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# Summary of EMN Ad-hoc Query

## 2022.64 Municipal level initiatives in TCN soft-landing

REQUESTED BY LITHUANIA ON 25 NOVEMBER 2022

### 1. KEY POINTS TO NOTE

- 10 Member States who responded to an ad-hoc query stated that they have municipal-level centres where foreigners can receive the main migration and integration services in one place.
- The main services provided in these centres include consultations with migrants about employment and residence permits. Also, some centres pursue initiatives designed to strengthen migrants' integration.
- The Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Lithuania, and the Netherlands measured foreigners' satisfaction rates regarding the municipal level centres in recent years.

### 2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Established in 2021, International House Vilnius (hereinafter – IH Vilnius) is a joint initiative of Go Vilnius, the city's official tourism and business development agency, and Work in Lithuania, a talent attraction program encouraging foreign talents to pursue careers in Lithuania. IH Vilnius offers free consultations and services related to relocation to Lithuania and living in Vilnius: from residence permits and social insurance to employment services, taxes, and other relocation services. Specialists from 5 different state institutions (the Migration Department, the Tax Inspectorate, the Social Insurance Agency, the Employment Service, and Go Vilnius – the development agency of Vilnius) work together, under the same roof, in the office of IH Vilnius. The IH Vilnius office is in the building of Vilnius municipality; therefore, municipal services are available to customers as well.

Seeking to learn from the best practices of other countries and improve the scope and quality of services, IH Vilnius inquired whether other EMN Member and Observer Countries have similar one-stop-shops to learn more about their structure, goals, and services by asking the following questions:

1. Do you have any municipal level centres where foreigners can receive the main migration and integration services in one place (similar to IH Vilnius, as described in the background information)?

2. If the answer to Q1 is YES, please describe which are the main actors involved and the services offered?

Migration

&

Home  
Affairs

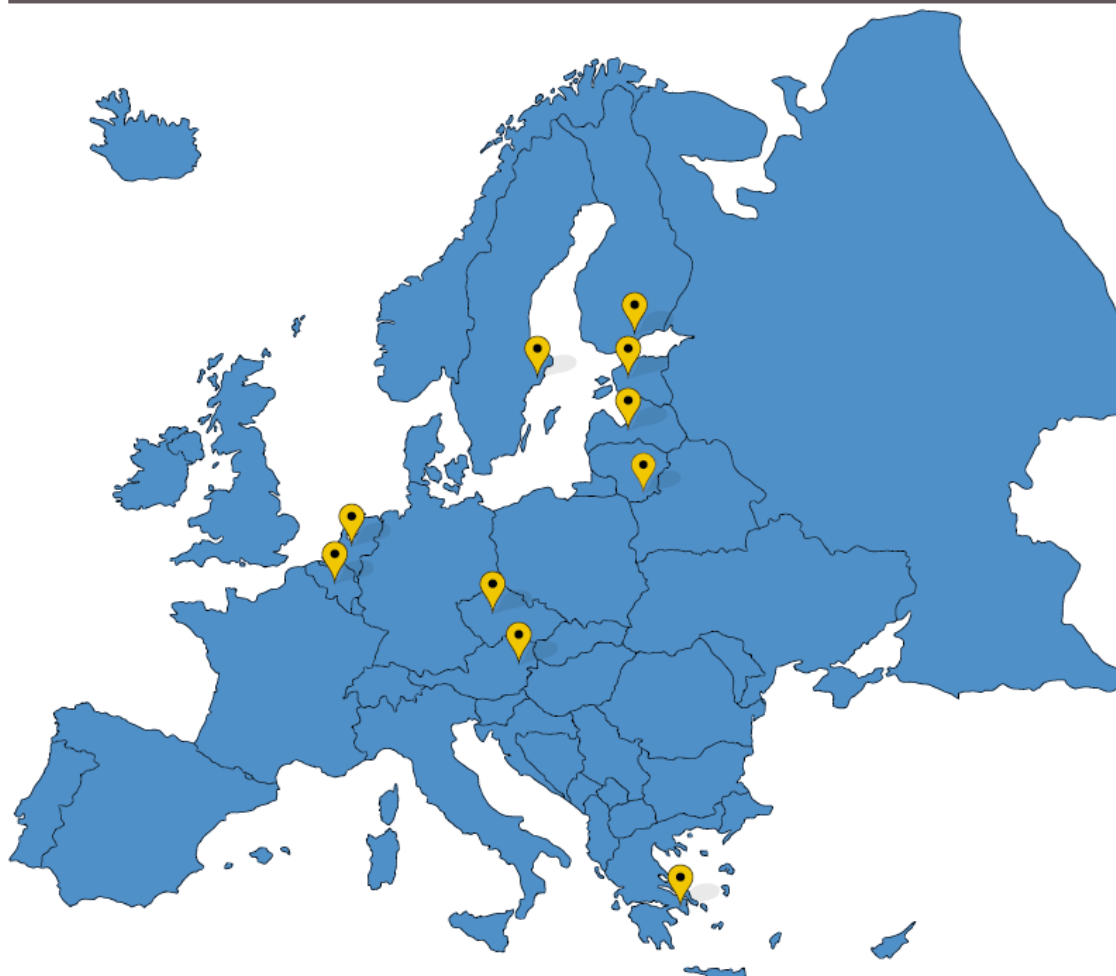
3. If the answer to Q1 is YES, are there any surveys available that measure foreigners' satisfaction of these municipal level centres (NPS-net promoter score or similar)?

4. If the answer to Q3 is YES, what is the foreigners' satisfaction rate? Please share links to surveys, if possible.

### 3. MAIN FINDINGS

Half of the Member States<sup>1</sup>, in total 10, have municipal level centres operating in a one-stop-shop way where foreigners can access migration and integration services in a single location.

Figure: Member States with one-stop-shop centres providing services to migrants at the municipal level



10 Member States<sup>2</sup> noted that municipal centres where foreigners can receive the main migration and integration services in a one-stop-shop way are not present in their countries. Even though Slovenia does not have a municipal level centre, a national-level centre operates under the Employment Service that provides foreigners with employment information and documentation and gives consultations regarding migrants' rights and obligations.

<sup>1</sup> AT, BE, CZ, EE, EL, FI, LV, LT, NL, SE.

<sup>2</sup> BG, CY, ES, FR, HR, HU, LU, MT, SK, SI. Croatia has established centralized information-sharing points, namely websites, containing all relevant information from different integration departments.

Of the countries having municipal level centres that provide migrants with services in a centralised manner, only the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Lithuania, and the Netherlands measure foreigners' satisfaction with provided services.

### 3.1. THE MAIN ACTORS INVOLVED AND THE SERVICES OFFERED

- **Austria** emphasised that the Business Immigration Office<sup>3</sup> and the Austrian Business Agency's (hereinafter - ABA) Unit "Work in Austria"<sup>4</sup> provide services to migrants in a centralised manner. The Business Immigration Office, which is located in Vienna, takes care of the prompt and efficient processing of residence permits. Its services include advising about residence permit matters to skilled international employees, companies, organisations, research institutions, and educational institutions. Similarly, ABA – Work in Austria functions as service center where companies and TCNs are provided with multilingual and digitally supported information and advice on the submission of applications for the residence permits Red-White-Red Card and EU Blue Card. ABA – Work in Austria also has Relocation Services that give advice and support to migrants regarding questions about living and working in Austria.
- In **Belgium**, integration processes are managed differently depending on the community: Flemish Community, the French Community, or the German-speaking Community. Because integration is not a competence of the local levels, Belgian municipalities rarely offer services similar to those provided by IH Vilnius. An exception is International House Leuven<sup>5</sup>, providing information, knowledge and service centre for internationals and their families and organisations in the Leuven region employing international talent.
- The **Czech Republic** has a regional-level network of 18 Centres for Support of Integration of Foreigners. The closest institution to IH Vilnius in the Czech Republic is the Integration Centre Prague<sup>6</sup>. However, the fundamental difference is that the Integration Centre Prague does not directly employ civil servants.
- **Estonia** has three centres providing services in a one-stop-shop way, namely International House Estonia<sup>7</sup> (hereinafter – IH Estonia), International House Tartu<sup>8</sup> (hereinafter – IH Tartu), and Tartu Welcome Centre<sup>9</sup> (hereinafter- TWC). IH Estonia and TWC offer services designed to consult and guide international newcomers settling in the country. Specifically, IH Estonia is more oriented towards skilled migrants. Services provided there include assistance with getting documents, consultations for migrants already residing in Estonia or shortly arriving, and for employers with established companies in Estonia. IH Estonia also arranges various events that help newcomers build social networks and offers language courses, activities for children, etc. TWC functions more as an information hotline giving consultations on settling international newcomers in Estonia. In contrast, of the three one-stop-shop municipal level centres operational in the country, IH Tartu provides the most direct support to the newcomers designed to help them settle down in the country. IH Tartu initiatives include supporting migrants to settle down in the first months, Estonian language training, labour related and intercultural workshops. IH Tartu also established a social enterprise KÖÖMEN that specialises in catering services to businesses, the public sector, and individuals. By creating

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<sup>3</sup> Business Immigration Office, website: <https://www.wien.gv.at/english/administration/immigration/business-immigration-office.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Austrian Business Agency, website: <https://www.workinaustria.com/en/>.

<sup>5</sup> International House Leuven, website: <https://www.internationalhouseleuven.be/>.

<sup>6</sup> Integration Centre Prague, website: <https://icpraha.com/en/>.

<sup>7</sup> International House Estonia, website: <https://workinestonia.com/internationalhouse/>.

<sup>8</sup> International House Tartu, website: <https://www.internationalhouse.ee/en/services/>.

<sup>9</sup> Tartu Welcome Centre, website: <https://tartuwelcomecentre.ee/>.

a workplace for migrants, KÖÖMEN aims to help migrants integrate into Estonian society through practical work experience.

- **Finland** created service points to gather services available to migrants under one roof. Each service point provides slightly different services. Notable examples of such service points are International House Helsinki<sup>10</sup> (hereinafter – IH Helsinki), International House Tampere<sup>11</sup> (hereinafter – IH Tampere), International House Turku<sup>12</sup> (hereinafter – IH Turku), and International House Joensuu<sup>13</sup> (hereinafter – IH Joensuu).

IH Helsinki is the most comprehensive service point providing a wide range of information and public authority services to meet the needs of international newcomers in the Helsinki capital region. It provides support to employers throughout the recruitment process, from searching for candidates to helping new international employees settle in the Helsinki capital region.

IH Tampere supports international migrants by providing information and advice on moving to and settling in Tampere, looking for a job, studying, and entrepreneurship. Similarly, IH Turku under one roof brings counselling and guidance services to support integration of immigrants and international newcomers in Turku and the Turku region. The same responsibilities apply to IH Joensuu that offers help and support to new Joensuu residents who have moved to city from abroad.

- In **Greece**, Migrant Integration Centres<sup>14</sup> (hereinafter - MICs) operate in 11 municipalities in Greece and offer, under one roof, a wide range of integration services to third-country nationals legally residing in the country (i.e., to immigrants who hold any kind of residence permit, applicants for international protection and beneficiaries of international protection). Specifically, the MIC operates under the supervision of the Directorate of Social Services of the Municipality. It is staffed by a social worker, a legal advisor, a psychologist, and intercultural mediators. The services offered include the provision of information, services, and counselling on migrants' and refugees' integration as well as networking. Moreover, it provides cooperation and referral of requests to other relevant structures, services, and bodies. It also offers courses in the Greek language, culture and history as well as promotes intercultural relations with Greeks. Finally, the centres promote access for migrants and beneficiaries of international protection to the labour market.

- In **Latvia**, an Information Centre for Newcomers<sup>15</sup> in Riga is the main institution providing services to migrants. It has four regional offices in Daugavpils, Jelgava, Liepaja, and Valmiera. The Centre gives lawyer-free consultations by phone, e-mail, and in person. The Information Centre for Newcomers is implemented by society "Shelter 'Safe House'" within the framework of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund.

From 2 January 2023, Latvia opened a one-stop agency for third-country nationals. It offers face-to-face and online consultations on the admission of third-country nationals, residence conditions, social protection, employment, tax system, education, health, housing, etc. in Latvian, English, and Russian as well as translation in rare languages. Lawyer, psychologist, and other specialists also provide consultations on relevant matters. In the future, specialists will also provide support for the socio-economic inclusion of third-country nationals.

- In **Lithuania**, IH Vilnius<sup>16</sup> is a joint initiative of Go Vilnius, the city's official tourism and business development agency, and Work in Lithuania, a talent attraction program

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<sup>10</sup> International House Helsinki, website: <https://ihhelsinki.fi/>.

<sup>11</sup> International House Tampere, website: <https://internationalhousetampere.fi/>.

<sup>12</sup> International House Turku, website: <https://ihturku.fi/en/services/>.

<sup>13</sup> International House Joensuu, website: <https://www.internationaljoensuu.fi/en/>.

<sup>14</sup> Migrant Integration Centres, website: <https://migration.gov.gr/en/kentra-entaxis-metanaston/>.

<sup>15</sup> Information Centre for Newcomers, website: <https://patverums-dm.lv/en/information-centre-for-newcomers>.

<sup>16</sup> International House Vilnius, website: <https://ihvilnius.lt/home>.

encouraging foreign talents to pursue careers in Lithuania. It offers free consultations and services related to relocation to Lithuania and living in Vilnius: from residence permits and social insurance to employment services, taxes, and other relocation services.

IH Vilnius provides services to all foreigners, although the Migration Department serves foreigners who come for highly qualified jobs. In addition to services, IH Vilnius also facilitates online and offline informational seminars, workshops, job fairs, networking events, Lithuanian language courses, and a mentorship program connecting foreigners to locals. All IH Vilnius services are free of charge.

- The **Netherlands** has ten one-stop-shop centres where the Netherlands' Immigration and Naturalisation Service provides its services. A tenth centre became fully operational on 1 January 2023. The centres are spread out over the whole country, each serving a designated region, usually including nearby municipalities and/or regions in connection with local service providers. Between a variety of services, these centres provide help in registration in the Municipal Personal Records Database, issuance of a citizen service number, housing, education, healthcare, and other personal needs. Centres also support employers and employees with their admission procedures, tax, and banking affairs.

All centres offer similar services, but in terms of governance each centre is organised differently. The largest one-stop-shop centre is "In Amsterdam", serving approximately half of all expats in the Netherlands.<sup>17</sup> The remaining centres are in Eindhoven<sup>18</sup>, Groningen<sup>19</sup>, The Hague<sup>20</sup>, Hengelo<sup>21</sup>, Maastricht<sup>22</sup>, Nijmegen<sup>23</sup>, Rotterdam<sup>24</sup>, Utrecht<sup>25</sup> and Wageningen<sup>26</sup>.

- In **Sweden**, general information and contact with Swedish authorities is offered in several cities and is called Statens service center (hereinafter - SSC). SSC consists of the Swedish Tax Agency, the Swedish Employment Agency, the Swedish Pensions Agency, and the Social Insurance Agency. The center also works together with the municipalities. The Swedish Migration Agency is part of the center in a few cities.

There are also initiatives like IH Vilnius in place at some of the municipalities in Sweden. In one of the largest municipalities, a center "Welcome House"<sup>27</sup> provides migration and integration services. The center works together with the staff of the municipality, Public Employment Service and Regional actors to provide services to migrants. In another municipality, Welcome House offers community guidance in different languages together with the Swedish Employment Services and local NGOs.

### 3.2. FOREIGNERS' SATISFACTION OF MUNICIPAL LEVEL CENTRES

Data on foreigners' satisfaction with municipal centres was collected in the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Lithuania, and the Netherlands.

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<sup>17</sup> In Amsterdam, website: <https://www.iamsterdam.com/en/live-work-study/in-amsterdam>.

<sup>18</sup> Holland Expat Centre South, website: <https://hollandexpatcenter.com/en/>.

<sup>19</sup> International Welcome Centre North, website: <https://iwcn.nl/>.

<sup>20</sup> The Hague International Centre, website: <https://www.thehagueinternationalcentre.nl/>.

<sup>21</sup> Expat Centre East Netherlands, website: <https://expatcentereastnetherlands.nl/>.

<sup>22</sup> Expat Centre Maastricht Region, website: <https://expatcentremaastrichtregion.nl/>.

<sup>23</sup> Lifeport Welcome Centre, website: <https://lifeport.nl/nieuws/lifeport-welcome-center-speciaal-voor-internationaal-talent-in-de-regio/>.

<sup>24</sup> Rotterdam Expat Centre, website: <https://rotterdamexpatcentre.nl/>.

<sup>25</sup> International Welcome Centre Utrecht Region, website: <https://www.utrecht.nl/city-of-utrecht/international-welcome-centre-utrecht-region-iwcur/>.

<sup>26</sup> Welcome Centre Food Valley, website: <https://www.wur.nl/en/show/welcome-center-food-valley-1.htm>.

<sup>27</sup> Welcome House, website: <https://socialstod.stockholm/nyanlanda/vagen-in-i-samhallet/welcome-house/information-about-welcome-house-in-different-languages/welcome-house---english/>.

In the Czech Republic, a questionnaire conducted at the Integration Centre Prague revealed that approximately 95 % of respondents were satisfied with the Centre and its activities. The IH Estonia measures the satisfaction of pre-bookable services available to migrants. Since March 2022, IH Estonia began using a Survey Monkey based system to gather input from migrants. The average rating of the consultation services was 4,5 out of the available 5. Similarly, the IH Helsinki in Finland surveyed its clients in 2019, and survey results showed a high satisfaction rate of 9.4 out of 10. In Lithuania, a survey conducted by the IH Vilnius in 2022 found that the satisfaction rate with IH Vilnius services was 4 out of 5 points. Finally, in the Netherlands, a 2018 survey titled "Attractiveness of the Netherlands for Highly Skilled Migrants" revealed that 97 % of respondents rated the services and support provided by the one-stop-shop centres as positive or very positive.

**EMN NCPs** who answered ad-hoc query: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden (20 in total).

*DISCLAIMER: The responses to this ad-hoc query have been provided primarily for the purpose of information exchange among the EMN NCPs in the framework of the EMN. The contributing EMN NCPs have provided information that is to the best of their knowledge up-to-date, objective, and reliable. However, the information provided in the present summary is produced under the exclusive responsibility of EMN Lithuania and does not necessarily represent the official policy of an EMN NCP's Member or Observer State. The responses are interpreted by EMN Lithuania to prepare this summary.*