



# The Utrecht Refugee Launchpad Evaluation Interim Report

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Caroline Oliver, Rianne Dekker and Karin Geuijen



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## Abstract

This interim evaluation report presents preliminary findings about the Utrecht Refugee Launchpad (U-RLP) an innovative approach to asylum-seeker and refugee reception. The U-RLP, known locally as 'Plan Einstein', houses 38 local youths and is the location of an asylum seeker centre for up to 400 asylum seekers at a time. It aims to create a more inclusive approach to the reception of asylum seekers, while generating opportunities for both them and neighbourhood residents. The U-RLP offers asylum seekers and locals classes in English and entrepreneurship, equipping asylum seekers with 'futureproof' skills that would be of benefit to them, whether in the Netherlands or elsewhere. This report presents early evidence generated between May 2017 and May 2018 about this programme, using theory-based evaluation and a mixed methods research programme among multiple constituents<sup>1</sup>. It shares some of the preliminary research findings and analysis undertaken to this point during the first phase of the initiative, recognising that the project was still developing at the time of the research, and that results will be available to report on only once the second phase has completed. However, the report shares learning so far to optimise the second stage of the programme, informing the project partnership as they continue to adjust the innovation in the latter phase of the project and help refine the model for scaling up elsewhere. In a second phase (May 2018-May 2019) the evaluation will more fully assess the contribution of the U-RLP to the main objectives of the programme: good relations in the neighbourhood and enhanced skills and wellbeing of asylum seekers.

## Authors and acknowledgements

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<sup>1</sup> including asylum seekers, young tenants, neighbourhood residents, partners and stakeholders,

# 1. Introduction, Contexts and the U-RLP Solution

## 1.1 Introduction

The Utrecht Refugee Launchpad (U-RLP) is an innovative approach to asylum-seeker reception in Overvecht, a disadvantaged district in the city of Utrecht. The U-RLP aims to create a more inclusive approach to the reception of asylum seekers, while generating benefits for neighbourhood residents in the local area. In late 2016, a new centre, named Plan Einstein opened, expecting to house 38 local youths and 400 asylum seekers. Various social activities and learning opportunities have been provided to connect people socially and professionally at the centre, as well as generate new business ideas (see 1.3). The project seeks to develop participants' 'futureproof' skills that will be of benefit to them irrespective of whether their future is in the Netherlands or elsewhere. Challenging the dominant approach to reception, characterised by a negative spiral of limbo, boredom and passivity, it aims to foster more self-determination among participants, repairing asylum seekers' 'broken narratives'<sup>2</sup>. Through living and learning close to each other, all participants are expected to build relationships, gain skills, and ultimately benefit from better prospects and wellbeing, with the programme acting as a 'launchpad' to further success.

The Utrecht Refugee Launchpad is co-financed with €2.87m funding through the *Urban Innovative Actions* (UIA) programme, a funding scheme designed to provide urban areas throughout the European Union with resources to experiment and test new and unproven solutions to solve urban challenges. The U-RLP was designed at the height of the European 'refugee crisis' in early 2016, an emergency context<sup>3</sup> when it was anticipated that large numbers of asylum seekers would continue to arrive from Syria and neighbouring countries. The substantial increase in asylum applications placed demand on the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA)<sup>4</sup> for emergency reception centres across the Netherlands. The Utrecht Refugee Launchpad brought together a range of partners from NGOs, SMEs and Universities to develop a new approach, experimenting and trialling different solutions through collaborative innovation, as well as involving multiple stakeholders in learning and development<sup>5</sup>. The partnership includes:

- The City of Utrecht;
- the Dutch Refugee Council (VluchtelingenWerk West en Midden-Nederland, VWWMN<sup>6</sup>) an NGO tasked with asylum-seeker support and brokering;

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<sup>2</sup> Repairing 'broken narratives' refers to the ways in which individuals, through telling their stories of traumatic events (including illness or injury) are able to engage in 'narrative reconstruction'. These concepts are used in narrative research especially in the fields of sociology of health and illness (Hydén & Brockmeyer 2008).

<sup>3</sup> At the time, many emergency housing locations opened for example in holiday parks and congress halls. There were also suggestions for the Dutch army to provide vacant military barracks as emergency housing for asylum seekers although this was rejected by the Minister of Defence, presenting challenges to the national asylum reception system (communication to research team by former COA employee).

<sup>4</sup> *Centraal Orgaan Opvang Azielzoekers*; see Ufkes, Zebel & den Besten (2017).

<sup>5</sup> De Vries et al. 2015; Sorensen & Torfing 2012; Sabel & Zeitlin 2012

<sup>6</sup> The regional arm of the Dutch Refugee Council, although from this point in the report the national abbreviation of VWN is used as this is how it is referred to colloquially.

- *Socius Wonen*, a housing company with a trackrecord in creating and facilitating community living;
- Utrecht University's Centre for Entrepreneurship: a research institute to teach entrepreneurship;
- The People's University (*VolksUniversiteit*): an education institute, to provide English courses from basic level up to Cambridge Advanced English.
- Social Impact Factory, a foundation stimulating social entrepreneurship, to coach participants in developing business ideas.
- Roehampton and Oxford Universities, UK higher education institutions, to conduct an independent evaluation and share learning through international knowledge exchange.

## 1.2 The problem

The issue of asylum seeker reception addressed by the U-RLP is a 'wicked issue'<sup>7</sup> where existing European-wide solutions have thusfar proven problematic. First, the process of asylum-seeking puts individuals lives 'on hold' through a lengthy period of limbo and uncertainty while status determination is in process, while opportunities that would support longer-term integration, such as language, skills learning and work are denied. The effects of the current system of asylum reception on labour market integration<sup>8</sup> and individual wellbeing are detrimental. Second, there is often an ambivalent or even hostile reception to asylum seeker centres (AZCs<sup>9</sup>) in both the public debate, and more specifically in neighbourhoods where reception centres are located, where they often function as segregated entities from the local environment.

## 1.3 The U-RLP solution

The Utrecht Refugee Launchpad is a centre located in the deprived *wijk* (district) of Overvecht in the Northern margins of the city. The asylum centre itself is known colloquially as *Plan Einstein*, in reference to both the inspirational spirit of its namesake and its location along the Einsteindreef, a busy road crossing the city in Overvecht. This is an area of post-war housing of high-rise flats and some houses developed in the 1960s, to relieve the cramped local housing market. It is a green and spacious area, now housing residents with an estimated 191 different ethnicities within its dwellings. The neighbourhood has high rates of unemployment and in comparison to other neighbourhoods, more residents cope with personal and social problems including in relation to health, nuisance, crime and poverty<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> A wicked issue is understood differently by different policy actors, and defies simple solutions (Rittel & Webber 1973).

<sup>8</sup> Lengthy stays in AZCs have a major impact on labour market integration, according to research. De Vroome and van Tubergen (2010) explored why refugees in the Netherlands, many of whom are highly educated have high unemployment rates. When considering all major reasons, including social and human capital, and health issues, the research shows that the longer people stay in a reception centre, the lower their chances of gaining a job.

<sup>9</sup> The term 'AZC' is used colloquially in English, referring to the abbreviation of 'asylum seeker centre' in Dutch.

<sup>10</sup> <https://utrecht.buurtmonitor.nl/>



Within the asylum seeker centre, 38 young people, known as 'Socius youth' live in part of the building (see photo, left) on the same site as the asylum seekers who live in an asylum seeker centre (AZC) located in a separate part of the building (see photo, right). Each part now has its own entrance, although initially there was a common entrance in the Socius side. Socius tenants live above a large 'incubator space', designed for common use by both populations, with a kitchen, sofas, tables and chairs for study and socialising, and a set of classrooms. This space is overseen by the **Socius** housing corporation, which aims to house young people by transforming real estate (especially empty office buildings) into sustainable communities. Socius' role within the project is to help

build Plan Einstein into a vibrant neighbourhood centre within the local community. Socius youth manage arrangements for the unit themselves and were recruited following publicity on a website and information days to act as a bridge between the AZC and the neighbourhood. Tenants share some responsibilities for arranging events and activities that connect the asylum seekers with both them and other neighbourhood members. There was an expectation that they would have a connection to Overvecht, as this would help recruiting neighbourhood members, envisaged initially as young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs), to take part in the courses at the centre. In Plan Einstein, three of these young people receive payment for their contributions to the administration of the building, while all tenants receive a subsidized rent for living at the centre.



To engage the neighbourhood, the project also employs a **district manager**, who is responsible for recruiting local participants, and enables a close connection of the project to the wijkbureau (neighbourhood centre). They also convene a 'neighbourhood sounding board' of seven local residents, which communicates general impressions of how the centre is received, and advises on U-RLP strategies from the neighbourhood perspective. There is also a regular programme of dissemination about the centre through online and hard copy of local news and information, inviting neighbourhood residents to take part in courses. Interested participants apply by email to the district manager, although some also drop in to the centre.

Asylum seekers' placement at the centre is determined by the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA) who had elected not to join the partnership, but were supportive of the

initiative. Upon arrival at the centre, asylum seekers are invited to do an online assessment administered by VWN<sup>11</sup>, the **Dutch Refugee Council**. Following this, asylum seekers and advisors have an intake conversation, where individuals are given recommendations for participation in the project. These include referrals to courses in Entrepreneurship and English, run by the **Centre for Entrepreneurship** and the **Volkuniversiteit** respectively, and/or voluntary work. The initial assessment is managed by the Dutch Refugee Council since it was agreed that they held the most expertise on asylum seekers and it complemented their existing advocacy role. The courses take about 8 weeks each. English courses are taught at several levels (basic, intermediate, advanced etc.) while entrepreneurship courses are taught at one level. All classes were expected to include both neighbourhood members and asylum seekers, although the entrepreneurship courses were subsequently adapted to allow some classes for asylum seekers only in English and Arabic.

Once participants move through the English and/or entrepreneurship classes, the final step of the U-RLP is to help individuals develop a business plan in a business ‘incubation’ programme managed by the **Social Impact Factory**. Participants are provided with an individualised and tailored programme, which can involve engagement in up to five activities, including:

- Coaching partnerships where participants are matched with coaches to solve a business coaching question developed at the beginning of the match, with mentoring and contact over a four-month period;
- ‘Start your own Business Programme’;
- ‘Challenges’, where groups of participants are invited to solve a problem in the neighbourhood and make an impact in the community through practical problem-solving activities. This involves regular meet ups and activities over a period of weeks;
- ‘Experience days’ where participants might spend time in an activity close to their aspirations for future work or education;
- Presentations and other themed events e.g. on building a network, job interviews etc.

The rationale for the focus on language and business is that the courses offer ‘futureproof’ skills. In particular, the choice of English language classes was to help prepare asylum seekers for a future wherever that may be: in the Netherlands (after acceptance of the asylum application), in the country of origin (after rejection of the asylum application) or in another country (Dublin claim<sup>12</sup>, migrating onwards). This choice corresponds with the Dutch policy that professional Dutch classes are offered only after asylum seekers have received permission to stay, since people are not expected to start integration when it is not yet clear if they are actually allowed to stay in the Netherlands. Additionally the choice added an innovative aspect, complementing the Dutch classes

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<sup>11</sup> Using the national abbreviation, see page 4. Footnote 6.

<sup>12</sup> This refers to asylum seekers with a ‘Dublin-claim’ registered in another EU member state before they applied for asylum in the Netherlands. According to the Dublin regulation, which was intended to prevent asylum ‘shopping’, the asylum procedure should be handled by the member state of first registration.

already available to refugees within the city's integration programme. English was also considered to be an inclusive choice, enabling communication through a common language and appealing to neighbourhood residents.

Finally, the work of the U-RLP is embedded within a broader programme of opportunities, courses and provisions for new residents in the city from other stakeholders. In particular, *Welkom in Utrecht* is an NGO working technically outside the partnership but which plays a key role in helping people to meet and connect. It provides a weekly Dutch language café in Plan Einstein, enabling up to 70 asylum seekers as well as non-Dutch speaking people living in the neighbourhood to practice Dutch language skills with Dutch volunteers (with 11 levels of language proficiency). Other events include sports opportunities, music meetings and beauty events. Additional complementary provision includes Utrecht University's InclUusion programme in which asylum seekers can enroll in university courses free of charge<sup>13</sup>, while *Radio Einstein* started to broadcast radio productions by residents to an outside public<sup>14</sup>. As the researchers write this report, a national actress organized a so-called '*Wijksafari*' (neighbourhood safari) through Overvecht in May and June 2018, bringing a theatre public in contact with urban life in Overvecht, including Plan Einstein<sup>15</sup>.

#### 1.4 U-RLP beneficiaries

The Utrecht Refugee Launchpad seeks to generate change among three beneficiaries. First, are residents of the local neighbourhood surrounding the building. The city team clarified that by 'neighbourhood', they were largely referring to up to 8000 people living around the centre, located in the larger district of Overvecht. Second there was a more specific group of neighbourhood beneficiaries, which initially were conceived of as local young people not in education, employment or training (NEETS). These people were expected to become involved in the co-learning element, by attending the courses and activities on offer at a rate of at least 20% of participants. Finally, asylum seekers placed in the emergency centre (in anticipated numbers of up to 640 throughout the programme) were expected to benefit.

#### 1.5. The project in context

Since Plan Einstein was designed as an emergency centre in early 2016, the picture of increased asylum applications across Europe during the so-called 'refugee crisis' has changed dramatically following the EU-Turkey refugee deal in March 2016, after which the numbers of asylum applications in the Netherlands fell significantly. Indeed while Plan Einstein was being developed, the COA was closing down some emergency and reception centres and reducing occupancy in existing newly

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.uu.nl/en/education/inclussion>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.radioeinstein.nl/>

<sup>15</sup> [www.theaterutrecht.nl/wijksafari](http://www.theaterutrecht.nl/wijksafari)



opened centres<sup>16</sup>. From the outset of the project therefore, the U-RLP project team had to adapt to changing circumstances, including an ongoing delay and uncertainty around the arrival of asylum seekers to the centre<sup>17</sup>.

Early on in the project, from February 2017, rather than operating to full capacity, 40 young, male asylum seekers were placed at the centre. Following multiple delays, 350 asylum seekers arrived in August 2017. The delays created some challenges for partners in the early days of the project, who were seeking to fill classes and fulfil their obligations to the project plan. In addition to the delay, the characteristics of the expected target group changed, since the larger group consisted of families with children, who were transferring from other centres in Utrecht or the Netherlands rather than in the initial phase arriving from overseas. Although the U-RLP was designed for people whose status was still to be determined, many in reality had also already been granted status or were nearing the end of their procedure and were waiting for family reunification and/or housing. As a result, some individuals were moving quickly through the centre into resettlement, only remaining for a matter of days rather than staying for any longer period as expected, while others were staying much longer.

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<sup>16</sup> According to a newspaper report by Swai (2018), COA had closed 45 locations by January 2018, leaving 61 open. The report from COA is that by the end of 2018, 51 remain open (<https://www.coa.nl/en/reception-centres/opening-and-closing>, June 2018).

<sup>17</sup> According to the project management team, they were given several different dates of when asylum seekers would arrive to inhabit the centre before it finally occurred in August 2017.

## 2. Evaluation framework and methodology

### 2.1 Evaluation aims, stance and design:

In recent decades, the evaluator's role shifted from being a stakeholder in the policy intervention to a neutral arbiter or 'fly on the wall' in the evidence-driven policy environment<sup>18</sup>. Evaluating the U-RLP however requires attention to both: *reporting* on activities and outcomes as *independent observer*, as well as *informing* the intervention in a *process of learning*<sup>19</sup>. The objectives are:

- To provide evidence on the *effectiveness, benefits and early outcomes* of the U-RLP experiment for participants and neighbourhood residents;
- To offer learning and *evidence-based recommendations* for use by other cities across Europe<sup>20</sup>.

For the *informer* role, the evaluation has adopted a 'living lab' approach, recognising that the U-RLP is a user-driven innovative programme developing in a real-life setting<sup>21</sup> in which change and adaptation requires the evaluator to pay attention to results and achievements beyond pre-set goals. In this approach, preliminary findings are therefore fed *throughout* the programme lifetime in multi-stage reporting, rather than at the end of the trajectory<sup>22</sup>, enabling a learning effect to take place during the project, to increasingly tighten and improve the developing innovation, as well as identify other unexpected or unintended consequences.

Given the adaptive nature of the U-RLP and unpredictable contexts in which it has been operating, the evaluation employs a non-experimental evaluation design, using theory-based evaluation to respond to the flexible and contingent nature of the programme. The evaluation uses a *Theory of Change* approach<sup>23</sup>, which has emerged as one of a number of non-experimental approaches to evaluation<sup>24</sup>. Rather than reducing contexts to variables to be controlled and eliminated (ibid.) theory based approaches recognise that 'context is key to understand the interplay between programme and effects'<sup>25</sup>. This entails recognising how the social makeup of interventions' areas, organizational differences and responses of local stakeholders are key to the success or otherwise of programmes. Explanations of these 'right condition[s] in the right circumstances' should aim to explain *why* a programme works, as much as if it works<sup>26</sup>. The guiding logic of this non-experimental evaluation will aim in the longer term to assess the *contribution* of the specific programme to observed outcomes rather than demonstrate *causal attribution*. In the contexts in which U-RLP has developed, it is extremely challenging, if not impossible to produce an empirically strong case of

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<sup>18</sup> Vedung 2010.

<sup>19</sup> Patton 2010.

<sup>20</sup> Parsons 2017:29.

<sup>21</sup> see Bergvall-Kareborn & Stahlbrost, 2009 and Dekker et al. under review.

<sup>22</sup> To be valuable to inform the innovation in real time, 'users must be prepared to accept and use preliminary and provisional findings, and evaluators must be willing to provide these' (CECAN 2018: 5)

<sup>23</sup> Weiss 1997.

<sup>24</sup> Blamey and McKenzie 2007: 440; Pawson and Tilley 1997; Rogers 2008.

<sup>25</sup> Blamey and Mackenzie 2007:441.

<sup>26</sup> Pawson & Tilley 1997:34.

what the outcomes would have been for programme participants had they not received the programme e.g. through a quasi-experimental approach<sup>27</sup>. The evaluation therefore will also employ Contribution Analysis<sup>28</sup> in favour of *inferring* causality, producing an account of the project's contribution and considering plausible other explanations for outcomes noted<sup>29</sup>.

## 2.2 Theory of change and assumptions

Understanding the impact of Utrecht Refugee Launchpad stems from a theory of change that uses practice-based knowledge from partners skilled in particular areas (creating community, working with refugees or the neighbourhood) aligned with broader theoretical knowledge and evidence. The Principal Investigator worked with the U-RLP team to initially articulate a model that explained the potential impacts that U-RLP could generate in the long term, through interim steps within the project lifetime. It is fully expected that as the programme changes, the model will be revised, but this captured how the team envisaged the goals and the steps they needed to reach them from the outset. The first iteration of the project theory developed by May 2017 (see Fig.1 starting at the bottom, as well as logical framework in Appendix 1) hypothesised that:

- 1) Shared activities (living, learning and participating in social events together) would create good neighbourhood relations and reduce hostility. By coming together to live together and learn new skills, more understanding, respect and a greater sense of wellbeing would be developed among both asylum seekers and people from the neighbourhood.
- 2) Entrepreneurship, international business and English language training would enhance socially excluded young people's and asylum-seekers' potential prospects in the labour market, in the Netherlands or elsewhere.
- 3) These (1 and 2) would create a more active experience of reception, providing opportunities for asylum seekers 'from day one', generating higher levels of wellbeing and preventing a negative spiral in wellbeing common in usual reception approaches.

The project's outcomes were clarified collectively and with individual partners and informed by written documentation about Plan Einstein's intended results (brochures, flyers, publicity materials).

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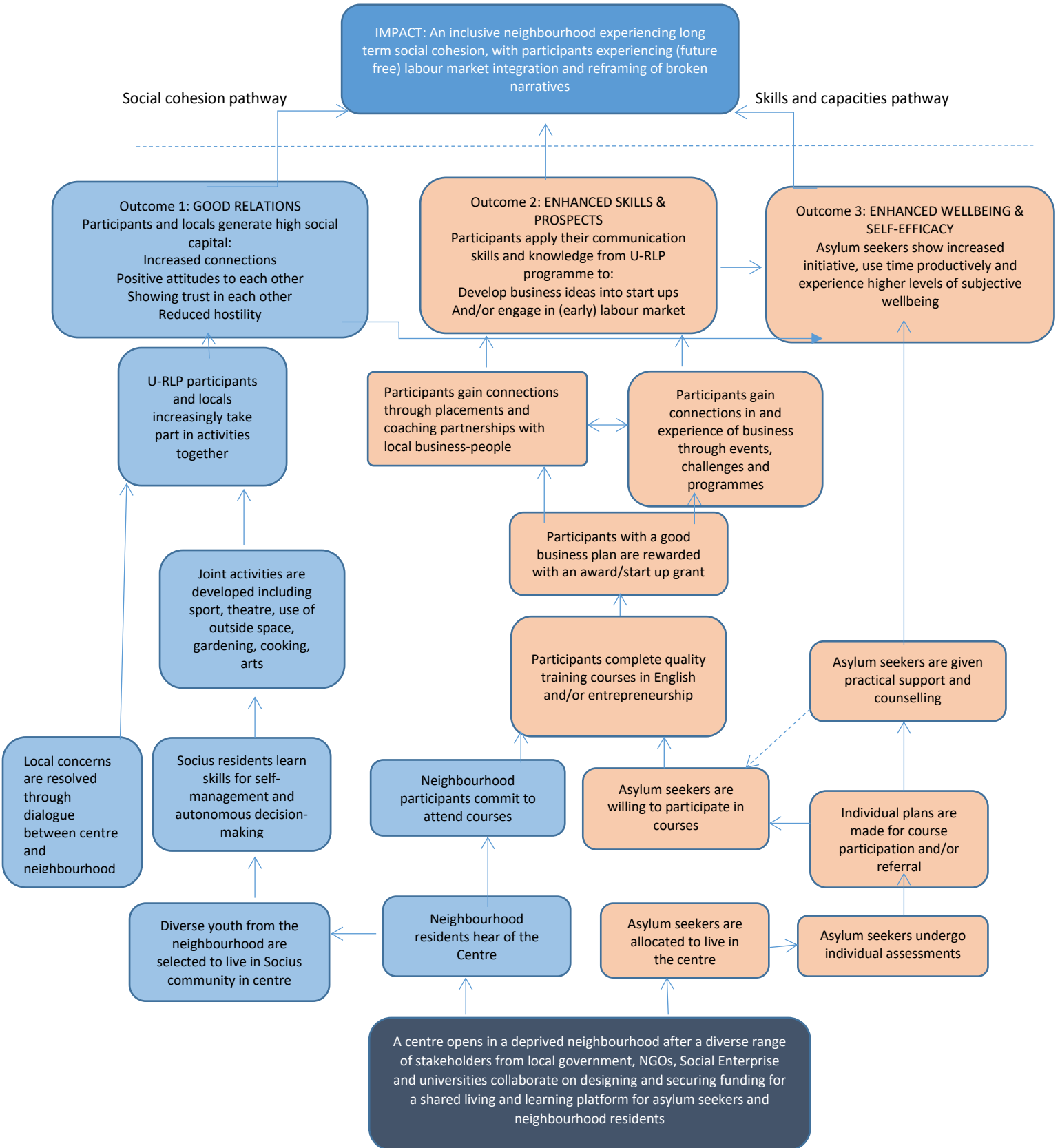
<sup>27</sup> The feasibility of a quasi-experimental approach comparing outcomes of U-RLP participants with non-beneficiaries from another centre was explored but was rendered unviable. Selection compromised the approach, as the first group of asylum seekers at Plan Einstein were chosen by COA to try out the programme. Second, a pragmatic response to boost course participation was to draft in U-RLP participants from the planned 'control' centre across the city. Third, the team faced difficulties in gaining access to comparable, reliable data because of commercial sensitivity around the assessment used (see p14) and participants' confidentiality, as well as further methodological, ethical and practical challenges of quantitative research with refugees (see Bloch 2004). Moreover, the appropriateness of such an approach was challenged by the fact that the evolving U-RLP did not involve 'a' single, stable treatment to which all beneficiaries were subject, but a range of classes, activities, counselling etc. which were operating in a flexible, dynamic and individualised manner.

<sup>28</sup> Mayne 2008, Befani and Mayne 2014.

<sup>29</sup> Confronting the problem that without a counterfactual, it is difficult to judge whether other intervening events, besides the intervention, might well effect the change we might expect to see in outcomes – the powerful argument for double – difference of before/after and with/without intervention as a gold standard (see DSD, SASSA and UNICEF 2012).

**Fig. 1: The Utrecht Refugee Launchpad Theory of Change – first iteration, May 2017**

**The vision:** To develop an inclusive approach to asylum seeker reception and integration, which beginning from day one connects newcomers with neighbourhood residents through learning and living together, and encourages participation in a mutually supportive and cohesive neighbourhood, giving both constituents better opportunities for the future.



The first, provisional iteration of the theory of change but built on a series of assumptions when conceived:

- That living and learning together will lead to reduced hostility and good neighbourhood relations;
- That entrepreneurship, English and business skills are desirable for participants and will be useful in generating better prospects in the labour market there and elsewhere;
- That it is better to facilitate some aspects of integration<sup>30</sup> from day one to address a potential negative spiral in wellbeing provoked by the dominant experience of limbo in reception centres.

It recognises that a number of constraints and enablers influence the project's performance (see Appendix 1). These include constraints of competing social problems (and programmes to ameliorate these) existing within the neighbourhood of Overvecht, as well as limited predictability of asylum seeker flow and the uncertain processes of procedure determination which will affect participants' legal status. Enablers include the provision of skilled and responsive teachers and facilitators, and supportive political contexts within Utrecht, a city building a reputation for the integration of human rights principles in its programmes.

An innovative project with multiple partners has potential for diverging expectations and 'shifting goalposts'. This need not be negative, since as the project develops, it will necessarily hone in and adapt its responses to the needs of different populations. However, these conditions require careful management to continuously communicate, coordinate efforts and avoid silo'd working of partners. In this sense, while the evaluation aims to provide evidence on outcomes, it also considers the process and management of these issues as the model is necessarily refined. Ultimately, there will always be an inherent tension between the dynamic nature of the programme and the setting of outcomes through a Theory of Change, but learning throughout the collaborative endeavour will benefit users seeking to emulate the programme in another setting.

### 2.3 Methodology

Inspired by the need for both measuring effectiveness and generating learning, the research aims to produce data on both results (change occurring as a consequence of the intervention) and process (working mechanisms). **This report considers findings from the first round of data collection from May 2017-beginning of May 2018** when the project was in its first incarnation. Data collection is to

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<sup>30</sup> Recognising that integration is a multi-dimensional concept, with structural, social and cultural elements (see Oliver 2016 review). In this context, the U-RLP programme seeks to address some structural and social elements, specifically education and labour market integration and social interactions, although notably for 'futureproof' integration not just within the local context but of relevance elsewhere. This concept requires further interrogation as the programme progresses.

be repeated in a second phase (May 2018-April 2019, ‘wave 2’) to document changes and to generate further insight into how and why the project has worked for participants. Full details of data collection and- analysis will be presented in the final report. This interim report provides a summary of the research undertaken<sup>31</sup>:

Table 1: Overview of quantitative data collection

	Timing	N	Sampling	Measurement
Door-to-door neighbourhood survey	Oct-Nov 2017	304	Random sample within 1 km radius, response rate 24%	Neighbourhood relations: Hostility, attitudes and participation in Plan Einstein.
Online Socius youth survey	Dec-Jan 2017/2018	23	Full population of 38 Socius youth, response rate 61%	Neighbourhood relations, wellbeing and data on participant characteristics
Online assessment among asylum seekers (NOA-assessments <sup>32</sup> )	Aug 2017-March 2018	89	Recruitment as part of U-RLP programme through VWN of approx. 20% of all asylum seekers entering AZC Einsteindreef <sup>33</sup>	Demographic information, Skills and Wellbeing.

<sup>31</sup> Further detail is available upon request to the researchers.

<sup>32</sup> The assessment was developed by NOA, a research bureau located in Amsterdam. They specialize in online tests and assessments in the fields of education, human resources and re-integration of unemployed. They developed the ‘Persoonsprofielscan Vluchtelingen’ (Personal profile scan for refugees, PPS-V) for Dutch municipalities based on assessments that were developed for unemployed. The assessment comes in various languages including Dutch, English, Arabic, Tigrinya and Farsi and were developed with attention for cultural diversity (<https://noa-vu.nl/producten/online-tests/re-integratietests/persoonsprofiel-scan-vluchtelingen/>). Since this a commercial product, the research team were not given full background to all survey response scales, thus we can only access selected results.

<sup>33</sup>191 NOA assessments were completed by year 1,5 of the project according to VWN registrations (see p. 32 of this report). A consent form for re-use of assessment data for this study was introduced on August 24, 2017. Between August 24, 2017 and March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2018 89 asylum seekers who took the assessment gave consent for re-use of their assessment data. Data from 102 assessments conducted before the consent form was introduced were not included in this report. Information from the COA management system indicates that until May 2018, 930 asylum seekers have lived in Plan Einstein for longer or shorter periods of time, including some children under the age of 18 who are ineligible to the program. The 89 assessments represent therefore approximately 15% of adult asylum seekers entering Plan Einstein. Intake to the courses by VWN was also done beyond these digital assessments; not all asylum seekers were willing or able to take the online assessment since they require digital skills, written language skills as well as familiarity with questionnaires and assessments. We have taken caution in interpretation of the assessment results, since qualitative interviews indicate that asylum seekers experienced the assessment as an ‘exam’ on which they had to perform well, which might have led to socially desirable answers on some questions. Employees of the Dutch Refugee

Monitoring of process indicators <sup>34</sup> aligned with Theory of Change	April 2017-April 2018; 3 times at six monthly intervals	Varying	Data requested from partners including CFE, VU, SIF, VWN, Socius.	Participation in programme including number of classes, social activities and events, composition, completion rates etc.
Course evaluation surveys (paper and online)	Jan 2018-end April 2018	60 from English classes, 44 from SIF business incubation programme	Evaluation forms distributed by course and activity organizers CFE, VU, SIF <sup>35</sup>	Self-attributed skills and wellbeing and insight into process through course content and delivery.

Quantitative data was analysed with SPSS statistics and Microsoft Excel software, providing - at this stage of the research - mainly descriptive statistics.

Table 2: Overview of qualitative data collection<sup>36</sup>

	Timing	N	Sampling	Measured outcomes
Semi-structured interviews with asylum seekers	Oct 2017-May 2018	30 participants <sup>37</sup> , corresponding roughly with nationalities present in the AZC, including: Syria: 14, Iraq: 2, Yemen: 2, Iran: 2, Pakistan: 2, Eritrea: 3, Singapore: 1, Burundi: 1, Ethiopia: 1 & Turkmenistan: 1.	Convenience sampling at Plan Einstein premises and activities and snowball sampling <sup>38</sup>	Neighbourhood relations, skills and wellbeing

Council revealed also that conversations based on the assessments showed that, in some cases there was divergence between reporting in the assessment and oral accounts.

<sup>34</sup> 21 process indicators were developed from the theory of change to measure the preconditions for longer-term change through the activities of individual partners. Examples include numbers of initial assessments completed, numbers of classes, composition of classes, numbers of social events provided, etc.

<sup>35</sup> Due to some personnel issues in the Entrepreneurship classes, these forms were not administered consistently in that stream, providing too small a number for meaningful analysis. However, in future reporting, we may be able to present findings from the existing evaluation format used by the Centre for Entrepreneurship.

<sup>36</sup> The sample refers to interviews completed and transcribed by May 2018; however, some interviews from phase 1 were still being transcribed as the report is published.

<sup>37</sup> 20 male, 10 female, ages varying from 18 to 57 years old, and within family units including single, single waiting for family reunion, to a family of seven.

<sup>38</sup> Purposive sampling of a heterogeneous sample drawn from the local COA management information system in terms of gender, age, size of family (unit), and country of origin was first attempted. However, this strategy meant (translated) letters had to be distributed via COA, which only yielded 2 respondents willing to participate.

Semi-structured interviews with neighborhood residents	March-end April 2018	18 participants	9 respondents recruited as follow up of neighborhood survey (reflecting different opinions) and 9 recruited via convenience sampling at Plan Einstein premises and activities	Neighbourhood relations (hostility, attitudes and participation in Plan Einstein).
Semi-structured interviews with Socius youngsters	Nov 2017	9 participants	Convenience sampling at Plan Einstein premises and activities	Neighbourhood relations and wellbeing.
Semi-structured and open interviews with project partners and stakeholders	Aug 2017- May 2018	10 partner and 3 stakeholder representatives	Representatives of all project partners (some twice) as well as representatives of (non) formal stakeholders, like COA, <i>Welkom in Utrecht</i> , and <i>InclUUsion</i>	Context and insight into all outcomes and process
Observation of formal and informal meetings, workshops, courses, and activities	Aug 2017 – May 2018	46 occasions	All steering group meetings, attendance at centre regularly and at different days throughout week, evening and weekends.	Context and insight into all outcomes and process

All the research instruments were designed and piloted before use with relevant groups. Seven interviews were conducted in Arabic by a student-researcher; all other interviews were conducted by the researchers from the team, using phone translation where required, and were recorded and transcribed<sup>39</sup>. The research was conducted according to professional, ethical standards, with the research plan rigorously reviewed at Roehampton University ethics panel. Steps were taken to

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<sup>39</sup> In some cases, asylum seeker respondents indicated that they would prefer the interview not to be recorded. In these cases, the researcher took as many notes as possible during the interview, including verbatim quotes.



ensure that no participants were harmed in the research; information was provided with flyers in Dutch, English and Arabic and displayed on the centre's notice board, supported by oral presentations on the project in meetings, offering availability for Q&A on the research by the researcher. Informed consent was sought for survey participation, as well as for access to NOA and interviews. Anonymity has been safeguarded through various procedures and all participants' names in the report have been changed. Health and safety risk assessments were undertaken to ensure the safety and wellbeing of student researchers in the field since face-to-face interviewing was undertaken for the neighbourhood survey.

In the following chapters, we present early findings from a range of participants, partners and stakeholders to the end of April 2018. We consider these thematically and draw some observations about how the project is implemented. It is important to recognize the contingent nature of these findings, as offering insight into the first phase of the U-RLP, but not 'the full story' of the innovation. In the second wave of the analysis, we will follow up on the new developments and adaptations to the program that are currently being made.

### 3. Preliminary findings: Neighbourhood relations

In this section, we present first findings on outcome 1: good neighbourhood relations. Reporting first on a neighbourhood survey administered in the surrounding streets to the centre in October and November 2017, it gives an indication of how the AZC was responded to in the first year. It offers evidence on awareness of the centre, contact and participation in the first phase of the project. Second, it presents findings from a survey undertaken in Winter 2017-2018 with the Socius young people recruited to live in the building, on the composition of the group, their motivation involvement and contact with asylum seekers. Some qualitative evidence is used as supporting evidence<sup>40</sup>.

#### 3.1. Neighbourhood relations with Plan Einstein

##### 3.1.1. Acceptance of the centre

When the programme started in November 2016, the response from some of the neighbourhood residents was one of initial hostility and suspicion about the new centre opening. Partners recall that negative sentiments dominated the public and media debate. A civil servant in the project management team explained that several hundred people came to meetings announcing the location of the centre in Overvecht:

*We went to neighbourhood meetings and the neighbourhood was very hostile and coming out in big numbers to protest this new thing they thought threatened the wellbeing of their neighbourhood, that was already disadvantaged and facing problems with multi-ethnicity, low social development, a lot of people out of a job. And they said for instance that their own children could not get housing, and these foreigners, these refugees were getting everything. They wanted to set the place on fire, they were really very concerned about it.*

Empirical evidence was sought to understand whether this apparent ‘hostility’ was an enduring reaction from the neighbourhood. This was important, since interviews with project partners suggested that hostility at the meetings was fuelled by outside agitators, but that protestors were coming from within the neighbourhood too.

The neighbourhood survey indicates that in November 2017, the group of neighbourhood residents objecting to the centre’s presence in Overvecht was a minority. It shows that shortly after the centre

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<sup>40</sup> At this stage of the research, interview and observation data have been preliminarily coded on the basis of the key aspects of the theory of change, which were used to develop the interview schedule. However a more extensive round of open coding of the interviews is being undertaken in NVivo, a programme for computer assisted analysis, with the detailed analysis informing the second stage of the project and final evaluation.

opened, responding neighbourhood residents in November 2017 generally possessed moderately positive attitudes towards the centre and towards asylum seekers in general:

**How do you experience the presence of the asylum seekers' center in Overvecht?**

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Very positive	12	4,2
	Positive	120	42,0
	Neutral	137	47,9
	Negative	11	3,8
	Very negative	6	2,1
	Total	286	100
	Missing	18	
Total	304		

46.2% of respondents experienced the presence of the AZC in Overvecht as positive, 47.9% were neutral towards the centre, and 5.9% reported a negative attitude towards Plan Einstein. Records of the 'neighbourhood sounding board' (*klankbordgroep*) monthly meetings (15 by the end of April 2018) suggested that hostility within the neighbourhood was manageable. For the neighbourhood district manager, the multi-ethnic nature of the neighbourhood meant that people cannot distinguish between who lives at the centre, and who lives in the neighbourhood apartments. She confirmed, *'there's always going to be some negativity but it is not directed towards the centre, and generally the reaction is to leave it in peace'*.

Interviews suggest that the neutral stance towards the centre in its first year might arise from absence of expected negative consequence of having the AZC in the neighbourhood and not noticing the centre too much:

*In practice, I don't notice anything from Plan Einstein. If it hadn't been in the letter, I wouldn't have known at all that it was there. So while it is 300 meters away, if it hadn't been for those leaflets, I wouldn't have noticed it. In that sense, my experiences are neutral, I don't really notice it that much (neighbourhood resident 8).*

Neighbourhood residents responding to the survey also generally agree that Overvecht is a suitable location for an asylum seeker centre:

		Totally agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Totally disagree	Don't know/ no response	Missing	Total
It was a good choice to place the asylum seekers' centre in Overvecht	N	22	125	78	52	17	10	0	304
	%	7,2	41,1	25,7	17,1	5,6	3,3	0,0	100
I want the asylum seekers' centre to move to another neighbourhood or city.	N	12	34	30	146	76	5	1	304
	%	3,9	11,2	9,9	48,0	25,0	1,6	0,3	100
The presence of the asylum seekers' centre benefits the neighbourhood	N	8	76	101	60	17	42	0	304
	%	2,6	25,0	33,2	19,7	5,6	13,8	0,0	100
I do not like meeting asylum seekers during daily activities such as shopping or work.	N	3	14	24	113	146	4	0	304
	%	1,0	4,6	7,9	37,2	48,0	1,3	0,0	100

### 3.1.2. Contact and Participation

When asked about contact, only a minority 14.2% (N=43) of the neighbourhood residents were in contact with asylum seekers on a weekly basis or more frequently. Some of the neighbourhood residents belonging to the latter group have a refugee background themselves so their contacts with asylum seekers also involved family and friends. In wave 2 of the research, it will be interesting to consider whether contact has increased as a result of increased participation in Plan Einstein activities.

### How often do you have contact with asylum seekers who have come to the Netherlands in recent years?

		Frequency	Valid Percentage
Valid	Almost daily	18	5,9
	Weekly	25	8,3
	Monthly	34	11,2
	Less than monthly	59	19,5
	Never	167	55,1
	Total	303	100,0
Missing		1	
Total		304	

Overvecht neighbourhood mainly reported accidental contact; when the survey took place in October and November 2017, 18 respondents had visited Plan Einstein and 5 respondents mention that contact with asylum seekers mostly took place at Plan Einstein. The centre was at that stage not experienced yet as a common place of meeting. This is perhaps to be expected since when the survey took place the larger number of asylum seekers had only arrived a few months previously; it will be of interest to note any increase in participation in wave 2.

#### Where did this contact usually occur?

		Frequency	Valid Percentage
Valid	At school	6	4,4
	In a sports club	8	5,9
	In a public place (street, public transport, shop)	70	51,5
	At Plan Einstein	5	3,7
	At work	18	13,2
	At home	10	7,4
	In a church, mosque or temple	5	3,7
	In a neighbourhood or community centre	14	10,3
	Total	136	100,0
	Missing	168	
Total	304		

By late 2017, most of the neighbourhood residents had not yet visited Plan Einstein and were not aware about the possibility to participate in courses and activities that were being offered at the centre. An important reason for this limited participation during the first year according to neighbourhood interviewees was that the project was experienced as quite anonymous and closed from the outside; therefore the threshold for just 'stopping by' was quite high:

*Yes if you only drive past there, then you don't know what the building is. It could still be an office building. It is that I know that there is an asylum center, but you don't notice anything specific. (neighbourhood resident 3).*

The survey in late 2017 uncovered that there was a potential group of neighbourhood residents that *would* like to participate in Plan Einstein, but had not been reached at that time by communication efforts. Indeed, although neighbourhood participation was an objective of U-RLP, simultaneously there was rather a low-key communication strategy employed in the neighbourhood by the project at the time. This was because the programme management had felt that it was important not to

draw too much attention to the centre while the project was still finding its feet and working out issues of security. However, since then, the U-RLP partnership has increased efforts to reach a larger neighbourhood public. Developments since that time include regular opening hours of the incubator space, after hosts were recruited in April 2018. In April and May of 2018, a Social Impact Factory challenge to open the incubator space as a coffee shop operated, with participants from Socius, the asylum centre and the neighbourhood working to make the space attractive to neighbourhood newcomers. This corresponds with some neighbourhood perspectives; for example, one respondent expressed a wish that when the asylum seeker centre closes, the building would keep that type of function for the neighbourhood. In wave 2 of our data collection, we will explore how the adaptations made might have worked to change perceptions of the degree of openness of the Plan Einstein space.

### 3.2 Socius youth involvement

In this section, we report on emerging evidence on the background, perspectives and involvement of the Socius tenants, the young people recruited to live at Plan Einstein. Using results from the online survey administered in Dec 2017-Jan 2018 and some interview data, we present evidence on the composition of the group and the types of contact developing within asylum seekers on the same site, relevant to the U-RLP's intended outcomes for generating good neighbourhood relations.

#### 3.2.1. Composition and motivations

From the outset, Socius tenants were expected to be from the neighbourhood of Overvecht so that there was an opportunity for local people to benefit from the provision of housing in the city, and also so that the tenants could facilitate the development of a 'bridge' between the neighbourhood and the centre. A local civil servant explained that youngsters were selected on the basis that they were willing and able to engage in community building within the centre and to reach out to others within the neighbourhood, including reaching out to socially deprived youngsters to participate in the centre activities. They explained that it '*was not particularly about the NEETS themselves, the idea was to start a community, and have a vibrant community communicating within and without*'. This was because:

*I [...] saw that this part of the town seemed very distant to one another, the streets are empty and people are not communicating with one another. And the general atmosphere towards this part of the city is that nothing works, nobody wants anything. People are not interested, despite that we are putting millions into this neighbourhood. And then I had this idea of shaking up a stuck situation by bringing in something entirely new. And I started talking with Socius who do these wonderful projects with youngsters. And I asked them if they would be interested in using part of the building to the housing of youngsters from the neighbourhood so that they could be some kind of go-between.*

The 38 housing units were filled following a recruitment strategy (see 1.3) and there were originally 14 women and 24 men. Among the online survey respondents, 14 (60,9%) had been living outside of Overvecht before moving to Plan Einstein; half of the group consisted of students (N=9), the other half were working full-time or part-time (N=10) and none of the youth reported being jobless. The survey responses indicated that many of the youth have busy lives, and they possessed a broad stance of social engagement and interests in helping others:

*I give lectures and advice on the future of the labour market, citizen participation, digitization and technology. In addition, I help many young people to create their own business and a life goal with one on one coaching and online communities. (Bart)*

The main motivation for Socius youngsters to choose to live in Plan Einstein was their wish to engage with asylum seekers and help others, while the third and fourth most frequently named motivations were pragmatic reasons of the low rent and lack of suitable housing elsewhere in Utrecht:

<b>Motivations to move to Plan Einstein (multiple answers possible)</b>	<b>Freq.</b>
Opportunities to meet asylum seekers	16
Wish to help others	14
Low rent	10
Lack of suitable housing elsewhere in Utrecht	9
Opportunities to organize activities and events	5
The location of Overvecht	4
Opportunities to meet neighborhood residents from Overvecht	3
Opportunities to participate in courses and activities	2
Other, namely...	2

The survey therefore shows that participants were socially engaged youngsters, interested in the programme's focus, but had less connections to the neighbourhood than originally anticipated. This might be expected to affect their role in bridging between asylum seekers and the neighbourhood; indeed a question on this topic showed that six of the 19 survey respondents indicated that they introduced asylum seekers to friends or family living in Overvecht, while 10 had introduced asylum seekers to people from elsewhere.

### 3.2.2. Involvement and contact

Evidence shows that the Socius youth were active in participating in and organising social activities for Einstein residents and the neighbourhood particularly in the earlier stages of cohabitation (February-August 2017). Socius reported a complete list of 74 events that had occurred in the first eighteen months, which brought together Socius youth with others (asylum seekers and neighbourhood residents) and 11 repeating activities. Of these, 53 events and activities were organised by Socius youth, 14 were co-organised in cooperation with other stakeholders such as

*Welkom in Utrecht*, and 7 were solely organised by others. The events and activities reported cover a wide range of activities, from playing and watching soccer, movie nights, bowling events, Kings day celebrations, designing the outside area, organising a dinner, to repeating events which included ‘chilling inside’ or ‘chilling outside’, or eating together in Ramadan and the *taalcafé*. There were a few one-off big events, like the *Zomerfeest* in July, where 100 local residents and asylum seekers each took part.

**Number of activities and events organised**

	Project target	Achieved Year 1		Achieved Year 1.5	
Number of <u>all</u> activities and events	20 one-offs	53		74	
		Nov 16-May 17	39	Dec17-May18	21
		May 17-Nov 17	14		
	10 repeating	8		11	
		Nov 16-May 17	7 (until Jul)	Dec17-May18	3
		May 17-Nov 17	1		

The survey responses confirms that Socius youth were participating in the initiative: 20 of 21 respondents had participated in activities at Plan Einstein, with only one of the respondents answering at that time that she did ‘not yet’ participate in any activities. On average, Socius youth had spent 9.5 hours over the past month (November/December 2017) on Plan Einstein tasks and activities (for three youth, this also included activities Socius paid them to do). Fifteen of the 21 respondents spent time over the past month (November/December 2017) on Plan Einstein tasks and activities, and 6 no time, indicating differentiated levels of involvement. Social events running within the Plan Einstein space achieved some contact between different constituent groups (Socius youth, asylum seekers, neighbourhood residents). Notable however is that events were much more frequent during the first period of the project (November 2016-May 2017). Numbers of events then dropped, particularly those bringing together the residents of the building (Socius youth and asylum seekers) for reasons we explore later.



**Number of activities by composition of participants, and average participant ratio:**

	Total project target	Type	Achieved total project	
			Period	Count (Ratio)
Activities involving Socius youth only: No. of events + (mean average no. participants)	Not specified within 30 event target	One-off	Nov16-May 17	4 (17)
			May-Nov 17	4 (9)
			Dec17-May18	5(11)
Activities involving Socius youth + local residents: No. events + (average ratio youth:local residents)	Not specified within 30 event target	One-off	Nov16-May 17	9 (8:14)
			May –Nov 17	0
			Dec17-May 18	2 (4:7)
		Repeating	Dec17-May 18	1
Activities involving Socius youth + asylum seekers: No. events and (average ratio youth:asylum seekers)	Not specified within 30 event target	One-off	Nov16-May 17	19 (6:7)
			May-Nov 17	5 (6:10)
			Dec17-May18	7 (5:15)
		Repeating	Nov16-May17	5 until Jul
			May-Nov 17	0
			Dec17-May18	2
Activities involving Socius youth + local residents + asylum seekers No. events and (average ratio Socius youth:local residents:asylum seekers)	Not specified within 30 event target	One-off	Nov16-May 17	7 (4:10:8)
			May-Nov 17	5 (8:34:23)
			Dec17-May18	7 (6:8:24)
		Repeating	Nov16-May17	2 until Jul
			May-Nov 17	1

In terms of regularity of contact, however it is interesting to note that there were different dynamics among Socius participants, with half having more regular contact and half of the group were in contact monthly or less often:

**How often do you have contact with asylum seekers living in Plan Einstein?**

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Daily	3	15,8
	Weekly	7	36,8
	Monthly	6	31,6
	Less than monthly	3	15,8
	Total	19	100,0
Missing		4	
Total		23	

We also see that most of the Socius youth, at that point in time (Winter 2017) did not actively take the initiative to meet with one or more of the asylum seekers. 11 of the respondents never took the initiative to meet, while the half who did, met with a very small number of asylum seekers:

**With how many asylum seekers living in Plan Einstein do you sometimes meet up with?**

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	0	11	57,9
	1	4	21,1
	3	1	5,3
	5	1	5,3
	10	2	10,5
	Total	19	100,0
Missing		4	
		23	

The survey responses showed that when Socius youngsters were in contact with the asylum seekers it was mostly in passing or at activities organized in the public spaces of Plan Einstein, like the incubator space, or outside the Plan Einstein building:

<b>Where do you usually have contact with asylum seekers who live in Plan Einstein (multiple answers possible)</b>	<b>Freq.</b>
In the kitchen and incubator space of Plan Einstein	12
In one of our own rooms	1
Outside close to Plan Einstein	14
In the Overvecht neighbourhood	2
Somewhere else in Utrecht	0
Via social media (Whatsapp, Facebook, etc.)	5

The image that the survey paints is that the experience of Socius youth was about neighbourly relations: youth were living adjacent to the asylum seekers, attending some of the events, but were not necessarily actively arranging to meet with each other at that point in time. The research showed however that this pattern may have differed during the project as in both the survey and interviews, Socius youth indicate a shift in the ease of making relationships<sup>41</sup>:

**Has it become easier or more difficult to make contact with asylum seekers living at Plan Einstein during the course of the project?**

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Easier	2	10,5
	No change	2	10,5
	Harder	7	36,8
	Much harder	8	42,1
	Total	19	100,0
Missing	System	4	
Total		23	

Respondents gave a variety of explanations as to why they felt that contact with asylum seekers and involvement with Plan Einstein became more difficult. First, this had to do with the group size. The survey was undertaken 4 months after the larger group of around 350 asylum seekers arrived in August 2017. They formed a large group, perceived as anonymous by the Socius youth, very different to the much smaller earlier group. As Alice explained, it *'was a great deal easier a year ago (when there were about as many Einstein residents as asylum seekers'*. Another reason that contact was perceived as harder was because of the composition of the group, now not only including asylum seekers in a similar stage of life and similar educational level as the Socius youth but also families and middle aged people without necessarily a common language. Third, some of the Socius youth mentioned that physical barriers diminished the potential for contact with asylum seekers.

<sup>41</sup> This finding corresponds with the monitoring figures where there can be seen a decline in activities after the first six months.

Until the larger number of asylum seekers came in August 2017, the common entrance to the incubator space (which is in the Socius part of the building) was open. However, from August 2017-April 2018, this was then closed at all times, except when a security officer or 'host' would be available to watch the premises because of some concerns about the safety of the youngsters living above this space. Being open twice weekly for only four hours each time limited opportunities for contact at other times, as Claudia explained:

*I experience the physical separation as an obstacle to contact between the Socius residents and the residents of the AZC, this makes contact in my opinion often less light and also less regular.*

Given the effects on the programme's objectives, there was widespread debate held among the broader partnership about the extent to which the Incubator Space should be open to all, especially given that none of the Socius youngsters in the survey reported feeling unsafe. Therefore, in adapting the programme as it evolved, a solution was developed to extend the employment of (externally recruited) hosts, who would maintain a presence and manage the incubator space. However, in the original programme design, there had been no funding allocated for these tasks and it took until April 2018 to secure additional funds from the city of Utrecht and recruit suitable candidates.

Another reason for less contact may have been that changes in the young people's personal lives demanded attention and diminished their time commitment to the project during the first year. Some of the Socius youth felt that the delays in beginning the project and the long duration of waiting for the asylum seekers to arrive meant that Plan Einstein had, by that time (Dec 2017) lost a bit of its momentum and energy:

*It is all a big set up with several parties, but that has taken away the low threshold and has rather deterred us. Also because it started very slowly, I thought the step [we needed to take] to get in touch with them was big. I may have anticipated this wrongly in advance. But it is difficult to know exactly how it will run. (Susan).*

Finally, there were different expectations among the partnership and the tenants themselves of what the Socius youngsters were supposed to do. Whereas for the programme management it was clear that they were expected to engage in a bridging role between asylum seekers and the neighbourhood, and to generate a community from within, for other partners it was less clear exactly how far this should go. A Socius manager expressed that he did not want the youth's experience at Plan Einstein to be a 'volunteering camp', but instead wanted the youngsters to build 'good neighbourly relations'. This corresponds with a Socius tenant, who mentioned in an interview that she did not want to feel like 'a volunteer' in the place she lives, and there were some indications that they felt pressure to do 'more'. There is a danger in this context that different levels of

involvement in Plan Einstein could generate some tensions within the group, especially among those participating regularly. As Lily said, *'The only unfortunate thing is that not everyone is committed. I'm quite annoyed about that.'* One of the Socius employees mentioned that on Facebook, mutual irritations were expressed. The survey results also support this picture. Socius youth reported high levels of wellbeing, suggesting that they enjoy living in the centre, but some also reported in open questions that they had feelings of guilt and pressure to contribute more.

## Summary

The U-RLP seeks to generate good relations in the neighbourhood, creating a vibrant community in and around Plan Einstein. Our initial research in the neighbourhood showed that the attitude of the neighbourhood to the asylum seeker centre was, according to the neighbourhood survey conducted in late 2017, 'moderately positive from a distance', but the neutral attitudes did not at that stage stem from close involvement in the centre or much contact with asylum seekers there.

The research with Socius tenants showed that participants had busy lives as socially engaged students and workers, but also had fewer connections to the neighbourhood than was anticipated. Activities involved different constituent groups together (local people, Socius youth and asylum seekers) although activity dipped after the first period of the project into Summer 2017. Relations between the 'Socius youth' and asylum seekers shifted from closer relations with a smaller, more similar group of students to neighbourly relations, since they found it much harder to make connections with a larger body of asylum seekers after August 2017. There is differentiation within the group too; so while half did not have much regular contact, or rarely or never initiated contact with asylum seekers, another half of respondents had contact more regularly and were proactive in initiating it.

The programme is adapting to these findings. The limited awareness of the centre in the neighbourhood has led to a more open communication strategy and more visibility for the centre. Moreover, since the Socius survey showed that it is within the public spaces that contact occurs, the partnership's resolution of the debate about the opening of the incubator space has been vital as a means of fostering fledgling encounters. Since the time of the surveys, the opening of the incubator space and presence of hosts appears to be creating more openness and opportunities for contact with both the broader neighbourhood and inhabitants of the centre. Other solutions in order to create meaningful encounters between all parties within the programme continue to be explored. The effects of these will be considered in the second wave of research.

## 4. Preliminary findings: Skills and wellbeing

In this chapter, we first consider emerging findings on the co-learning in Plan Einstein, including an analysis of the participation, reach and offer of the entrepreneurship and language training and follow-on business incubation programme. The second section presents provisional analysis on the wellbeing of asylum seekers living at Plan Einstein in phase 1, demonstrating how the programme is helping participants to feel more positive about their current and future situation, considering feelings on productive time use, connections, outlook for the future and ability to contribute.

### 4.1 Skills

#### 4.1.1. Participation in courses and activities

In the first phase of the project there were a consistent number of courses provided. However, the number of participants was lower than expected at this time, given the expected targets of 800 participants (English) and 600 (entrepreneurship) for the whole project:

##### Courses provided

	Total Project target	Achieved by Year 1	Achieved by Year 1.5 (cumulative total)
Numbers of courses provided in English	66	11	30
Numbers of courses provided in Entrepreneurship	16	6	12
Numbers registered on English classes	800	101	414
Numbers registered on Entrepreneurship classes	600	96	183
Number of participants registered for SIF development programme	300	79	187

Participation rates were affected initially by the lower numbers of centre residents and delays in the recruitment for the intake assessments, so numbers were bolstered by drafting in asylum seekers from the other shelter in Utrecht (a bicycle ride away across the city). Locally, the expectation that young people not in education, employment or training from the neighbourhood would be attracted to the courses was proving difficult to meet too. However, higher numbers of asylum seekers arrived at Plan Einstein before the end of year 1, meaning recruitment of asylum seekers to the courses picked up in pace, and participants began doing multiple or follow-on courses. For the business incubation programme, monitoring shows that as in the courses, participation and activities have gained more momentum since November 2017 the end of year 1:

**Participation in business incubation project:**

	Total Project Target	Achieved Year 1	Achieved Year 1.5 (cumulative total)
Number of SIF events taking place	24	6	22
Number of registrations at events	n.s.	90	289
Number of challenges	4	2	3
Number of coaches recruited	50	65	78
Number of coaches active in U-RLP	50	30	44
Number of 'experience days' attended and arranged <sup>42</sup>	150	10/20	130/150

The Social Impact Factory's business incubation project has been adapted within the last year to respond to participants' needs. For example, initially 'experience days' involved participants spending a day in a work environment matching their aspirations. However initially only low numbers were achieved, as matching participants to appropriate experiences was highly time-consuming due to the highly specific and niche interests of some participants. Numbers of people benefiting increased after the concept was changed to a broader notion, where people were linked up to meet with professionals with relevant experiences, rather than necessarily attending whole internship days. Within the SIF 'challenges' too (where participants respond to a problem over a series of group meetings) the project was adapted so that they took more of an active role in defining the problem to be solved, for example setting the challenge to turn Plan Einstein's incubator into a vibrant space. Finally, although recruitment of volunteer coaches from the business environment was high from very early on in the programme, the team have also shifted their focus to attracting coaches from major global companies. This enabled a more specialised focus, relevant to individuals and according to the SIF team, made coaching meetings, beneficial and uplifting for both parties. The degree to which this model shifts the notion of a more traditional 'charity' model is to be investigated further in wave 2 of the data collection.

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<sup>42</sup> SIF set up experience days between participants and network contacts, but it is not always possible for individuals to attend, so the numbers of arranged and attended differ.

#### 4.1.2. Composition

In terms of participation by different constituents, monitoring data requested from the Dutch Refugee Council shows that asylum seekers have entered onto the programme as follows:

#### Numbers of asylum seekers enrolling in U-RLP project - assessments

	Total Project target	Achieved by Year 1	Achieved by Year 1.5 (cumulative total)
7.4.1. a. Numbers of asylum seekers completing NOA digital assessment at AZCs in Utrecht (including Einstein)	500	109	191
7.4.2. b. Numbers of asylum seekers completing oral assessment at AZCs in Utrecht (including Einstein)	140	43	64

#### Numbers of asylum seekers enrolling in U-RLP project – course recommendations

	Total Project target	Achieved by Year 1		Achieved by Year 1.5 (cumulative total)	
7.4.3. c. Numbers of <u>recommendations/referrals</u> onto U-RLP classes from AZC's in Utrecht including Einstein	640	192		307 (cumulative)	
		English	Entrepre n'sp	English	Entrepre n'sp
		93	99	59	56

According to these data requested from VWN, there were 307 total recommendations to courses following 255 online and oral assessments, implying that some people received the recommendation to do both types of courses. Although these figures show that 255 actual asylum seeker participants had completed the intake and were recommended to the courses and activities, it is not possible to arrive at exact percentages of participants vs. non-participants in the entire AZC. Correspondence with COA suggests that 930 asylum seekers have moved through AZC Einsteindreef, but it is not yet possible to know for certain how long they were there for (so may not have been given chance to do the programme). Moreover, there are only rough estimates rather than exact figures yet available of how many of this number are children or under 18 (estimations range between 30-40%) while finally, in the initial period of the programme, some of the initial participants came from the other AZC, the Joseph Haydnlaan centre<sup>43</sup>.

In wave 2, it is important therefore to investigate the reach of the programme, since although these figures explain participation in the initial assessment, it does not explain who actually registers and

<sup>43</sup> Data provided from COA shows there have been 930 asylum seekers passing through the AZC from its opening. Further breakdowns of these figures into characteristics including gender, length of stay, legal status etc. are being pursued.



completes the courses with the educational partners, or further details about who they are<sup>44</sup>. The qualitative research so far suggests that some people do not participate because they are not interested, or not in the centre for long enough, but that there are also some ‘implicit’ requirements to participation, which might inadvertently inhibit the inclusivity of the courses, including the threshold of being able to speak some English. Interviews through translators with some asylum seekers who do not speak English, Dutch or Arabic show that despite some efforts at securing translators in classes, this may be a barrier, particularly for Eritrean asylum seekers and Kurdish women, while we also have to consider the participation of those with small children to care for.

For neighbourhood members, the original expectation was that 20% of all U-RLP participants (160/800 in English and 120/600 in entrepreneurship and implicitly 60/300 in SIF activities) would be local people. Monitoring data shows that neighbourhood participants were relatively limited in numbers in the first year. In the English classes until November 2017, five of the eleven classes did not have any neighbourhood participants. However, their participation rose sharply from November 2017. The numbers of neighbourhood participants has been steadier for entrepreneurship, but this required some necessary adaptation to the concept of co-learning where early on in the programme five of the twelve classes were not mixed classes, but focused on either residents *or* asylum seekers, for practical reasons of language (some classes provided with English-Arabic translations).

**Number of people from neighbourhood registering for U-RLP activities:**

	<b>Total project target</b>	<b>Achieved Year 1</b>	<b>Achieved by Year 1.5</b>
Number of neighbourhood participants <u>registering at English</u> classes;	160/800	11/101 (11% of actual participants)	163/414 (39% of actual participants)
percentage against target	20%	1.3% against target numbers	20.4% against target numbers
Number of neighbourhood participants <u>registering at Entrepreneurship</u> classes	120/600;	38/114 (33% of actual participants)	69/245 (28% of actual participants)
percentage against target	20%	6.3% against target numbers	11.5% against target numbers
Number of neighbourhood participants <u>registering at SIF activities</u>	60/300	22/57 (39% of actual participants)	53/145 <sup>45</sup> (37% of actual participants)
percentage against target	20%	7.3% against target numbers	18% against target numbers

<sup>44</sup> Course numbers do not tell us this, since they record places on individual courses rather than actual individuals’ names participating across the total programme (including those doing multiple courses).

<sup>45</sup> This refers to breakdowns of figures of first quarter 2017 only, so not the full number of registrations by May 2018.

The initial lower neighbourhood participation, especially in the English courses might be explained with reference to the limited knowledge about the centre at first (see previous chapter) or a result of the initial strategy of focusing on NEETS as a target group. After the first six months, the class criteria were expanded, since in reality it appealed to a different group of people in the neighbourhood, including older unemployed people, long-term carers, as well as those already in employment but looking for a career change. Interviews in the neighbourhood provide some insight into the reasons why some residents might choose not to participate in courses, which included the observation that courses appeared to be suited for specific target groups beyond themselves, or that they were too old, too busy with work during daytime, or the course content was ‘not my thing’ (resident 5). Although there were many other additional activities stemming from Plan Einstein (including music, sports or Dutch) some participants in the interviews did not appear to know of those.

#### 4.1.3. Skills enhancement

Material successes, or hard outcomes, of the courses to date have been the achievement of 16 Cambridge Advanced English certificates, the registration of one business at the chamber of commerce by a neighbourhood resident, and some other outcomes in development. Course evaluations in the first wave of data collection (from January 2018 to end April 2018) indicate that by the mid-point of the project a large majority of participants (n=60 English, 44 SIF) self-reported improvements in their skills following attendance at courses. For example, from the English courses, most participants agreed or strongly agreed that the course has improved both their speaking and listening skills, written English and organizational skills. In an interview, Zahir, a Syrian man in his fifties explained:

*I do two language courses: English and Dutch. In my experience I learned a lot from these courses, the teachers are good and there are volunteers who really come with passion, that I find really good. That is why I would like everyone who lives here to make use of this, because it makes sense. Previously, I could hardly understand English or speak, and now after some time I see that I have improved in English. This also applies to Dutch. After some time I really notice a difference, I've made progress.*

Participants in the first wave of interviews commented that the courses were ‘not crowded’, were ‘small’ and were free of charge, and that teachers combined a strict and kind manner, with many participants preferring a more ‘serious’ manner in courses. Emerging findings also point to the appreciation of individualised responses offered within the SIF incubation programme, which addressed their specific problems or situations. All but 2 respondents on the evaluations of the SIF programme collected since January 2018 (n=44) agreed or agreed strongly that the coach provided useful feedback, with the best aspects of the course noted for example as: ‘*The personal coach, as it deals with personal issues rather than just general issues*’. Evaluations of the SIF programme since January 2018 also show suggest that participants have grown their business networks through

making relevant connections in their area of interest (including contacts with people from Unilever, Port of Rotterdam and Sodexo for example). An example is Mohammad who was helped to find an internship in Delft with an engineering company, where he now hopes to be allowed to move with his family. Amal has also been accepted onto a university course (subject to finance). In this interview at an earlier stage, she explained how the individualised help she received from her SIF coach helped her clarify her ambitions and supported her as she investigated university study as an option:

*And I also have my coach. And I think that this was the most important project for me, because when I come to here, I was not, I didn't have any clue about what I wanted to do. Or what I can do, all my options and all of this. He just introduced me to many information about the education here and what I can do, the universities here and erm....And he not only just told me about these things, we do it together. Like on Saturday we will go together to Leiden because there is an open day there, so yeah, and we are trying to prepare my papers and all this for university.*

#### 4.1.4. Programme Offer

In terms of offer of the U-RLP, the data generated so far suggests that the entrepreneurship and English focus has been of interest to participants. Not all of the programme participants had concrete ambitions to become an entrepreneur, but emerging findings suggest that the programme nevertheless offered valued broader opportunities such as developing network skills, building a CV and learning how to work collaboratively. Participants seemed to appreciate practical aspects and being able to contribute to real issues. For example, Azra and some people from Overvecht created a pop up restaurant as a SIF challenge, developing a menu and cooking the food for about 50 people, as well as doing the decorations, the finances and the marketing. There are also some examples of individual self-development gained from broader involvement and networking through the programme (e.g. in the Socius community, when individuals have become involved in local politics or skilled in PR and media communication).

Emerging analysis suggests that English language skills were valued in particular to enable access to university study, especially through the Cambridge certificates. On the other hand, because of the changed characteristics of the asylum seeker beneficiaries, who were further into their asylum procedure, all asylum seekers expressed a wish to have Dutch classes in addition to English. This was to help them make business and social contacts with Dutch people and enable them to contribute to Dutch society. Dutch classes already exist in the city's integration programme, and the Plan Einstein innovation sought to offer different courses, yet this observation does demonstrate a need for flexible adaption of the programme to ensure relevant futureproof skills are offered, which will vary according to the beneficiary group's situation. It is also interesting that one of the partners also raised the option of Dutch courses as a possible means of complementing the existing offer for the *neighbourhood* populations. They reflected that an assumption was made that the

neighbourhood already speaks Dutch, but felt that in fact Dutch language lessons would help not only refugees but also the neighbourhood, since some of them *'write or speak Dutch more poorly than refugees'*.

Some aspects of the 'futureproof' elements of U-RLP have already generated some critical, internal reflection within the partnership. SIF has observed that certain activities, such as 'Start your own business' might create false expectations that do not correspond with barriers related to participants' insecure legal status, or for neighbourhood participants, their welfare benefits. The SIF certificates of participation were also misunderstood by some participants, who accorded them an overinflated value that might be detrimental in their future job-seeking (e.g. by inflating CVs). SIF reported how, in the first phase of the project, they have had to hold some *'not so nice conversations'* as some participants wanted to investigate crowdfunding or options to gain funds for start ups that would be off limits for people without permits or on benefits. As the SIF partner explained there is a difference between, on the one hand, learning skills and meeting people, both aspects that can be offered on their course and on the other, *'executing* or doing things that help you enter business environment in a profound way'. When people go outside of the centre, and put ideas into practice, they run into all sorts of problems. This was recognised by some asylum seekers themselves; for example Mohammad, a business man from Iran with a masters in management & economy from Teheran university questioned the logic as, *'for starting a business you need to be in a country at least five years in order to know the rules. You also need money. So first get a job.'*

While some of this can be addressed through clear explanations of what can and cannot be delivered in such a course, there is also a shift in attitude required, away from some wider messages that asylum seekers receive, as raised by one of the employees in the partnership, that *'they can be great and you can reach for the moon'*. *Actually, the experience points out that sometimes, 'You can't reach for the moon...'* since for example it is impossible for a refugee to go to a bank and ask for money'. They felt that bringing positive messages only means that the disappointment can be even greater when expectations cannot be met. The focus on entrepreneurship and people's own efforts to enter the labor market has the danger of reinforcing an individualizing neoliberal perspective, while genuine structural barriers that prevent refugees from starting and maintaining a business remain.<sup>46</sup>

The need for adaptability and flexibility in the futureproof offer is equally relevant for highly skilled individuals. In some cases, interviewees reported that the courses could be experienced as too basic and slow-paced, particularly in entrepreneurship classes when translation was occurring between English – Arabic and the other way around. Joris, Jahmal, Azra, and Alan were all highly educated young individuals who reported that they felt the speed of the classes was too slow. As the project

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<sup>46</sup> Lysias Consulting Group (2018)

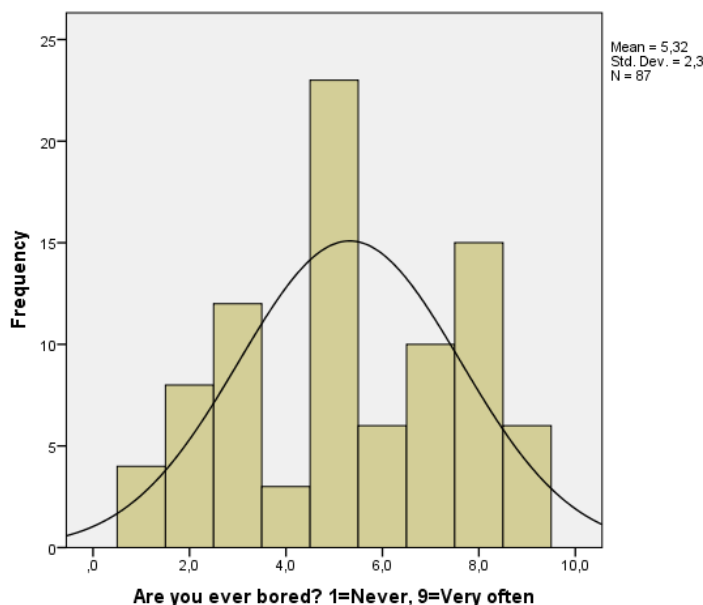
moves into phase 2, the partners might reflect on the experiences of some people with high ability and high motivation who are together in a course with people less motivated or lower educated, and whether there is any scope in rationalizing the courses by some grouping and selection. For the research team, further investigation of the reach of the programme is required to gain more evidence on who participates and who does not, to understand further to whom the U-RLP appeals. It will also be interesting to explore further in phase 2 some of the expectations around what and how long people need or expect guidance if they do seek to incubate a business idea. As a SIF employee reflected honestly, *'we create sometimes expectations or dreams, and sometimes I think should we have done that?'* because of status, personal circumstances, finances etc.'

## 4.2. Wellbeing

In this section, we consider emerging evidence on how the programme is affecting participants' wellbeing, considering productive use of time, making connections, ability to think about the future and confidence in abilities (relevant to the repair of ruptured narratives) and ability to contribute.

### 4.2.1. Productive time use

Baseline assessments of some aspects of wellbeing are available through the NOA assessments, which asked asylum seekers to indicate whether they are ever bored on a scale of 1-9 with 1 meaning never and 9 meaning very often. The results show that many asylum seekers reported being bored:



The assessment also inquired about asylum seeker's main activities during the day. The respondents could choose from various given options, with multiple answers possible. The table below indicates that half of the respondents was already following a language course, while other popular activities

were sports, hanging out with friends and spending time on a hobby. 31.5% of the asylum seekers taking the assessment report spending time alone:

<b>What are your main activities during the day? (multiple answers possible)</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
I follow a language course	45	50,6
I do sports	41	46,1
I hang out with friends	34	38,2
I spend time on a hobby	40	44,9
I'm mostly alone	28	31,5
I take care of my children aged under 12	34	38,2
I do voluntary work	17	19,1
I go to a café or neighborhood centre	21	23,6
I go to school	15	16,9
I work	5	5,6
I take care of someone else (e.g. a parent)	1	1,1

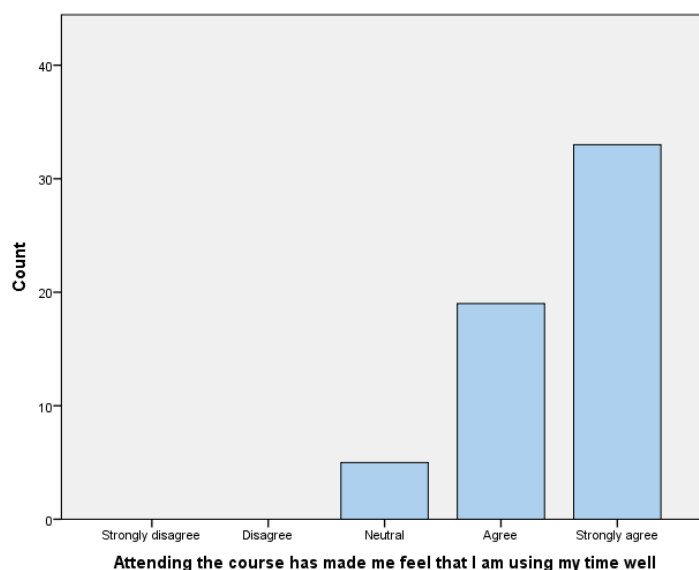
Qualitative data from interviews with asylum seekers showed that following admittance onto the U-RLP programme, many residents of AZC Einsteindreef felt that the courses and activities organized in the centre were crucially important. Most interviewees reported that the programme gave them opportunities to 'do things', 'not waste time', or 'not sleep all day'. Anisa reported of her involvement:

*I think I am also fully participating in the activities that they do, because when you're living in the AZC, you have a lot of free time. A lot of free time, yeah. So it was good for us to come here.*

Most asylum seekers contrasted their experience to that in other AZCs, since some had lived in several, or even up to eight, AZCs before coming to Plan Einstein. All referred to how in these centres, few activities or courses were available. Their experiences in the other sites had made them feel 'depressed' (Zemedu, Mohammad, Faisal), and ill (Mohammad). This perspective is confirmed by course evaluations, which show mainly positive self-reporting of the course in terms of the influence of the courses on positive time-use among participants<sup>47</sup>. For example, these from the English classes between January 2018 and April 2018 (n= 60) showed:

### **Attending the course has made me feel that I am using time well**

<sup>47</sup> Among all participants, i.e. neighbourhood participants and asylum seekers.



Qualitative data from the participants and professionals working with the asylum seekers also supported these observations, through their reporting of visible signs of higher wellbeing among U-RLP participants. It is of particular note that the manager and some of the professionals working at the reception centre reported that they experience a more positive atmosphere in this centre than in other reception facilities they have worked. They observed that residents were more actively engaged, and they witnessed fewer people spending time passively in their rooms. They also indicated that they experience fewer negative or violent incidents within the reception centre, although the evidence of formal incident-reports to support this claim are not yet available, but being pursued.

On the other hand, the research needs to investigate further the possibility that the courses might not benefit some asylum seekers because their poor wellbeing prohibits participation (baseline NOA tests are only with those participating). The interviews revealed that some asylum seekers at the centre might find participation too difficult because of anxiety. For example, Aesha was worried all of the time because her parents might face deportation from the Netherlands at any moment. Others noted that even though participation in the courses and activities was a good way of spending their time, it did not significantly improve their wellbeing, because uncertainty about their status and reunification with family prevailed. Interviews with relevant partners and stakeholders will also explore this point further in wave 2.

#### 4.2.2. Making connections

In terms of making connections, the NOA baseline assessment gives some initial insight into participants' contacts with Dutch people. The question does not specify whether they include people living or working at Plan Einstein or others from the neighbourhood or elsewhere (so may well include COA professionals for example) but responses show that the majority of asylum seekers was

in contact with Dutch people when beginning the programme. 65,2% of the asylum seeker respondents reported being in contact with Dutch people on a monthly basis or more frequently, while 34,8% of the asylum seekers taking the NOA assessment had no contact with Dutch people.

**How often do you have contact with Dutch people?**

		N	%
Valid	Twice or more per week	22	24,7
	Once per week	15	16,9
	Once per every two weeks	8	9,0
	Once per month	13	14,6
	No contact	31	34,8
	Total	89	100,0

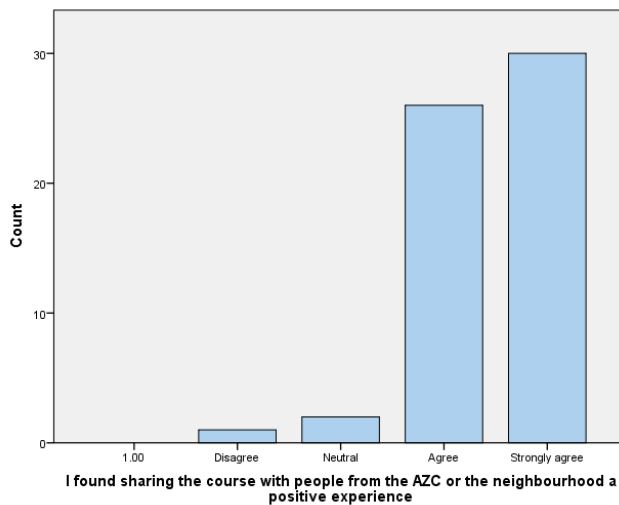
Emerging evidence from the qualitative research showed that taking part in Plan Einstein’s courses and activities has facilitated asylum seekers to meet both with people who live in the AZC and neighbourhood residents. Two Syrian sisters, Amal and Fatima appreciated how participation enabled them to make initial contact, suggesting: ‘It breaks the ice’. Living at the centre helped AZC residents make contacts, particularly in the phase before August 2017 when asylum seekers and Socius youth knew each other by name, sat together at the end of day, held parties or bbqs and went together to different places during the weekends. Faisal described the implications for his wellbeing:

*I was depressed when I lived in all these AZCs. Refugees all come from a bad situation. They talk about Syria all the time. They worry. They have negative energy. Dutch students bring positive energy.*

There were also some emerging signs in wave 1 that the courses were having longer-term effects on generating contact for some people. For example Abdul-aziz explained how he was invited to watch the Utrecht – Ajax soccer match at the house of a person he met on one of the courses. In addition, a Pakistani physician explained how he met a Dutch woman during the entrepreneurship classes, who then offered to teach him Dutch. These two now regularly sit in Plan Einstein’s Incubator Space and work together. Aban said: *‘for us it is very difficult to knock on doors [in the neighborhood]. This [U-RLP] helps integrating.’* The course evaluations also suggest that, for participants the co-learning has been experienced as positive in this respect (from English course evaluations, n=60):



**I found sharing the course with people from the AZC or neighbourhood a positive experience:**



Connections made within Plan Einstein were recounted by asylum seekers as helping them to learn more than just English or entrepreneurship, in particular enabling learning about less tangible aspects about Dutch society and Dutch rules and norms. Abdul-aziz, a middle-aged man from Syria learned that in the Netherlands it is important to ‘think for yourself, while in my country learning is being able to repeat.’ The Syrian sisters for example have also been able to understand student life better in the Netherlands, and were assisted with their preparations for their Cambridge English exams by getting to know some of the Socius students and their friends.

While some connections were developing from the classes, the complementary activities offered from *Welkom in Utrecht* (see page 8) appeared to work well in connecting people. These additional activities include the ‘beauty meetings’ at which women were able to show off skills in hairdressing and cosmetics. Other people (Aesha, Mohammad, Abdul-aziz) enjoyed Tuesday evening’s music meetings, again citing that these activities are useful since, ‘It breaks the ice.’ Many asylum seekers and refugees are also highly positive about the Taalcafé (language café), which were variously described as ‘Nice people help[ing] you at your own level’, ‘It is great, wonderful’, ‘Teachers are so nice and competent as well’. ‘Nice people, it is touching,’ and ‘I learn more than at the COA Dutch classes because it is conversation, practice.’ Indeed, it was clear that participants were experiencing other ways of getting in touch with Dutch people beyond the U-RLP programme and expanding their orientations beyond Plan Einstein, including in religious places of worship, the local community centre, voluntary work placements (e.g. in children’s activities) or in sports coaching.

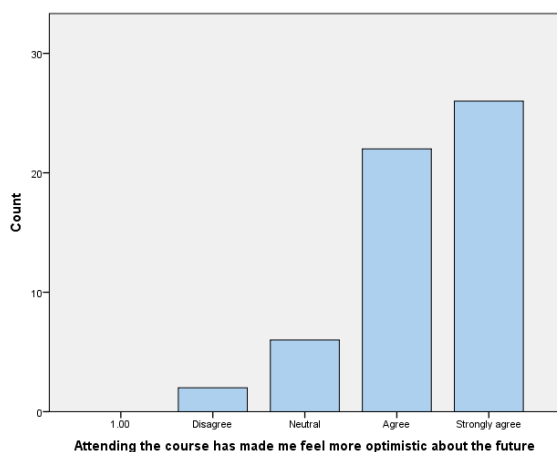
Finally, while the emerging findings suggest some positive benefits from Plan Einstein for asylum seekers’ contact with others, it is of course important to note that the structural conditions of life in an AZC, which are outside the U-RLP’s influence, remained as overriding influences in asylum seekers’ experiences and willingness to make contact. Those living in AZC Einsteindreef explained

that much as in any other AZC, the experience of living with 400 people from many nationalities, cultures and speaking different languages was not easy. Typically asylum seekers would be sharing a room with three or four strangers when single, or having a room for a whole family. Sharing bathroom and kitchen facilities could be difficult when others did not have the same standards on hygiene or noise. And since people have different daily rhythms and activities, it was difficult to have no space at the AZC to sit outside the bedrooms to prepare classes, study, relax or make a private phone call. In these contexts, it was important for some of the interviewees to have a place to go to when they wanted to get away from their roommates, or conversely to meet people and relax. In these contexts, the space provided through Plan Einstein’s incubator can become very important to asylum seekers. Amal and Fatima referred to Plan Einstein’s incubator as their ‘living room’; they were highly involved in the courses and used the space as a place to meet with Dutch Socius students, as well as distance themselves from the gossip they felt their fellow country(wo)men engaged in. On the other hand, experience of shared space and lack of privacy might affect the willingness or possibility of asylum seekers to engage with the U-RLP aspirations, since they might try to avoid too much contact with other people to avoid problems. These conditions require further investigation in phase 2.

#### 4.2.3. Ability to think about the future and confidence

Some emerging evidence indicates that some asylum seekers’ wellbeing is affected by being able to construct clearer future plans following U-RLP participation. Aban for example, explained that he had been a businessman in China for 15 years before being expelled from that country while not being able to return to Syria, his home country as a result of the war. Developing his own business plan at the SIF incubator helped him to get his life together again and enabled him to perceive building a new future. Maali reports a similar rediscovery of his professional ambitions after taking the entrepreneurship course at Plan Einstein, explaining *‘I was successful in Yemen, I will be successful again in the Netherlands.’* The English course evaluations among participants are positive in this regard:

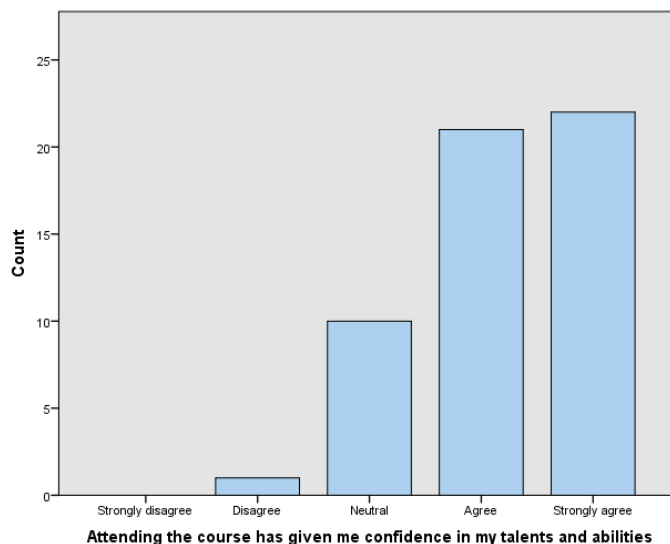
#### **Attending the course has made me more optimistic about the future:**



Emerging evidence suggests that for some participants, the project has enabled them to reconnect and claim some degree of self-determination. For example, Jamileh explained how attending the courses had reminded her of her former professional self as a university lecturer, while course evaluations self-reporting on confidence in English show again the effects of the course on (self-reported) confidence levels:

*But little by little I started to take part in the courses in Plan Einstein, for example in entrepreneurship and English, and little by little I felt better. Because I really....before that, I [...] forgot myself. And I felt like [disabled] people, without any ability. But in fact I was not that, I had a lot of abilities, I did a lot of things in my life. And, with Plan Einstein, Plan Einstein helped me to find again myself. To remember me. Who I was, how many abilities did I have. And now I feel better. And I have more hope for the future. Yeah, it's really very nice.*

**Attending the course has given me confidence in my talents and abilities:**



Although this gives some evidence that some individuals are building steps towards the future, this initial evidence must again be contextualized in relation to the overriding transience and uncertainty characteristic of claiming asylum, on which the U-RLP programme has no direct control. Almost all interviewees have moved asylum centres, and living in five or six different AZCs during a year or eighteen months was not exceptional. Those living at AZC Einsteindreef are not told their length of stay or where they will be housed afterwards (in Utrecht or elsewhere). Such conditions may influence their willingness and ability to connect to people from the neighbourhood or AZC, and their conceptions of the future may rest more on resolution of practical, legal aspects such as their asylum claims, their claim to family reunion, or their claim to a house. In these contexts, participants might feel that only once a decision is taken on their claim, their lives will really start. Also, in the early years after migration, refugees are known to be overly optimistic about their future opportunities in the country of destination – a phenomenon referred to as ‘immigrant optimism’.

Initial optimism tends to change over time into a more realistic and critical view of their future.<sup>48</sup> Wave 2 analysis in the final report will give insight into possible changes in asylum seekers' confidence in their futures over time.

#### 4.2.4. Opportunity to contribute

Emerging evidence suggests that asylum seekers enjoyed the courses and activities and appreciated being able to participate. However, some of the participants also felt that rather than necessarily be on the 'receiving side', they would like to 'give something back', for example by sharing available relevant expertise that could be put to good use on the programme. Alan for example suggested he could contribute to English classes as well as share his expertise on business consultancy, Wassim used to teach technical skills, while Amina's husband is a highly educated and experienced ICT consultant who was trained in the Netherlands for two years before claiming asylum.

Developing participation might help the U-RLP in further bolstering participants' feelings of self-determination and agency, which are diminished within the AZC context. Participants at the AZC face a raft of organizational rules and regulations, such as limited opening hours of the kitchens (between 8am and 9pm) and not being able to cook in the rooms outside these hours. Other AZCs in which they have lived had kitchens or recreational rooms open 24/7, in contrast to this AZC. For the asylum seekers, the rules and decisions impact their agency and ability to be able to decide even on one's own daily life, let alone their future. Joris said for example,

*Once I asked COA to give me 10 more minutes. I started cooking at 8 but was not ready at 9. He said 'no'. COA people always say, 'these are the rules', but rules are made by people. If they don't work, we should change them. Some COA people sometimes treat us like we can't do anything.*

On occasions where participants have been given the opportunity to contribute, the emerging evidence suggests this is highly valued by participants. For example, the SIF challenges, directed at solving a neighbourhood problem were experienced as a good way of 'giving something back'. Participation by all U-RLP beneficiary groups (asylum seekers, Socius youngsters and neighbours) in presentations during the Social Affairs Forum, an international event for the Eurocities network organized by the Utrecht local authority for their European counterparts, was enjoyed. In preparing for the presentations, the youngsters were trained in pitching and debating skills. They expressed afterwards their pride in the results; how they themselves had learned a lot, but they also felt they had contributed something back to the project, and felt empowered, useful and that they had spent their time in a meaningful way. It is encouraging that SIF has also been looking at ways of harnessing some of the talents of the asylum seekers within the delivery of their own programmes, which will be reported in wave 2.

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<sup>48</sup> Hendriks (2018)

## Summary

Through taking part in courses and entrepreneurship activities in joint classes held with asylum seekers and neighbours, the U-RLP expects to enhance participants' skills, labour market readiness and wellbeing. Initial findings show increased participation, positive course and activity evaluations and some material successes of the programme. Participants also seem to show higher levels of wellbeing, albeit within the constraints within which the U-RLP has to work (including lack of privacy in a large AZC, the legal insecurity of the asylum procedure and a feeling that 'lives are on hold' until asylum seekers have a decision). There is a continuous need to ensure the 'futureproof' focus of the programme adapts to participants' needs, especially given the changed nature of beneficiaries, which included higher numbers of people who are in the centre with positive status decisions, and who hold desires for integration within Dutch society. It is also important that participants are not left with unrealistic expectations through the programme. Finally, the 'reach' of the U-RLP programme requires further investigation. To the end of April 2018, 255 asylum seekers were recommended onto the U-RLP programme (including some initially from Joseph Haydnlaan AZC). Emerging evidence indicates that the courses may attract people who already possess a minimal level of skills and capacities (including language skills). Further investigation is required of numbers and profiles of individuals engaging on the courses and reasons for non-engagement, in order to offer further recommendations around inclusivity.

## 5. Plan Einstein's implementation process

Previous chapters have described the original plan for the project and provided some initial indications of the emerging picture of Plan Einstein so far. However, in seeking to understand how this picture is emerging, it is important to consider the process of implementation and partnership collaboration. This chapter offers early insight into relevant aspects, including the programme's adaption in the face of shifting external contexts, the influence of political sensitivities around the project and challenges of horizontal network collaboration. More definitive conclusions and recommendations around the process aspect of the evaluation will be presented in the final report, and will be reflected in the refined theory of change developed by the end of the project.

### 5.1 Shifting external contexts and adapting the plan

Evidence gathered thus far shows how the project team has developed and adapted the U-RLP programme in response to a changing context. Plan Einstein's initial conception as an emergency centre anticipated that asylum seekers would go there immediately after arriving in the Netherlands, where new residents would access courses and activities 'from day one'. The initial plan included short-term courses of 8 weeks as it was assumed that asylum seekers would be living in Plan Einstein only for relatively short periods of time. In reality a more diverse population of individuals and families arrived who were at different stages of the asylum procedure. Participants were far from starting these courses and activities from 'day one'. For example, assessments indicate that many asylum seekers were already taking language courses upon entering the U-RLP programme, while some were already permit-holders<sup>49</sup>.

The 'futureproof' approach of Plan Einstein (with activities in English) therefore needed some consideration as a result of the changes. The programme has shown adaptability by allowing participants to follow courses at different levels, thus allowing participants to progress, and by offering different elements of the SIF business incubator program as a follow up. In particular, the programme has been able to meet diverging needs of participants by situating the U-RLP offer within the broader, complementary integration facilities within the city, for example offering the Dutch Taalcafé (Language café) organized by *Welkom in Utrecht* in the incubator space. The courses were adapted practically too to accommodate some difference in languages, with one class for mixed participants in English, one class with English-Arabic translation attended by asylum seekers only and some further translations brought in. Another adaptation has been that the provision of start-up awards, which were designed to support fledgling new businesses, has been shelved. There has also been emphasis on more *individually appropriate* matching and coaching activities (by SIF) to connect refugees to Dutch employers. Learning from the project suggests that flexibility and agility in

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<sup>49</sup> Data is being sought from COA to clarify legal status of inhabitants.

response is vital, where providing different programs for different groups might be necessary to offer a truly futureproof programme.

An emerging challenge is that the project has to close at the pre-set date of November 2018. With the end-date nearing, the outlook of certain stakeholders is - understandably – also changing. For example, the Socius youngsters are already looking for other housing options and moving out, while the focus from some project partners is shifting towards transferability of the program to the other AZC in the city. In these contexts, the ending of a living lab experiment poses ethical questions<sup>50</sup> about how to manage withdrawing an intervention that a range of beneficiaries have committed to and profited from (including the asylum seekers, youngsters and the neighbourhood). The project team has started addressing these challenges, as the centre nears closure, and outcomes of this process will be reported in the final evaluation.

## 5.2 The U-RLP in a politically sensitive context

Plan Einstein from the outset has been an initiative that engaged in upstream action against a quite restrictive national and local political and policy context. The Dutch national government principle for asylum reception is that it should be ‘basic but humane’<sup>51</sup>, while there is also reluctance to offer asylum seekers and refugees extra provisions through local policies that would not be available to other unemployed or poorer citizens<sup>52</sup>. Plan Einstein was something of an exception to existing policy, becoming possible as a result of the European UIA funding but still yet represented a politically controversial initiative requiring careful management and communication.

First, as a result of the political sensitivity around the programme, the partnership chose to develop a careful communication strategy towards the neighbourhood, engaging in a ‘word of mouth’ strategy in order not to risk stirring public unrest. The neighbourhood ‘sounding board’ was established, containing neighbours as well as the local COA management and representatives of the local authority, while a ‘safety group’ was established containing neighbours, police representatives, COA management, and local authority representatives to pick up ‘early signals’ of unrest. The low-key communication strategy combined with preventative measures for possible issues in the neighbourhood however meant that large groups of neighbourhood residents in the first year did not yet know about their opportunities to benefit from the centre (see Chapter 3). Since then, the project team have adapted the plan, engaging in a more open communication strategy towards the neighbourhood and more visibly drawing attention to the centre through banners outside and increased opening hours of the incubator space.

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<sup>50</sup> Dekker et al. under review.

<sup>51</sup> [https://acvz.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/22-03-2013\\_Advies36-web.pdf](https://acvz.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/22-03-2013_Advies36-web.pdf)

<sup>52</sup> [http://www.utrecht-monitor.nl/sites/www.utrecht-monitor.nl/files/documenten/raadsbrief\\_integratie\\_van\\_statushouders.pdf](http://www.utrecht-monitor.nl/sites/www.utrecht-monitor.nl/files/documenten/raadsbrief_integratie_van_statushouders.pdf)

Creating something of a contradiction is that the programme also needs to generate transferability, meaning that the partners have been obliged to actively showcase the project towards local, national and European policymakers (see the project webpage <http://www.uia-initiative.eu/en/uia-cities/utrecht> on the UIA portal). Despite the low-key strategy locally therefore, the project has attracted much attention externally, having been visited on numerous occasions by public officials. These include mayors and aldermen, high ranking national civil servants, MPs and policy advisory boards, the national COA management board, COA managers from other reception facilities, as well as European politicians and civil servants (especially during the EUROCITIES Social Affairs Forum<sup>53</sup>). In other ways Plan Einstein has also become a public attraction: National television made a TV documentary on Overvecht ‘*Typically Overvecht*’ in which Plan Einstein’s employee recruited to host the incubator space and some youngsters performed<sup>54</sup>. When the national news reported on the national open day of asylum centres, it featured Plan Einstein with Director of COA, Gerard Bakker as exemplary of ‘COA 2.0’, referring to the new way that COA would seek to work (<https://nos.nl/uitzending/27734-nos-journaal.html>: 11m18s quote at 12m28s)<sup>55</sup>. Subsequently the development of *Radio Einstein* and the *wijksafari* (see Chapter 1) have also increased exposure.

This focus on showcasing to support transferability is an important element of the programme, but early findings suggest it also has an impact on partners. While the programme is conceived of as an innovation where it is possible to experiment and to partly and/or temporarily fail, in reality the programme must appear to be performing well in the public eye, especially given the politically sensitive contexts. Moreover, there are also human impacts of the project, which maintains a pressure on partners to succeed. One employee in the partnership summed up this dilemma, explaining the difference between the principle of being free to fail and the reality, stating, ‘*even though ‘it doesn’t matter’ [if we fail], we all want it to succeed as it’s about people*’. This pressure was evident early on, where particularly because of the delayed entry of asylum seekers, partners were anxious about filling the courses. Therefore, initially programme meetings could be quite negative, with partners critical of their progress and the impacts of other partners’ responses. To change this atmosphere, the city team introduced a focus on sharing successes and good things happening during steering group meetings. This has helped to raise spirits among the partners, but a number of partners in interviews suggested it became more difficult to raise and discuss issues that might need improvement. When the researchers started to feedback their first results to the partnership meetings and steering group meetings, this provided an opportunity that was used by the project managers and partners raise sticky issues and discuss improvements among themselves.

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<sup>53</sup> <http://www.eurocities.eu/eurocities/allcontent/EUROCITIES-Social-Affairs-Forum-in-Utrecht-on-7-8-March-2018-WSPO-ASLEPN>

<sup>54</sup> <https://www.duic.nl/cultuur/bnnvara-maakt-docuserie-typisch-overvecht/>

<sup>55</sup> See also <https://nos.nl/artikel/2194464-jongeren-en-vluchtelingen-een-grote-familie-in-azc-overvecht.html>



### 5.3 Challenges of horizontal network collaboration

A final issue emerging from the evidence refers to the way in which the consortium of different partners works. Partners joined Plan Einstein as a result of their own interests and expertise. Maintaining independent professionalism of each partner was a key principle built into the management strategy of Plan Einstein, whereby partners were expected to largely self manage while each contributed to the common goal. During implementation, interviews showed however that they held somewhat different definitions of the common goal as well as views on how it could be reached by their own and others' efforts. This sometimes led to internal tensions, issues with collaboration and difficulties in reaching decisions as a steering group, while some partners felt they bore unequal responsibilities and had to solve problems that should be the remit of other partners. Three examples demonstrate some of the internal tensions:

- At the beginning of the project, the Dutch Council on Refugees had a role as matchmaker for asylum seekers in whether they could enter the courses. Initially the assessments went slowly, so courses were running with lower numbers of participants than anticipated. The gatekeeping role of the Refugee Council created some disquiet from educational partners who were concerned about filling the courses and keen to begin the learning from 'day one'. On the other hand, the Dutch Refugee Council was clear that it should remain the first point of contact, even if it took some time to allocate individuals to courses, since it had most experience with this group and could assess more readily the needs of individuals.
- Debate was held about opening up the incubator space in Plan Einstein during daytime hours. Socius is responsible for managing this space, but as a housing corporation its primary concern was with security of the building and the youngsters living there. Other partners however were keen to extend the limited opening hours to facilitate meeting and connection between the neighbours, youngsters and asylum seekers, for example by using volunteer hosts for the space. Each partner brought valid arguments to the table from their own professionalism and expertise, but discussions about opening up the incubator space went on for about half a year until a solution was agreed. The delay was created initially by discussions to reach the decision to recruit hosts to open the space during office hours, as well as then the subsequent time to secure funds to appoint the employees to act as hosts of the incubator space.
- A final example of partners' different perspectives concerned the role of Socius youth in the project. The youngsters were expected to act as community builders within the centre and 'bridges' between the neighbourhood and the asylum seekers. However, partners had different perspectives on how to do this. Socius left the interpretation of this task open to the youngsters themselves and encouraged them to be 'good neighbours' to the asylum seekers and not work in a 'volunteering camp'. Some of the other partners, however,

expected more activity and commitment from the youngsters after the arrival of the larger group, by their attending other Einstein activities, or initiating more activities to connect people. The issue was discussed in several bilateral meetings between partners and although some differences of opinion remain, partners increasingly came to understand each other's perspectives.

These examples show that managing a project as a horizontal network in which all partners are equals can be challenging at times in terms of collaboration and decision-making. The way that it was managed within the project was to allocate the discussions to different sub-committees who would then report back to the collective meetings for decision-making, but the risk was that it opened up issues anew in the wider forum for discussion. Without a coordinator, there is a risk that achieving consensus takes a long time and that collective learning is missed by focusing too much on individual contributions to the U-RLP vision. It also makes the project susceptible to diversion as personnel come and go. A civil servant explained how their initial vision had been developed with one set of individuals from each partner, but then became vulnerable to different interpretation:

*So we developed the project with some people, and we had the idea that we had a common understanding. But then after that, we had to deal with all these changes in the staff. And every change in staff is a difference, there's a change in your project [...] And it could be for the good, or it could be for the bad, or we have to go steps back again to really again explain again the essence of the project.*

Working towards a shared definition of the common goal and understanding of each partner's contribution is a constant effort. Collaboration needs to be facilitated (using facilitative leadership<sup>56</sup>) so that issues, such as those above and other issues (for example the provision of childcare) can be resolved more quickly and decisively by the project partnership. We will report on the results of the outcomes from adaptations made as a result of the last two examples in wave 2 of the research.

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<sup>56</sup> Ansell (2000).

## 6. Preliminary Conclusions

This interim evaluation report presents initial and emerging data generated during the first phase of the Utrecht Refugee Launchpad, up to May 2018. It gives an indication of how the programme has been working towards its outcomes on good neighbourhood relations and improved skills and wellbeing for participants. Given that when this report was being prepared, participants were still engaged, or some were even just beginning to take part in the intervention, we can only give preliminary findings on results of the U-RLP, and not yet produce a finalized theory of change for this adapting programme. However, the emerging data gives indications of how the project has fared up to that point.

First, in terms of good relations, the survey and interviews suggest that in the first period of the Utrecht Refugee Launchpad, attitudes in the neighbourhood reveal a relatively benign reception to the centre. However, at the time of the survey (Oct-Nov 2017) this perspective did not seem to be drawn from close involvement of neighbourhood residents in the centre or contacts with asylum seekers there, but was an attitude drawn from a distance. The research team recommended more communication efforts of the classes within the neighbourhood, and this combined with other actions of the project partners have seen a significant improvement in neighbourhood participation since November 2017. There has also been adaptability given that the programme attracted fewer NEETS than expected, attracting instead diverse individuals in the neighbourhood, including many more middle aged people than anticipated.

Second, in considering the contact developing in and around the Socius community, the evaluation notes that young people living in the centre met some characteristics anticipated at the project conception, including social engagement, but did not have as strong links with the neighbourhood as expected. This may have affected the participation of younger people from the neighbourhood in the programme and the bridging expected between the centre and the neighbourhood. Surveys and interviews also showed that the initial period of regular contact from the young people with low numbers of asylum seekers in the first six months of the project had given way to relations of more distant neighbourliness with the larger group. This occurred because of shifts in the demographic profiles of asylum seekers, less access to common space because of the removal of a shared entrance, changes in the momentum of the project and in some cases, changes in personal circumstances. Subsequent actions to communicate more to the neighbourhood and develop the incubator space through collective involvement this year have sought to turn Plan Einstein into a more (attractive) shared space for asylum seekers, neighbours and Socius youngsters. The current and longer-term effects of these responsive efforts on the nature and degree of contact will be reported on in the final evaluation.

Third, in terms of co-learning and skills development, the evaluation finds many enthusiastic participants of courses and of the business incubation programme from both the neighbourhood

and asylum seeker centre, who felt that they were gaining relevant skills of some value to them. The numbers participating so far have been gaining ground. There is evidence of refinement of the programme, especially in the SIF projects, where efforts are being concentrated in the coaching, experience days and workshops. Access has been facilitated also to multiple interventions for interested participants. As the innovation matures, collective thinking around the inclusive nature of the programme however might be considered: emerging evidence points to a need for further investigation of the overall reach of the programme, investigating whether educational level, language skills and other issues (such as childcare) might have inhibited participation thusfar. It is clear also that care must be taken around managing expectations of participants, and this will be investigated further as some of the fledgling businesses develop without the intensive support provided within the programme, but perhaps with continuation of networks within the local and national business community.

Finally, in terms of wellbeing, the U-RLP has made some notable difference to asylum seekers' feelings of productivity and of being connected, their confidence and ability to plan, although the project is only more recently building in means of facilitating participants' ability to contribute. Compared to other centres that they have lived in, a very large majority of asylum seeker participants in the qualitative research reported feeling enthused about having something to do other than sit around in the AZC feeling depressed, while the courses and activities have given them chances to gain a different perspective than solely focus on the asylum application. However, the research shows that the extent of this is still, understandably constrained by the wider contexts in which they live, over which the U-RLP has little direct control – of shared accommodation, little privacy and the anxious wait for a decision on legal status.

The insights generated thusfar have, in accordance with the principles of a living lab methodology been fed back to partners at regular intervals to give opportunities to adapt the programme as it continues and moves into alternative settings. Key areas of adaptation to the programme have been around **communication** to key constituents of the project. A low-key approach was felt to be needed for reasons of political sensitivity and security, but these considerations need to be balanced with people's requirement for information to be able to join the project. Another key point of reflection concerns whether some degree of **facilitation** for Socius youth might be useful to help in generating community and supporting the individuals with their bridging role. The task they were set was difficult and not overly defined at the outset, with expectation that participation would evolve organically. This has led to differentiated levels of involvement. The Socius management (now working collaboratively with SIF to bring some of the residents together in common projects) recognise that some space and facilitation (though avoiding hard prescriptions) might be needed. Finally, we have also fed back the importance of using and facilitating asylum seekers to actively create the program and contribute to activities, enabling **reciprocity** to be built into encounters. It also makes active use of asylum seekers' skills and knowledge, offering further opportunities for networking and opportunities to build their CVs.

Further research in wave 2 (from May 2018) on the reach of the project, on the outcomes of business networking and on the conditions in which positive contact flourishes should generate further learning from the project. Of particular interest here is the consideration of whether the more liberal opening policy of the incubator space, established in April 2018 will affect the degree and nature of contact in the neighbourhood. Also it will be relevant to monitor the closing of the centre which was anticipated in November 2018 (although see postscript) and continuation of elements of the programme elsewhere. As Plan Einstein evolves, wave 2 data collection will generate more learning into the effects of this unique innovation, enabling further adaptation of the Theory of Change for the final evaluation report and insight into when, how and why the programme has had an impact for its multiple beneficiaries.

## Appendix 1: U-RLP Logical framework (initial conception May 2017: provisional and subject to change)

<p><b>The problem:</b> The timing and nature of asylum seeker integration leads to enforced passivity and is focused only on those granted status; there is an ambivalent reception in deprived neighbourhoods, where centres are often placed as removed and segregated entities from the local environment.</p> <p><b>The vision:</b> To develop an inclusive approach to asylum seeker reception and integration, which beginning from day one connects newcomers with neighbourhood residents through learning and living together and encourages participation in a mutually supportive and cohesive neighbourhood, giving both constituents better opportunities for the future.</p>					
Inputs	Activities	Reach	Outcomes Short	Outcomes Medium	Long term impact (not evaluated)
Funding  Staff  Volunteers from local businesses	- Disseminate information in neighbourhood and provide opportunities for dialogue between neighbourhood and centre -Recruit people for participation in centre (residents) and courses - Facilitate youth self management and capacity to develop joint activities and initiatives to bridge contact in neighbourhood, including sport, social events, theatre, gardening, cooking	Asylum seekers and diverse local young people ... + people from neighbourhood	Neighbourhood becomes less hostile as local concern is recognised and resolved.  Increased participation of asylum seekers, local young people and neighbourhood in activities together	<b>Good relations:</b> Limited local hostility to the centre and benign attitudes to asylum seekers  Increased social connections and relationships	The neighbourhood is inclusive and there is long-term social cohesion
Equipment and materials  Time  Research	-Provide training courses in entrepreneurship and English -Recruit volunteer local business mentors; provide opportunities to develop entrepreneurship through provision of incubator space, visits and events, one to one coaching sessions, mentoring and networking opportunities - Provide in-depth assessment and recruit asylum seekers to courses -Provide practical support through stay	Asylum seekers and local young people ...+ business volunteers	Participants gain skills & connections through coaching, mentoring and/or completing courses in English, business and entrepreneurship Participants are developing networks and forming business idea  Participants are motivated to take part in U-RLP and are using their time productively.	<b>Enhanced skills:</b> Participants apply skills in practice and show early steps towards labour market participation, e.g. development of start ups  <b>Higher Wellbeing:</b> Participants have higher levels of subjective wellbeing and more positive attitudes to future	Participants benefit from (future free) labour market integration, earning through employment or entrepreneurship in the Netherlands or elsewhere  Asylum seekers are able to reframe broken narratives

### Assumptions:

- Living and learning together will lead to reduced hostility (contact hypothesis)
- Learning entrepreneurship, English and business skills is desirable for participants
- Entrepreneurship, English and business skills will generate better prospects in the labour market
- Some aspects of 'integration' are best facilitated from day one to avoid loss of motivation through passive reception

### Enablers and constraints:

- Competing social problems within locality
- Limited predictability of asylum seeker flow (via COA) and status procedures
- Skilled and responsive teachers and facilitators
- Supportive political contexts with Utrecht as a 'welcoming city'

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