



THE SQUARED CIRCLE
INCLUSIVE INTEGRATION POLICY LAB

CONCEPT PAPER

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Objective

Across Europe, competences on immigration and integration policies at state, regional and local governments vary significantly. This complex institutional landscape reflects the transversal and interdisciplinary nature of integration and, at the same time, it makes it particularly challenging to conceive and implement coherent and coordinated policies between the different policy areas and governance levels.

The Inclusive Integration Policy Lab addresses the lack of multi-level governance in areas of competence shared by the different governance levels, by setting-up a platform for a robust and permanent dialogue between local and national policy-makers on migrant and refugee integration.

The Policy Lab aims to ensure policy consistency and complementarity and enable transfer of innovation and good practice from local to regional and national levels. It could also encourage national, and/or (whenever appropriate) regional authorities to adopt an intercultural approach to migrant and refugee integration policies as a means of building more inclusive societies.

Concept and rationale

A strong case can be made in favour of orienting both national and local policies towards a more inclusive approach. This would definitely imply complying with States' obligations under various international legal instruments (eg. European Convention on Human Rights and the European Social Charter), but also ensuring more peaceful societies. Research shows that public policies and public opinion are inter-dependent and that countries with more inclusive integration policies (i.e. higher MIPEX¹ overall scores) have lower levels of perceived threat and, to some extent, lower levels of negative attitudes towards immigrants. Moreover, inclusive policies may also help receiving societies to trust

¹ The Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) is a tool which measures, evaluate and compare national policies to integrate migrants in all EU Member States, Australia, Canada, Iceland, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland, Turkey and the USA.



immigrants and see the benefits of immigration, thus becoming more resilient to populist xenophobic discourse.

A recent study has demonstrated that countries where integration policies are co-ordinated have better overall integration results². Co-ordination and effective communication among the different levels of governance is an issue particularly in those countries which do not have an institution with a specific mandate on migration and integration, or a national action plan and adequate statistical data to measure gaps and progress.

The goal of the Inclusive Integration Policy is therefore to identify ways to foster more effective policy co-ordination, evaluation and communication across different levels of governance. It will encourage governments and local authorities to take human rights, together with the related international commitments, as a strategic driver for integration policies.

Modus operandi

The Policy Lab is a framework for strategic dialogue where governments are invited to present and explain their plans for migration, refugees and integration, and discuss with cities the role they can play in designing and implementing those policies. It will showcase success stories and warn of harmful shortcomings, and contribute to accelerating the outreach and take-up of the intercultural integration model that has been successfully tested in cities across Europe and beyond.

Based on the assessment of the needs and priorities identified by a selected number of cities member of the Intercultural Cities network and representatives of national governments, the dialogue will focus on a list of ten main areas where urgent action through an agreed and common position is needed (not in a priority order):

1. Language and integration courses
2. Early access to employment and employment opportunities
3. Recognition of skills and qualifications
4. Education
5. Permanent or long-term residence
6. Situation of the rejected asylum seekers
7. Family reunion
8. Access to healthcare and other social rights
9. Political participation of migrants (including maximizing refugee's self-reliance and capacity to take decisions)
10. Setting-up of co-ordination structures for inclusive integration policies.

² Eurofound (2015), Challenges of policy coordination for third-country nationals, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.



Some of those priority areas above have been already brought to the attention of the 47 Council of Europe member States by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights in an issue paper on migrant integration³.

APPENDIX

The following recommendations put forward by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights constitute a framework for discussion in the context of the Policy Lab:

FAMILY REUNION

Spouses and children of migrants should be able to apply rapidly and be reunited with their sponsor. In order for family reunion to be an effective tool for integration, states should:

- remove practical obstacles, such as high fees, complicated documentation and difficult-to-access visas and travel documents, especially for beneficiaries of international protection;
- make the waiting periods and procedures as short as possible.

LONG-TERM RESIDENCE

Nearly all foreign citizens with five years or more of legal residence should have secured an EU or national long-term/permanent residence permit. States should:

- allow migrants with any legal permit to apply and count all years of legal stay, including the entire asylum application period for beneficiaries of international protection;
- guarantee enough free courses and support for all applicants to pass any language or integration condition.

LANGUAGE AND INTEGRATION COURSES

Countries cannot demand linguistic and civic integration without supporting enough free courses and materials for all migrants to learn and succeed. States should:

- guarantee enough free and flexible language learning options for learners to obtain the level and types of language proficiency necessary for their individual professional and educational background;
- ensure that integration programmes focus on opening doors so that learners meet local organisations, services and mentors open to diversity and interested to support their integration;
- ensure that professional teachers and staff of language and integration programmes work with a large number of volunteers and promote intercultural activities, such as conversation tandems where migrants and interested non-migrants can learn each other's languages.

³ [Time for Europe to get migrant integration right](#), Issue paper published by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Council of Europe, May 2016



NO EXCUSES: CALLING ALL SERVICES AND EMPLOYERS TO WORK WITH MIGRANTS

Migrants and non-migrants with the same socio-economic background should be just as likely to be in employment, education and training in a society that delivers on its promises of equal opportunities. States should:

- give asylum seekers full access to the labour market as soon as possible and for other newcomers after no more than one year;
- guarantee equal treatment of migrants and national citizens in terms of access to social security and rights, education, training, study grants, private and public housing and health care;
- review any residential dispersal schemes in terms of their effectiveness for integration;
- assess the professional skills of all newcomers and effectively orient them to available services and jobs;
- guarantee that all newcomers quickly obtain either formal recognition of their foreign qualifications and skills, a new or bridging domestic degree and/or work experience in the host state commensurate with their level of education;
- implement alternative means for migrants lacking documents to validate their foreign qualifications and skills.

EVERYONE HAS THE RIGHT TO QUALITY EDUCATION

Migrant children should be in mainstream schools and classes and their enrolment rates and educational attainment should be similar to that of non-migrant children.

States should:

- implement a comprehensive, inclusive education policy and require schools to effectively respond to the needs of migrant and non-migrant pupils;
- ensure that schools are mixed and able to work with parents and other local actors to offer the targeted educational support and diverse language;
- courses that match the learning needs of their diverse student body;
- develop targeted training and internal/external support mechanisms on newcomers and diversity, and then require and monitor their use by teachers and school leaders;
- develop in-school or out-of-school programmes for migrants and interested non-migrants to learn the major local migrant languages;

INTEGRATION POLICIES WILL FAIL WITHOUT MORE EFFECTIVE ANTI-DISCRIMINATION LAWS AND EQUALITY BODIES

All people who experience discrimination should know and use their rights to challenge discrimination. Public authorities have a duty to promote equality and non-discrimination throughout their work. States should:

- explicitly protect all people from discrimination on the ground of nationality and from multiple discrimination;
- effectively punish xenophobia, ethnic profiling, hate speech and violence;
- collect and publish data on discrimination experiences, complaints and cases;
- expand the powers, staff and resources of national equality bodies and develop more accessible complaints mechanisms at local level and in various areas of life.



ALL EUROPEAN COUNTRIES MUST BECOME INCLUSIVE DEMOCRACIES

Non-citizens should participate in political and civic life in some way and be enfranchised to vote at local and regional level after a maximum of five years of legal residence. Nearly all first-generation migrants should be naturalised as full citizens after a maximum of 10 years in the country, while their children should be entitled to become citizens by virtue of being educated or born in the country. States should:

- grant the right to vote and stand in local and regional elections after a maximum of five years of legal residence;
- get residents of migrant background onto local consultative bodies of all types;
- create welcoming procedures that inform, encourage and support migrants to meet all the requirements for naturalisation and to celebrate their accomplishments;
- open up to dual nationality and create clear entitlements to citizenship for the first generation after a maximum of 10 years of legal residence;
- facilitate, for stateless persons and beneficiaries of international protection, naturalisation and integration requirements by reducing or eliminating fees, documentation and waiting periods;
- create clear entitlements to citizenship at or after birth for children educated in the country or born there;
- address and eradicate any form of discrimination in terms of citizenship acquisition on the basis of gender, age, or racial/ethnic origin.

The full report “Time for Europe to get migrant integration right” (2016) is downloadable [here](#).