Main topics covered:

- Various existing challenges in municipalities in the social sector:
  - cultural differences that can lead to tensions
  - misconceptions
  - conflicts
  - violent extremism
- Solutions and ways forward in dealing with these challenges

Best practices:

- Work of Generations for Peace
  - Changing perceptions, overcoming stereotypes by bringing people together across differences to change perspectives, e.g. through arts and sports programs, consisting of training and ongoing mentoring and support
  - Dialogue for Peace – approach
    - has so far been tested in 3 countries (Georgia, Macedonia, Ghana), planned to be implemented in Jordan and Lebanon next year
    - Objective: to improve conflict relations. Therefore, it is not about just reaching an agreement, but to support people in the midst of a conflict to have more constructive relations.
- Examples from Sultanbeyli Municipality, Turkey:
  - **Creation of a Wise men council** that is composed of members both from the hosting and the refugee community, and also includes representatives from various groups (men / women, people with disabilities etc)
  - **Stressing the importance of leaders as role models** to promote social cohesion (e.g. mayors or imams as role models)
  - **Assigning area coordinators**: one person is responsible for one area where he / she is in charge of conflicts
  - **Hotlines** that both Turks and Syrians can call if they have problems or experience conflicts. At the hotline, mixed teams of both Syrians and Turks work to overcome language barriers.

**Lessons learnt:**

1. Acknowledge that cultural differences, misconceptions and tensions exist and put the focus on how to overcome them.
2. Use existing structures that can be supported by NGOs and international agencies, rather than creating parallel structures.
3. Include both host communities and Syrians in decision-making / create space for participation.
4. Focus not only on the “hard ware” (creation of jobs, restoration of infrastructure etc), but also on the “soft ware”, for example creating and promoting tolerance, respect and dignity to foster social cohesion.

**Recommendations:**

- Bring together the demand of municipalities, the professional expertise of NGOS / INGOS, and international agencies that can provide funding for interventions and programs.