



CISOMO II: Civil Society Solidarity Movement II

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D3.2 Germany's Practices in Refugee and Migrant Support Engagement and Advocacy

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Lead Organization:
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INTRODUCTION

About CISOMO II

CISOMO II (Civil Society Solidarity Movement II) is a European project under the CERV programme aiming to empower civil society to strengthen solidarity with migrants and refugees through engagement, advocacy, and thematic living labs. By fostering inclusive dialogue and collaboration, the project promotes EU values of democracy, freedom, and integration.

Germany's Role in CISOMO II

As a partner in CISOMO II, uDevelop based in Munich, plays a central role in piloting local actions in Germany. Focused on community-based engagement and participatory advocacy, uDevelop brings its experience in civil society innovation to support migrant and refugee inclusion at grassroots and policy levels.

About uDevelop e.V.

uDevelop is a nonprofit organization based in Munich, engaged in promoting social innovation, civic participation, and inclusive development. The organization prioritizes empowerment-oriented initiatives for marginalized groups, including refugees and migrants. Through non-formal education, community dialogue, and structured advocacy, uDevelop contributes to strengthening democratic engagement, intercultural understanding, and resilience within diverse urban communities. Within CISOMO II, uDevelop leads Germany-based activities aligned with the project's core mission of fostering solidarity across borders.



STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT WITH EU VALUES

The work of uDevelop is guided by the foundational values of the European Union, including human dignity, equality, freedom, and solidarity. By facilitating access to civic rights, policy discourse, and inclusive public spaces, the organization actively supports the implementation of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and contributes to the goals outlined in the European Citizenship Report 2020. Its initiatives align with the EU's broader agenda for a more democratic, just, and cohesive Europe, particularly through the empowerment of refugee and migrant populations.

MIGRATION LANDSCAPE IN GERMANY

Germany remains one of the primary host countries for refugees and migrants within the European Union. In 2023, it received approximately 329,000 first-time asylum applications, accounting for 31% of all applications across the EU. Furthermore, as of January 2025, over 1.1 million individuals displaced by the war in Ukraine were granted temporary protection in Germany. These figures reflect the country's central role in European migration governance and its continuing responsibility in facilitating protection, support, and integration.





LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS

Germany's approach to migration and integration is structured by a combination of national legislation and EU-aligned strategies. The Asylum Act and Integration Act (2016) form the backbone of national policy, ensuring legal protections, access to services, and support for participation in society. Additionally, regional adaptations—particularly in Bavaria—respond to local needs through cooperation between municipal authorities and civil society actors. These frameworks operate within the broader EU context, in alignment with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the European Democracy Action Plan.

STAKEHOLDER ECOSYSTEM

Effective refugee and migrant support in Germany is the result of coordinated efforts between multiple actors. These include the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), local governments, legal institutions, civil society organizations, grassroots networks, and volunteer initiatives. In 2023, Germany issued 586,000 first residence permits to non-EU nationals, highlighting the scale and significance of migration-related service provision. uDevelop functions as a key civil society partner within this ecosystem, fostering integration and civic engagement at the community level.

WORK PACKAGE 3 OVERVIEW

- **German Study Visit**

The German study visit titled “Empowering Voices: Exploring Civil Society’s Role in Refugee and Migrant Advocacy in Germany” was organized by uDevelop as part of Work Package 3 of the CISOMO II project. Conducted in Munich over three days (Month 5–6), the visit brought together 25 participants across Europe to examine how civil society organizations (CSOs) in Germany support refugee and migrant communities through engagement and advocacy. This deliverable captures the practices, tools, and insights shared during the visit, contributing to the CISOMO II Good Practices Model Guide.



OBJECTIVES OF WORK PACKAGE 3

- **German Study Visit**

The study visit aimed to deepen participants’ understanding of effective advocacy through the following objectives:

- To examine best practices of civil society-led initiatives focused on refugee and migrant support.
- To facilitate meaningful knowledge exchange between participants, CSOs, and community representatives.
- To enhance practical advocacy skills, including grassroots organizing, policy influence, and coalition building.
- To promote cross-cultural understanding, by fostering interaction among diverse communities and stakeholders.



THE GERMAN CIVIL SOCIETY LANDSCAPE

Germany hosts a vibrant and well-structured civil society landscape, composed of over 600,000 registered associations (eingetragene Vereine). Civil society organizations (CSOs) play a significant role in supporting democratic resilience and human rights advocacy, particularly in the context of refugee and migrant inclusion. During the Study Visit, participants were introduced to national and local CSOs working in areas such as legal aid, housing, language training, youth empowerment, and civic engagement. These organizations serve as both support providers and platforms for migrant self-expression.

PILLAR I – ADVOCACY STRATEGIES AND CAMPAIGNS

A key focus of the Study Visit was exploring the strategic approaches used by German CSOs to advocate for refugee and migrant rights. Participants learned how organizations engage in public awareness campaigns, policy consultation, and strategic litigation. Examples included city-wide initiatives for dignified housing, digital campaigns to promote legal reform, and direct engagement with local councils. Particular attention was given to refugee-led initiatives that successfully influenced local government decisions—demonstrating the power of civic advocacy grounded in lived experience.



CASE STUDY: ADVOCACY IN PRACTICE

One highlighted example involved a migrant-led legal aid project in Munich supporting rejected asylum seekers with appeals and legal representation. Through partnerships with local law firms and policy advisors, the initiative secured over 200 positive case outcomes in 2022–2023. Participants explored how storytelling, evidence collection, and legal literacy were used as tools for advocacy and empowerment. This case reinforced the importance of combining grassroots leadership with institutional access to achieve change.



PILLAR II: COMMUNITY-LED INITIATIVES

The Study Visit featured site visits and meetings with grassroots initiatives operating at the community level. These included neighborhood centers, intercultural cafes, solidarity hubs, and women's cooperatives. Emphasis was placed on self-organized support models that respond directly to local needs. These initiatives often operate with limited resources but high levels of trust and community legitimacy. Their work exemplifies participatory solidarity, as an approach in which refugees and migrants are not passive recipients of aid but active contributors to community well-being.

FROM LOCAL VOICES TO PUBLIC DIALOGUE

Community representatives shared how personal experiences of displacement, exclusion, and resilience were transformed into public dialogue and civic participation. Whether through cultural programs, petitions, or roundtables with city authorities, these perspectives helped shape inclusive policy recommendations. The Study Visit demonstrated that empowerment grows when people are provided with safe platforms to speak, be heard, and influence the environment around them.

PILLAR III – GENDER, DIVERSITY, AND VOLUNTEERISM

Intersectional perspectives were central to the German Study Visit. Sessions addressed how gender identity, age, sexuality, and migration status intersect to shape vulnerability and access to support. Participants met with women's groups advocating for gender-based asylum claims and organizations supporting LGBTQIA+ refugees.

The workshops emphasized that effective advocacy must be responsive to diverse experiences and must challenge discrimination at all levels—from service delivery to policy design.



VOLUNTEER MOBILIZATION IN REFUGEE SUPPORT

Germany's tradition of civic engagement is reflected in its extensive volunteer networks, with approximately 30 million active volunteers nationwide. Many of these individuals support migrant inclusion through mentoring programs, language assistance, housing access, and community mediation. The Study Visit included sessions on effective volunteer engagement, with a focus on recruitment, retention, and training. Volunteer-led projects were recognized as essential bridges between migrants and host communities, especially in first-contact and integration phases.

BUILDING CAPACITY WITHIN CIVIL SOCIETY

Another key component of the Study Visit was the focus on strengthening civil society organizations themselves. Workshops explored tools for internal development, including advocacy planning, project design, impact measurement, and coalition building. Participants discussed how CSOs can enhance their long-term sustainability through inclusive leadership, cross-sector partnerships, and digital innovation. The sessions underscored the need for continual learning and investment in organizational resilience.

PRACTICAL SKILLS ACQUIRED BY PARTICIPANTS

Throughout the visit, participants engaged in participatory learning exercises, simulations, and practical workshops. Key skills developed included:

- Designing community-led advocacy campaigns
- Facilitating inclusive public forums
- Applying intersectional analysis to project planning
- Navigating local institutional structures
- These competencies were directly connected to the strategic objectives of WP3 and will support participants in replicating practices in their home contexts.

INTERCULTURAL LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

A core added value of the Study Visit was the opportunity for cross-cultural exchange. Participants from diverse national and professional backgrounds engaged in structured dialogue and informal reflection, fostering mutual understanding. Encounters with local refugee and migrant leaders further deepened empathy and insight. These interactions built a foundation for ongoing collaboration and European solidarity, strengthening the collective capacity for inclusive civic action.

CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED DURING THE STUDY VISIT

Despite Germany's comprehensive support systems, several recurring challenges were identified during field observations and discussions. These included:

- Persistent delays in asylum processing and family reunification;
- Bureaucratic complexity in accessing housing, healthcare, and employment;
- Limited language accessibility in legal and civic services;
- Rising instances of social polarization and misinformation.
- These barriers reinforce the importance of continuous civic engagement and adaptive strategies among civil society actors.



RISK RESPONSE AND RESILIENCE STRATEGIES

Civil society organizations in Germany have developed a variety of strategies to address these systemic and social risks. These include:

- Establishing multilingual advisory services and legal support hotlines;
- Creating safe spaces for dialogue to counter anti-migrant narratives;
- Partnering with local governments to streamline service pathways;
- Training community mediators to defuse tensions and foster inclusion.

These strategies emphasize flexibility, cross-sector collaboration, and bottom-up resilience building.

REFLECTIONS AND PARTICIPANTS

Participants of the Study Visit consistently emphasized the value of Germany's collaborative model, where civil society, volunteers, and public authorities work in coordinated and complementary ways. uDevelop highlighted the importance of trust-building and peer-led initiatives. Feedback gathered throughout the visit demonstrated increased confidence, enriched knowledge, and a stronger sense of European solidarity among participants—reflecting WP3's intended learning outcomes.





CONTRIBUTION TO THE CISOMO II GOOD PRACTICES GUIDE

This deliverable represents a core building block of the CISOMO II Good Practices Model Guide. It contributes detailed insights from the German experience that can be adapted across other European contexts. Specifically, it strengthens the thematic pillar on civil engagement and advocacy, offering replicable tools, methodologies, and case examples for future study visits, capacity-building programs, and cross-border collaborations.

REPLICABILITY ACROSS EU CONTEXTS

Practices observed in Munich are not context-exclusive. The Study Visit revealed approaches that are highly adaptable in other EU countries, including:

- Refugee-led storytelling and advocacy initiatives;
- Volunteer-based integration models;
- Community-driven policy consultations;
- Intersectional frameworks for inclusive programming.
- These elements offer a strong foundation for partners in the CISOMO II network and beyond to enhance their own advocacy systems.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS

Based on the Study Visit findings, the following recommendations are offered to grassroots organizations, NGOs, and community leaders:

- Center refugee insights in the design and evaluation of programs.
- Build long-term partnerships with municipalities and public institutions.
- Invest in the digital literacy and communication capacity of both staff and beneficiaries.
- Apply intersectional lenses in planning, to ensure equity and access for all groups.
- Document and share local initiatives as a tool for broader policy influence

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

To enhance the role of civil society in refugee and migrant support, policymakers at local, national, and EU levels are encouraged to:

- Streamline bureaucracy to enable more efficient collaboration with CSOs.
- Fund flexible, grassroots-led pilot programs with participatory evaluation.
- Recognize civil society as a strategic partner in integration and democratic participation.
- Support volunteer engagement through training infrastructure and resource hubs.
- Adopt inclusive legal frameworks that are grounded in human rights principles.



CONCLUSION: SOLIDARITY IN ACTION

The German Study Visit reaffirmed that solidarity is not merely a theoretical ideal, but a lived, dynamic practice expressed through everyday acts of engagement, advocacy, and community-building.

Civil society plays an indispensable role in responding to the complexities of migration, offering solutions rooted in empathy, innovation, and human rights.

Through this deliverable, CISOMO II presents not only a documentation of best practices but a compelling roadmap for strengthening dignity, democratic participation, and inclusive belonging across Europe.





CIVIL SOCIETY SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT

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