



PROJECTS

# LIVING AND LEARNING TOGETHER

**TOTAL INVESTMENT  
EUR 3 472 892**

**EU CONTRIBUTION  
EUR 2 778 313**

The city of Utrecht offers an innovative and inclusive approach to facilitate the integration of asylum seekers from day one. Residents and refugees live, learn and work together in the U-RLP project – an Urban Innovative Action funded by the European Regional Development Fund.

The U-RLP project in Utrecht, West Netherlands is located next to an asylum centre to facilitate and stimulate meaningful encounters between local young residents and refugees. They can all enjoy the shared social spaces and benefit from the personal and professional development programmes on offer, such as international entrepreneurship, language courses and other social activities.

The initial U-RLP project was developed in 2016 to address local concerns regarding a temporary refugee reception centre in the district of Overvecht. There was a high demand for housing in the district with many residents on low incomes. U-RLP offered a way to provide temporary housing for local young residents, as well as facilitating integration for refugees through purposeful encounters intended to improve mutual understanding.

This unique approach is known locally and (inter)nationally as Plan Einstein, due to its location in the Einsteindreef, a residential road in Overvecht. Young Dutch people moved in at the start of the project in November 2016, while the refugees arrived during the first half of 2017 as the state reception facilities were being finalised.

In November 2018, this temporary refugee reception centre closed. Since January 2019, the lessons learned are informing the development of the long-term asylum seekers' centre Plan Einstein Haydn.

## Creating a community

The concept and vision behind the Plan Einstein U-RLP project is the principle of 'activation from day one', with opportunities for people to mingle from the start. Local young residents and refugees can benefit from individual coaching and attend professional development events as well as the courses provided.

Creating a community has been central to the project's success. An open day in September 2017 attracted 600 attendees. Spontaneous social initiatives have sprung from the initiative, such as the community radio station 'Radio Einstein'. Residents have started businesses, are volunteering in the city, or are taking their studies further.

The project illustrates Utrecht's wider approach to refugee integration whereby volunteers and professionals work together in consultation with stakeholders.

The Dutch government is currently looking into using U-RLP's integration model in all Dutch reception facilities. The project was also presented to representatives from other local authorities at the EURO CITIES Social Affairs Forum in March 2018 as an example of how to develop social cohesion. ■

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## FIND OUT MORE

<http://plan-einstein.nl/>