



**THE SQUARED CIRCLE**  
INCLUSIVE INTEGRATION POLICY LAB

## Inclusive Integration Policy Lab

**Meeting**  
**26 June 2018, Council of Europe, Strasbourg**

CONCEPT PAPER

3 April 2018

### **Background**

In 2017, the Council of Europe launched the *Inclusive Integration Policy Lab*, an initiative to promote co-operation and co-ordination among local, regional and national authorities in the field of diversity management and inclusive integration. This initiative builds upon a wide range of standards<sup>1</sup> linked to different aspects of integration, as well as on the 10-year experience in working on local integration policies in the context of the Intercultural cities programme<sup>2</sup>.

A brainstorming session organised in Berlin in February 2017, identified key policy achievements and gaps in the field of migrant integration, and the needs of national and local authorities in relation to making these policies more effective. In November, the first session of the *Policy Lab* took place in the framework of the Intercultural Cities Milestone event in Lisbon. It concluded that:

- The lack of dialogue and cooperation among the different levels of governance in areas of shared competence affects the efficiency and quality of integration policies;
- Integration processes require time: migration, refugee and diversity management policies require a long-term approach rather than an emergency perspective;
- Human rights should be a strategic driver for public authorities to achieve inclusive integration;
- The Council of Europe has both the highest legal standards and the policy know-how in areas directly related to inclusive integration, and should thus continue to facilitate dialogue and cooperation among all relevant stakeholders<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> See list <https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/normative-texts>

<sup>2</sup> [www.coe.int/interculturalcities](http://www.coe.int/interculturalcities)

<sup>3</sup> See the [Conclusions of the First Policy Lab meeting](#), November 2017.

## **Overall Objective of the Inclusive Integration Policy Lab**

*Carry out constructive dialogue between local and national policy-makers on migrant and refugee integration, as well as on long-term policies for settled populations with a foreign background.*

The Policy lab will contribute to policy consistency and coherence, enabling the transfer of innovation among local, regional and national levels for a better and more efficient management of migration and diversity.

The Policy Lab will further encourage national, and, whenever appropriate, regional, authorities to adopt intercultural approaches to migrant and refugee integration policies as a means of building more inclusive, sustainable, prosperous and peaceful societies.

Members of the Inclusive Integration Policy Lab are appointed by their national, regional, or local authority, Council of Europe Committee or body, or another relevant organisation, to bring their views and knowledge in the Policy Lab process. The Lab is assisted in its work by experts and members of the Council of Europe Secretariat.

## **Objective of the Policy Lab meeting of 26 June 2018**

- Review draft guidelines for multi-level governance of migrant and refugee inclusion
- Review draft guidelines for inclusive integration policies based on the intercultural principles
- Agree on a roadmap, methodology, format and priorities for the future work of the Inclusive Integration Policy Lab

## **Policy Lab Rationale**

Following recent refugee arrivals, and in the context of lasting geopolitical instability, fears related to migration and diversity are more and more politically mobilised by nationalist and nativist rhetoric. “In a growing number of countries, nationalist and xenophobic parties are making gains by challenging elites and exploiting public anxieties over migration. Fearful of losing ground, established politicians are responding by toughening up their stances on issues such as asylum and law and order”<sup>4</sup>. Discrimination continues to affect large numbers of ethnic minorities, immigrants, and children of immigrants in the EU<sup>5</sup>.

As a result, integration policies often fail to live up to European human rights standards, including those related to social cohesion, equality and anti-discrimination<sup>6</sup>. Effective integration is seen, wrongly, as a pull factor in the absence of agreed asylum and border policies and harmonised approaches to integration across the continent.

And yet, lessons from lacking or deficient integration policies in the past show that the price to pay in terms of eroded cohesion and wasted talent can be serious. “If we fail to devise policies and strategies to promote the inclusion of refugees and migrants with the right to remain in our societies, we will create entirely avoidable problems for ourselves in the

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<sup>4</sup> State of Democracy, Human Rights and the Rule of Law – How strong are Europe’s checks and balances? Report by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Council of Europe Publishing 2017, p.4

<sup>5</sup> See: “Together in the EU - Promoting the participation of migrants and their descendants”, Report of the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), March 2017.

<sup>6</sup> Including, but not limited to the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, the European Social Charter, the Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Political Life at the local level etc.

future<sup>7</sup>. It is “time for Europe to get migrant integration right”<sup>8</sup> by putting it on a solid Human Rights basis<sup>9</sup>, and making it an integral element of good governance<sup>10</sup>.

Migrant and refugee inclusion policies pertain to a range of policy areas and levels of government, and their elaboration is a complex and delicate process that would certainly benefit from greater consultation and coordination among all relevant stakeholders. Their success ultimately depends on ensuring ownership and active engagement by state institutions, regional and local authorities, and civil society. It also depends on embedding in diversity management policies the experiences and impact of effective and/or innovative approaches to integration that have been successfully tested in states and cities across Europe and beyond.

The European Commission against racism and intolerance (ECRI) noted that efforts have been made by local communities and authorities which face the biggest challenges in the area of integration support, in particular in the areas of housing, education, employment and health. In this context, ECRI has noted that a large number of municipalities in recipient countries have successfully mobilised groups of local residents as volunteers to support and accompany newly arrived migrants.

Compelling research has demonstrated the value of the inclusive approach to integration and diversity management for local communities. There is also evidence that integration policies that are coordinated and coherent between the different levels of government are more successful<sup>11</sup>. The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe recognised in 2015 the value of interculturalism for building integration policies that are in line with Member States’ human rights obligations, and encouraged them to adopt the intercultural integration policy model<sup>12</sup>.

In order to facilitate the development of holistic, rights-based and inclusive integration policies it is necessary to build a solid partnership between local and national authorities, with the participation of European institutions. Sustainable answers to integration challenges can only be tackled through multi-level and multi-stakeholder governance of diversity and inclusion issues, and inspired by the intercultural integration approach.

The Council of Europe, as a source and promoter of both European human rights and equality standards, has been identified as the organisation that should support the building of such partnerships at the national level. It will also continue to facilitate dialogue between member States, cities and other stakeholders on the concept and content of human rights-based integration policies. In the context of this dialogue, the Council of Europe can harness the knowledge and expertise of its various committees and monitoring bodies, as well as of its Intercultural Cities’ network (ICC) which has developed and is implementing the principles and practice of intercultural integration.

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7 Ambassador Tomáš Boček, First report on the activities of the Secretary General’s Special Representative on Migration and Refugees, CoE February 2018, p. 21

<sup>8</sup> Time for Europe to get migrant integration right, Issue paper published by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Council of Europe Publishing May 2016

<sup>9</sup> Guidelines on Human Rights in Culturally Diverse Societies, Guidelines adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 2 March 2016

<sup>10</sup> See Council of Europe’s [Twelve Principles of Good Governance](#)

<sup>11</sup> See “[How the Intercultural integration approach leads to a better quality of life in diverse cities](#)”. Migration Policy Group, December 2017

<sup>12</sup> See Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)1 on intercultural integration