life and, consequently, they rarely take part in civic actions.

Overall, Etterbeek heterogeneous population tends to form different separate sociodemographic groups, sometimes at the expense of social cohesion.

All these reasons, accompanied by the peculiar composition of the population of Etterbeek, led to the decision of joining the APProach project. A project aimed at facilitating the free movement of EU mobile citizens in different European countries, by providing an effective circulation of guidelines and information.

By joining the project, the municipality of Etterbeek wanted to facilitate and foster the involvement of EU mobile citizens into the local life, in order to improve democratic participation (including voting), social cohesion and support intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding.

To achieve this purpose, the municipality of Etterbeek as partner of the APProach project, carried out a multitude of actions and it was involved in almost all the different Working Packages of the project. Those actions were operated by the municipality, local associations, citizens and civil society and in collaboration with other stakeholders (including European networks).

The first activity implemented by the municipality of Etterbeek, which falls under the "Communication and Dissemination" Working Package, consisted in drafting an invitation to take part in the APProach project both in French and Dutch. This invitation was uploaded on

the website of the municipality on June 14, 2018, and it included a general presentation of the APProach project and a detailed description of the different project's objectives.



The invitation was followed by the **first general public info meeting** about the APProach project, which took place on June 18, 2018, in the city hall of Etterbeek. The title of this first meeting was "How to facilitate the reception and involvement of 'expats' in Etterbeek – Brussels?" and it tackled several real issues that EU citizens encounter while moving countries, such as access to vote, to services, how the housing system functions, how the school systems functions, how to take part and where to find different leisure activities and more.

In order to make citizens aware of the project and to spread as much as possible the aims and objectives of APProach, the municipality of Etterbeek published a piece of news in the municipal paper newsletter on July 2018. The news was posted in two different languages: French and English.

The communication around the APProch project was regularly carried out by the municipality of Etterbeek, especially through its website. On 23 October 2018, the municipality wrote another piece of news explaining APProach, with the aim of reaching more people possible and get them involved in the project.

Strongly believing in the objectives of the APProach project, the municipality of Etterbeek built synergies with several organisations which shared the very same values and mission of the project. The first synergy was developed with the Brussels Commissioner for Europe and International Organisations (CEOI) an Expat Welcome Desk that offers a personalised administrative assistance service to all those who come to work in Brussels in or around the European institutions. The municipality of Etterbeek and the CEOI built a precious cooperation. The latter participated to the APProach focus groups in Brussels and provided to Etterbeek a list of key stakeholders to invite. In addition, the CEOI informed its community on the different activities of the APProach project by using dvarious communication tools, such as social media, newsletter and emails.

Another valuable synergy was the one with Expats in Brussels, a guide published every year (both online and printed) containing guidelines and information for people coming to live in Brussels. This cooperation helped Etterbeek municipality to get further in touch with the expats community and to gather more people for the focus groups in Brussels.

Thanks to the cooperation with ECAS - European Citizens Actions Service, an international Brussels-based non-profit organisation with a pan-European membership, Etterbeek further spread knowledge regarding the APProach project. In addition, being an organisation with more than 27 years of experience, ECAS provided precious advice and recommendations to Etterbeek.

On 26, November 2018, a piece of news was published on the website of the Etterbeek municipality informing the audience about the collaboration between APProach and CRISCO.

Financed by the Programme "Europe for citizens 2014 – 2020" and Network of Towns (EACEA), CRISCO "Crossroad of the Regions – fostering involvement of all citizens in local life to improve Social Cohesion" was a project aimed at proposing good practices and recommendations to citizens at EU level. The common objectives of the two projects made possible the organisation of a public meeting on December 4, 2018, in occasion of the European Week for Local Democracy.

A further synergy established by the municipality of Etterbeek in order to ameliorate the communication around the Approach project, is the one with Belgium's leading English-language multimedia brand "The Bulletin". The synergy with "The Bulletin" helped to expand the audience of the APProach project thanks to its communication tools.

All the synergies mentioned above and established thanks to the APProach project did not end with it. The connections created by the municipality of Etterbeek are valuable networks which will hopefully work together in the future, and which will continue helping and informing EU mobile citizens and foreigners in different European countries, facilitating the free movement.

Beyond communication, the municipality of Etterbeek implemented several actions within the framework of the second Working Package (WP2) "Focus groups and exchange of best practices" which had two parallel objectives:

- Assessing the efficiency of provided services and challenges faced by each local authority welcoming EU mobile citizens and opening a space for exchange of best practices.
- 2. Investigating the problems and challenges faced by the EU mobile citizens in exercising their free movement right

Specifically, the municipality of Etterbeek carried out a total of four focus groups. Two directed towards professionals and representatives of local authorities and other two targeting citizens. All the focus groups took place in the Etterbeek city hall.

The focus groups were conducted in three different languages namely, English, French and Dutch, and they covered several issues and challenges that EU mobile citizens are very likely to encounter daily. Among others, the focus groups covered the following topics:

- Access to vote (for European and Local elections)
- Enrolment and access to school system
- Participation to local life

The focus groups organised by the municipality of Etterbeek, were not only a great tool for citizens and professionals who, through these focus groups, acquired information and guidelines on how to deal with daily situations not easy to face for a newcomer. These focus groups also led to the creation of "In Etterbeek", a Council of European and non-European residents, which consist of a permanent assembly of 48 foreign residents involved in the future of the municipality.

Thanks to the lessons learned from the APProach project, the "in Etterbeek" assembly has been created with the following characteristics:

1. The recruitment method of the members of "In Etterbeek" has been formatted in order to make the assembly long-lasting, representative and transparent. The members have been recruited on the basis of a call for expressions and interest sent by personalised letter in early 2021 to all households in Etterbeek with foreigners (approximately 15,000 letter). The members have been randomly chosen among the 580 candidates who responded to the call. Their mandate lasts 3 years. The draw was preceded by a categorisation of the candidates according to certain criteria (gender, nationality, and age group), in order to guarantee a balanced representation of the foreign population of Etterbeek.

The "In Etterbeek" is currently composed of 50% females and 50% males, for a total of 48 persons, as previously mentioned. The nationalities represented by the assembly are 26.

- 2. The format of "In Etterbeek" meetings is diverse. The plenary meetings focus on practical and concrete topics. The members of the assembly debate local issues, advise the authorities on actions to be taken and guide the choice of activities and projects proposed by the municipality, bearing in mind the final aim, which consists in meeting the needs of foreign residents. In addition, these plenary meetings are complemented by a variety of activities designed to raise the interest and cohesion of members, such as thematic meetings and workshops: presentation of municipal services, lectures on the Belgian institutional system, forum on public cleanliness, leisure activities and much more.
- 3. "In Etterbeek" gives a prominent place to EU mobile citizens (36% of the population), but it is also open to all non- Belgians (almost 50% of the inhabitants of Etterbeek).

The "In Etterbeek" assembly also produces a newsletter, for a total of 5 issues per year.

The "In Etterbeek" assembly is a great example of how the APProach project will leave beyond its deadline. The assembly has been created following the general guidelines of the APProach project, by and for the citizens. It will continue living within the framework of the municipality of "Etterbeek", aimed at providing guidelines and information on how to face daily issues to EU mobile citizens and foreigners.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the municipality of Etterbeek was involved in almost all the Working Packages of the APProach project. Another key activity was the organisation of **English trainings for Local Authorities' staff** (WP4). The municipality of Etterbeek conducted two English courses between September and August 2019 targeting street agents in charge of public cleanliness and welcome desk agents. In addition, they also provided two English training books to the welcome desk agents.

The English trainings conducted by the municipality of Etterbeek have been extremely valuable and important in terms of sustainability. Etterbeek, as previously mentioned, has a varied population coming from all over Europe and beyond which, most of the times, is English speaker. It is very important that the staff of the municipality acquires the skills to communicate and help in the best way possible expats and foreigners. The English knowledge acquired during these trainings has a long-term scope, with the objective of helping not only the current EU mobile citizens and foreigners, but also the future ones.

One of the main objectives of the APProach project was to create a **digital ecosystem**, aimed at promoting EU mobile citizens' participation in the social life of the host city, in order to stimulate their interest in the city and also their active civic participation at a wider scale, such as in elections and community decision-making.

The municipality of Etterbeek actively participated in the process of creating this digital ecosystem, and promptly uploaded in the APProach website all information and guidelines

regarding the 4 main topics identified, being voting system, school enrolment, civic engagement and social life.

To ameliorate the APProach digital ecosystem before making it available to the public, the municipality of Etterbeek organised a focus group to test the web contents, the usability and the design of the digital ecosystem. The focus group was composed of 12 users chosen from different backgrounds and it was divided in 3 sessions: user research, usability test and brainstorming.



The first session had the main objective to know better the users by creating a collective empathy map, which gives to the web creators a more concrete vision of the users' needs, their perspective about specific topics, where they collect information and how they act. It is extremely important when creating a satisfactory user experience, since knowing the users can guarantee a personalised and accurate experience. The second session focused on the usability of the website, by making the users navigate the different sections. As a last activity, the participants to the focus groups engaged in a constructive discussion on the design of the website and on its overall usage.



The focus group organised by Etterbeek was not only useful to the development of the APProach digital ecosystem. Following the guidelines of the APProach project and of the very accessible structure of this digital ecosystem, the municipality of Etterbeek, as part of the APProach project, decided to launch a complete reshuffling of their municipal website, with a user-friendly approach giving direct access

from the home page to pages especially dedicated to EU mobile citizens. This new municipal website contains 240 pages, of which 45 pages specially dedicated to EU mobile citizens.

Thanks to the main lessons learned from the APProach project the pages of Etterbeek new municipal website dedicated to foreign citizens have the following features:

- The website is not dependent on an external host, to avoid operational problems. Thus, the municipality is in control of the access to the website and of its content. Therefore, the pages are easily editable and adaptable to the needs of foreign citizens.
- By hosting the content on the Etterbeek municipality website, the users should consider it more reliable.
- Etterbeek identified many topics which interest EU mobile citizens and foreigners. The new website includes 48 different topics among which registration, vote, citizenship, jobs, mobility, urban planning and much more.
- The webpages of this new website are not targeting only EU mobile citizens, but also foreigners at large, who often face the same challenges of the former.

The European project APProach made the creation of this website possible, facilitating the access to information to thousands of people that are currently living in Etterbeek or that are planning to come living in this municipality. The APProach digital ecosystem and the new website of the municipality of Etterbeek are two closely linked and inseparable systems. This merger will allow both digital systems to survive beyond the deadline of the APProch project, continuing to achieve their objective of facilitating free movement of citizens.

3.3 Proposal and scenarios for Nea Smyrni

The Municipality of Nea Smyrni is located in the Athens region, in Greece. Despite a lack of updated information, we can state that the Municipality counts a population of approximately 75.000 inhabitants. We do not know the exact number of foreign citizens residing in the city, but it is most likely a considerable number, taking into account the past of the city, which has always been a destination for migrations due to various historic reasons.

The reasons for the Municipality to join the project are to be found in a general lack of circulation of information, which often brings to a poor cooperation among the components of the community, in particular among public authorities and citizens, and may cause in turn challenges related to integration issues. Further key elements to underline are the deficiency of dissemination and integration platforms on the one hand, and the fact that often most European Mobile Citizens residing in the Municipality work for humanitarian organisations in response to the urgent migration crisis.

Within such a complex and delicate frame, the project APProach brought and is bringing a tremendous contribution in support of the integration of foreign residents. It also provides the local administration with clear guideline and a cutting-edge platform to foster a proper and reliable information flow.

During the project implementation period the Municipality has put in place numerous activities aimed at improving firstly their internal skills, and then the external communication towards European Mobile Citizens.

More specifically, concerning the first point, the Municipality of Nea Smyrni successfully involved its staff into **English-language training course**.



The training seminars were held by a private educational institution, in the premises of the City Hall during the working hours of the employees. They were attended by twenty-six employees, who were trained in the English language and received a certificate of proficiency. At the same time, they received **training from the Programme Facilitator on the use of the APProach Digital Ecosystem** in order to be able to respond to the needs of the project and answer the requests of European citizens.

More, Nea Smyrni organised **2 focus groups**, which took place on 6 and 7 March, 2019, targeting selected staff who is in contact with EU mobile citizens in its everyday work. They studied the challenges faced by the Municipality when welcoming EU mobile citizens concerning the free movement rights of EU citizens, especially on three aspects: access to vote, school enrolment and active participation in Nea Smyrni's city life.



A further focus group was organised with local European Mobile Citizens, on 19 April, 2019. It aimed at understanding EUMCs' needs and the reason of their limited participation in the city life. As stated into the reporting, the workshop was useful to both parties, to understand which aspect are to be improved by the Municipality, and at the same time for EU citizens to discover all opportunities offered by their hosting city.

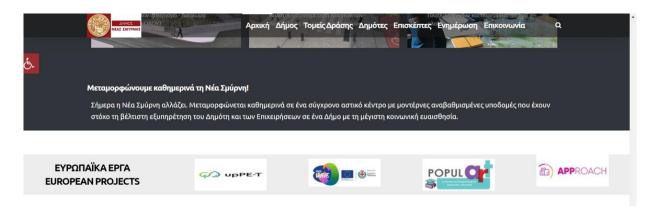
On the other hand, the municipal staff worked hard to ensure a **good dissemination** and development of the Approach Digital Ecosystem and of the project's objectives. For the previous a **foreign language brochure** was created and distributed among the expat's communities of European citizens living in Greece, as well as through the Embassies. The project was also disseminated through publications, press and on relevant websites.

Moreover, the program and its results were of high importance to the Municipality of Nea Smyrni, resulting in the preparation of a study for its dissemination which was sent to all 332 Municipalities of the country

Among the lessons learned and the **good practices taken from the project** that the Municipality will replicate, there is the English-language training for its staff. Indeed, the training of the employees, which was carried out through the Programme, proved to be a good practice, and as a result the Municipality of Nea Smyrni offered at its own expense the training to almost all of its administrative staff, so that today most of the Municipality's employees have a certification of proficiency in English.

Coming to the core element of the whole project, being the APProach Digital Ecosystem, this has been extremely helpful to the Municipality of Nea Smyrni. It helped increasing the reach and the level of engagement of European Mobile Citizens in the area, reason why the Municipality has always worked with a long-term plan in view of its sustainability.

Since the very beginning the Ecosystem was integrated in the Municipality's website, through a direct hyperlink from the APProach logo. The present administration of Nea Smyrni, in fact, wish to work on the sustainability of the project's platform. Unfortunately, due to a series of internal issues, such as lack of budget² and possible administrative changes following the upcoming local election, Nea Smyrni cannot confirm that it will maintaining, upgrading and feeding the digital ecosystem inherited from APProach.



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² Due in part to unexpected changes in the macroeconomic environment.

On a positive note, the Municipality has recently stated that in light of a server upgrade, there may be a possibility that Nea Smyrni will manage to host the APProach ecosystem into a cloud server³.

It is important to mention that the APProach experience has also been useful to upgrade and further develop Nea Smyrni's already existing Pubic Administration Portal "ERMIS" (http://www.ermis.gov.gr/portal/page/portal/ermis/Dimotologio), which provides citizens and business with a set of e-services to make the community more inclusive and service-oriented.

Additional elements contributing to the sustainability of the project are the experience and expertise acquired by the municipal staff in communication and management; increased awareness on European citizenship and good practice on digitalization and digital transitions thanks to the exchange with such a relevant network of European Municipalities and international organisations.

³ To be confirmed with the partner

3.4 Proposal and scenarios for Vejle

Vejle municipality is situated in the Region of Southern Denmark, placed on the Jutland peninsula. Vejle counts around 119.000 inhabitants and is expected to reach a total population of 131.000 in ten years.

As partner of the APProach project, the municipality of Vejle was involved in several Working Packages. As briefly mentioned in the previous sections, the second Working Package (WP2) "Focus Groups and exchange of best practices" of the APProach project concerned the organisation of focus groups, targeting both EU mobile citizens and local authorities' representatives.



The municipality of Veile organised a total of 5 focus groups and one interview. Two directed towards Local Authorities and three targeting EU mobile citizens. The first one took place on February 7, 2019, and saw the participation of stakeholders connected with migration and movement of EU citizens. The second focus group took place March 2019, and targeted organisations that provided citizen services for internationals. Finally, a telephone was carried out interview by the municipality of Vejle with a citizen service which deals with international driver licences. The two focus groups and the interview conducted helped Velje to gather inputs and information on the three topics at the base of the APProach project namely, access to vote, school enrolment and active participation in the welcoming city life.

Tackling the topics from the citizens' perspective, the municipality of Vejle conducted three focus groups directed towards EU mobile citizens, all the three of them took place in VIFIN office, a Resource Centre for Integration at the municipality of Vejle. The three focus groups took place in March and saw the participation of several expats living in Vejle. Some inputs were also collected in written form from a few participants who could not attend the in-person meetings. The focus groups were carried out both in English and Danish.

All the focus groups organised by the municipality of Vejle were deeply communicated and disseminated through the communication channels of Vejle. The invitations were published on

the most important Facebook groups and pages where EUMCs are present: *Internationals in Vejle, Vejle Expat Network* and *Facebook Vejle,* just to mention a few.

The topics tackled during these meetings were extremely useful both for expats and for professionals working in fields related to citizens' mobility. The valuable inputs and feedbacks gathered during the different sessions are not only useful within the framework of the APProach project, but they will help the municipality of Vejle to ameliorate its approach towards EUMCs.

Apart from the great contribution of the municipality of Vejle regarding the organisation of the focus groups, the main role of this municipality concerned the fourth Work Package (WP4) so called "Trainings". The objective of WP4 was to train the community of interest (EU mobile citizens living in municipalities involved and local authorities' staff) on the existence of the APProach digital ecosystem, on its benefits and on specific guidelines to promote it. The trainings were of different nature: the so-called "English trainings for LAs" were aimed at offering English courses to the municipality staff engaged in welcoming EU mobile citizens. The "trainings for LAs" and the "Dissemination trainings for EU Mobile Citizens" had the objective of spreading knowledge on the APProach project and its digital ecosystem.

Considering the high level of English generally spoken by the staff of the municipality of Vejle, the partner developed an <u>online training</u> available for all the present and future staff members of the Danish municipality. In addition, VIFIN, Resource Centre for Integration at the Vejle municipality, created a special <u>online English course</u> for Local Authorities/frontline staff who deal with newcomers. The course consists of 10 lessons, ant it takes approximately 1.5-2 hours per lesson. It does not require a login; due to this it can be freely accessed. Finally, the municipality of Vejle also produced a <u>video training</u> about the APProach digital ecosystem entitled "Webinar for Administrators". This video, of the length of 10 minutes, provides an indepth explanation of what the APProach digital ecosystem is and how to use it. These tools have been extremely useful for all the length of the APProach project and will continue to be valuable for all the present and future staff of the Vejle Municipality.

Focussing now on the APProach digital ecosystem, the municipality of Vejle actively contributed to creating its content. The Danish municipality currently has a <u>landing page</u> which provides information and guidelines to EUMCs on different topics namely, the voting system, school enrolment, civic engagement, social life and it also has a section so called "getting started" containing general basic information for newcomers.

A focus group to test the APProach digital ecosystem was organised by the Danish municipality and 5 users chosen from different profiles evaluated its content, its usability and its design.

In addition, similarly to the municipality of Etterbeek even if on a smaller scale, the municipality of Vejle decided to merge the APProach digital ecosystem with the VFIN website by creating a

<u>landing page</u> where the APProach project and its objectives are presented in a clear and concise manner. This landing page is both in English and Danish.

As stated by the municipality itself, the simplicity of the APProach digital ecosystem renders it extremely easy to use by the EU Mobile Citizens and foreigners, due to this they will continue to update the platform even after the due date of the APProach project.

3.5 Proposal and scenarios for Lisbon

The Municipality of Lisbon, Portugal, has an estimated population of 544,851 inhabitants (2016) within its administrative limits in an area of 100.05 km2. Lisbon is one of the municipalities with the largest number of foreign nationals in Portugal. Indeed, according to research published on the Council of Europe's website⁴, non-nationals make up 9.30% of Lisbon's total inhabitants, while second and third generation migrants make up 9.30% of the city's population.

It is thus sound and clear the interest of Lisbon in joining the APProach project consortium, as a means to increase the local involvement of European Mobile Citizens in town.

Unfortunately, the activities implemented by Lisbon Municipality were limited, due to internal and organisational issues, so that no training or focus groups with local authorities took pace.

However, the Municipality of Lisbon organised a **focus group targeting European Mobile Citizens**, which took place on 19 April, 2019 and saw the participation of 8 participants. In that occasion, the main objective was to test the APProach digital ecosystem from a user-perspective and suggest changes or adjustments if necessary. The focus group was carried out through a participatory approach.

Lisbon was also the host of an important project's milestone, namely the APProach Mid-term meeting: a 3-day reunion, from July 10 to 12, 2019, among all partners to discuss about the advancement and progress of project's activities, problems encountered, and good practices experienced. A key issue was the discussion around the digital ecosystem. Indeed, during the meeting, in agreement with all partners, a deviation from the original project's plan was decided. All partners suggested to develop a mobile-responsive digital ecosystem instead of a mobile APP and a website.

All in all, despite all difficulties faced by the municipality, the APProach digital ecosystem has been uploaded and updated with all information related to the municipality concerning the targeted areas of interest: voting system, school enrolment, civic engagement, social life.

Moreover, Lisbon has always presented the project in their communication and dissemination material, raising awareness, and seeking the involvement of the community of Erasmus students, who represent the main European Mobile Citizens in town. However, through its communication actions carried out succeeded in addressing a continuous growing number of expats.

Concerning the sustainability of the APProach Digital Ecosystem, Lisbon agreed in keeping the projet's website updated with the relevant information. The inclusion of a direct link to the project's website directly from the official website of the Lisbon Municipality is highly suggested

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⁴ https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/lisbon

and it is object of discussion at the present moment. On the other hand, we consider quite improbable that the Municipality will decide to integrate and host in its server the APProach Digital Ecosystem.



3.6 Proposal and scenarios for Paris

Paris is the capital of France, and it is situated in the north-central part of the country. Paris is positioned at the centre of the Ile-de-France region, which is crossed by the Seine, Oise and Marne rivers. Paris counts around 2 million inhabitants. While most non-native Parisians are French, more than one-tenth of the population is foreign-born and about a third of the city's foreign residents come from a country belonging to the European Union. Due to the great mobility of European and foreign citizens in Paris, this municipality agreed and shared the aims and objectives of the APProach project.

The municipality of Paris was involved in different activities within the framework of the APProach project, the first of which regarded the organisation of the first kick-off meeting in Paris, under the lead of ALDA, supported by the municipality of Paris. This kick-off meeting consisted of a two-day long event which took place at the beginning of the project, precisely on 4 and 5 July 2018, with the intention of discussing the overall work distribution and in-depth planning of the project. In addition, during this first meeting a detailed division/agreement of project tasks and a more precise definition of partners' contributions, deliverables, planning, and schedule were established. Finally, a communication and dissemination plan were drafted. This first kick-off meeting of APProach saw the participation of all the partners of the project and some representants of the municipalities of Warsaw and Amsterdam, for a total of 21 participants.



The municipality of Paris gave its main contribution within the second Work Package (WP2) "Focus Groups and Exchange of best practices". The French municipality conducted a total of two focus groups, one directed towards professionals (Local Authorities) and another one targeting European Mobile Citizens. The first one took place on February 19, 2019, while the second one on February 21, 2019.

Regarding the third Working Package (WP3) included in the APProach project, which consists in the development of the digital ecosystem, the municipality of Paris worked to provide content for the APProach website. The French municipality currently has a <u>landing webpage</u>, available in French and English, that includes information for European Mobile Citizens on different topics namely, the voting system, school enrolment, civic engagement, social life and, similarly to the municipality of Vejle, it possesses a page called "Getting started" which contains general basic information for EUMCs.

The APProach digital ecosystem was evaluated thanks to a focus group organised by the municipality of Paris. The focus group was composed of 6 users belonging to different profiles; EU mobile citizens, municipality members and students. Similarly, to the focus groups organised by the other partners, the meeting was divided in three sessions namely, user research, usability tests and brain storming. The three sessions were aimed at testing the content, the accessibility, and the design of the APProach digital ecosystem.

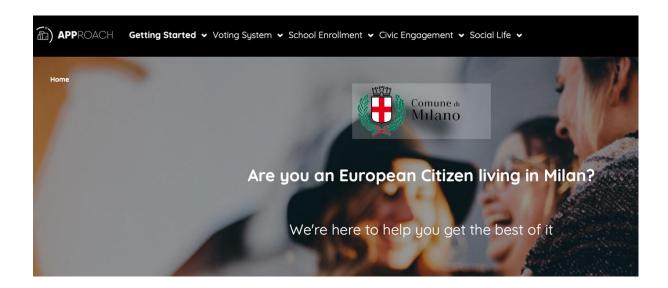
The municipality of Paris, thanks to the instruments and capacities offered by the APProach project, empowered the <u>European's Council</u> of the city of Paris. The call for elections, based on the work of the APProach project, was disseminated broadly also by other embassies, for instance the <u>Italian Embassy</u> in Paris. These two examples are the demonstrations of how the tools provided by the APProach project can be useful beyond its framework.

Unfortunately, due to internal changes in the municipality and due to the sanitary crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the municipality of Paris decided to leave the project and not to implement the third phase of APProach which consisted of training and dissemination of the project, as stated by a letter from Marie-Aline ROMAGNY, Chief of Service of external funding.

4. Technical sustainability of the platform

The APProach digital ecosystem represents a state-of-the-art platform which facilitates the exchange and dissemination of key information aimed to support the settling down and the life in general of European Citizens who move into another European country.

More specifically, the main achievement of the platform is to gather into a single source reliable information about fundamental issues every European mobile Citizen has to deal with, sooner or later. Namely, these are how to get started in the new city, voting system, school enrolment, civic engagement, and social life.



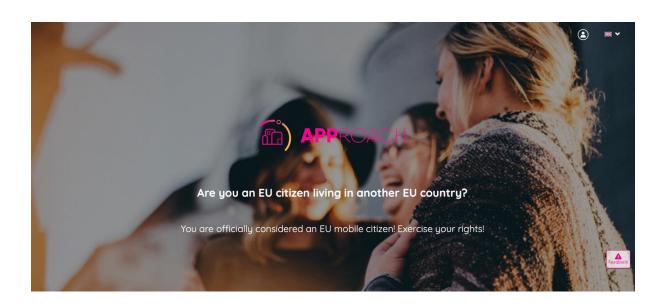
As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the APProach Digital Ecosystem has been developed through a collaborative approach which involved local authorities' representatives and European Mobile Citizens. This testing stage was carried out in 2 steps: a first phase where the focus groups studied through a collaborative way how the platform should look like and what it should contain to be useful and efficient. While the second phase was aimed at testing the prototype result of the platform, which was elaborated by the IT company according to the results and suggestions raised during the first round of consultation.

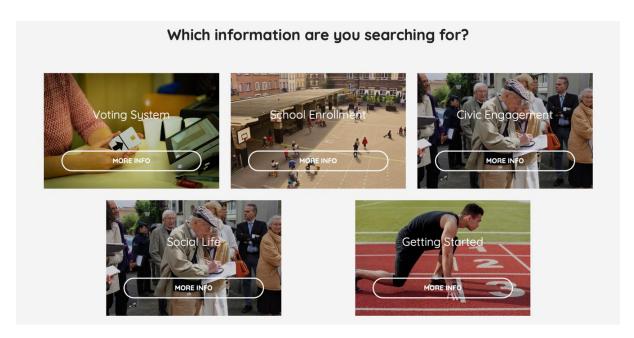
In light of this, and according to general feedbacks received during these years of implementation, there is no doubt that the APProach digital ecosystem turned out to be a user friendly, organised and useful platform for both EUMCs and local authorities.

However, upgrades and improvements are still possible, and yet advisable, to be implemented for an ever-better user experience and to enhance the sustainability of the project.

From a **graphic point of view**, the APProach digital ecosystem is recognised for being pleasant to the eye, with a **colour palette** marked by strong colours, i.e. black, pink and white, used in a clear and uniform way, so to distinguish the various levels of importance of the related content.

The platform also contains numerous, and often large-sized high-quality **pictures**, while the **text**, used in a calibrated manner without exceeding, is articulated into short and clear sentences, going straight to the point.





Looking ahead, a great achievement for the project and its sustainability would be that **other European municipalities will join the initiative** and be included in the platform, thus reaching to a consistent number of municipalities present in the ecosystem, to meet the needs of more and more European Mobile Citizens. If this should become a reality, a number of modifications

to the actual settings of the platform would be needed and an entry procedure for new municipalities should be established.

Concerning the latter, new Municipalities integrating in the platform should first gathering all relevant information about the 5 key sections of the digital ecosystem and translate them into English. Once this step is fulfilled, the municipality will have to organise the information according to an excel template, following specific guidelines provided by the project-leader, ALDA. Then, they will be able to correctly upload it into a specific section of the platform. Indeed, for every new municipality joining the ecosystem a personal profile will be created by ALDA to allow them to upload all the material online.

Technically speaking, if the number of adhering municipalities should be more than 12 (at the present moment there are 8 municipalities in the platform), the whole **hosting system** should be revised. In fact, now the Digital Ecosystem is hosted by the servers of ALDA website, which have a large quantity of memory and ram available. Anyhow, if the amount of information to host should substantially increase, and with it also the number of visitors, resulting in a very high traffic rate for the platform, the APProach ecosystem should have its independent hosting service to be more performant and guarantee a better user-experience.

According to this scenario, the **visual layout** of the landing page would also need to be changed according to the number of new entries, in order to facilitate the usability and the functionality for the users. Additionally, a more performing search tool should be integrated.

From a **technical point of view**, being a platform hosting information subjected to more or less frequent changes, improvements are surely possible to be integrated to the existing digital ecosystem. First of all, we think important to underline that the sustainability of the whole platform **mainly depends on the commitment of the municipalities** involved, who need to continuously update and feed the platform, for this to become a well-reputed go-to source for reliable information by mobile citizens all over Europe.

For that reason, in our view it will be recommended to improve and facilitate the use of the platform by the municipality, mainly in terms of data input, thus encouraging them to be more involved. In fact, the data entry system happens through quite complicated documents to be filled by each municipality in order to be correctly read by the platform's operative system, while it would be possible to simplify this process.

Another valuable extension could be to add a **calendar plug-in** inside the section of each municipality, thus to highlight key dates for the citizens, such as election days and cultural events. In so doing, EUMCs will be keener on discovering, and joining key moments of the social and political local life.

Finally, we consider useful in terms of user experience and platform usability, to integrate a more responsive way to help new users navigating through the platform. A possible solution could be to install a specific plug-in for **instant chatting**, **BOT**. These are paying tools, which are

set to answer to basic, yet important, questions from the users, and to redirect them to the proper email address in case of more complicated issues with the platform. In case of limited financial availability, a simpler **FAQ section** might be already an effective solution.

5. Summary and different scenarios for the sustainability of the project APProach

In light of the previous technical analysis and taking into consideration the nature and the purposes of both the project and the APProach digital ecosystem, there are two possible scenarios (that can also be implemented both) for the sustainability of the platform.

(1) The first option consists in the simple **maintenance of the Platform**. This scenario implies an overall technical stability for the digital ecosystem, keeping it as it is now for the long term.

Thus, the platform will continue to reside in the same servers' as ALDA's website since no addition of new municipalities is foreseen and the quantity of information and memory required by the hosting would remain steady. On the other side, the communication around the project and the dissemination of the APProach digital ecosystem shouldn't stop. Contrarywise, a wide communication should continue by all partners involved through its channels, thanks to the already-established synergies with European networks and by the creation of new partnerships. In this way, the objective would be to grow the number of users, namely European Mobile citizens of targeted areas, while the digital ecosystem's structure would remain unchanged.

(2) The second option consists in a general growth and development for the whole APProach Digital Ecosystem, and its users' community.

According to this scenario, the Platform should be object of a ever-growing dissemination action, targeting not only European Mobile Citizens but also, and mostly, European Municipalities, thanks to online and offline actions. In this case, the modifications previously suggested will be highly suggested to make the platform more functional and appealing.

Taking up what had been said in the previous chapter, the long-term sustainability and animation of the APProach digital ecosystem greatly depends on the rate of engagement and commitment of the adhering municipalities. Thus, the main goal proposed by this scenario would be to involve more and more European Municipalities in the platform, so to make the ecosystem a real point of reference for the European mobile community.

In the involvement of new Municipalities, ALDA surely plays a key role, in light of its potential reach and the high number of municipalities being members of ALDA. Of course, presenting

testimonies from the Municipalities involved would be equally important, to demonstrate through the experience the added value of being part of such a community.

The dissemination of the platform through potential interested European mobile citizens is another aspect in which all partners, and mainly ALDA could bring an important contribution. From ALDA's perspective, for instance, the dissemination of the platform through the numerous organisations part of the ALDA's network would be an extreme added value for the whole project and its sustainability. Indeed, the dissemination of the platform through citizens' networks and through Associations of Municipalities would perform as a cascade effect in making the platform known at a whole European level, and beyond.

All in all, this second scenario is considered by ALDA and the whole project consortium **the value-proposal we all would like to achieve**: not only keeping the Platform alive, but feeding and developing it, to the point of making it a shared tool, more and more useful for both European municipalities and mobile citizens.

Indeed, taking as a starting point the well-established fact that the APProach digital ecosystem is a great tool with extremely high potential, we feel it would be a waste and a mistake not to make the most of it.







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