



Inclusive Integration Policy Lab

Helsinki 28-29 May 2019

MEETING REPORT

The purpose of the meeting was to review the draft Policy Framework on Inclusive Integration (hereinafter “the Draft”). The Draft is underpinned by a review of existing national and local integration strategies and exchanges with policy officials from Council of Europe member States and intercultural cities. It is also based on relevant international standards¹ and draws on the established positive results of intercultural integration approaches at the local level.

The Draft had been discussed for the first time at the 2nd Policy Lab meeting in Strasbourg, on 26 June 2018, and amended as a result of the discussions.

Section I – Principles of an Inclusive Integration Strategy – was considered already “approved” at the previous gathering of the Lab, so the meeting in Helsinki should have focused on Section II – Goals of an Inclusive Integration Strategy, and on identifying concrete policy actions for public authorities to implement. Yet, in the course of the discussions, some very good ideas and suggestions were made which helped to improve further the formulation of the agreed principles.

TERMINOLOGY AND CONCEPTS

A first debate concerned the **terminology** to use – integration vs. inclusion strategies. Integration mainly refers to migrants and refugees while inclusion has a wider scope, embracing diversity and equality for all, regardless of cultural, social or other backgrounds. It was suggested that the most appropriate terminology for the purposes of the Draft could be “A framework for integrating diverse societies”. Alternatively, a solution could be to continue speaking about inclusive integration, and include in the beginning of the document a **thesaurus** of key terms.

It might be interesting to spell more explicitly the **concept of shared responsibility for integration**, as used in Canada and in many of the Intercultural Cities members. This means that the whole society should strive for integration through a bi-directional approach where the migrants try to accommodate to the new context (eg. by learning the host country language(s)) and the host society provides the tools and opportunities for integration to happen (eg. the public authorities provide funding for integration policies, free language classes, child care, and classes to learn the mother tongues as example of mutual recognition).

Also, it seems appropriate to put in place mechanisms to promote participatory policy-making in order to ensure the uptake of governmental policies by the civil society and the citizens. The necessity to **financially support NGOs** that help ensuring social, cultural and political participation should be underlined, as participatory policy-making or implementation is impossible without them.

A question was raised (but not discussed) on **how can smaller countries/cities develop a meaningful migrant participation** if there are not enough people to form associations or enable meaningful migrant representation?

¹ See [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2015\)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on intercultural integration](#)

Other important questions to consider are the equality challenge in a context of poverty and social exclusion, as well as **compounded discrimination on ethnic, cultural and social grounds**. It is necessary to discuss further how can inclusive integration policies **adopt intersectionality**.



The participants suggested that the Draft should **explain better the rationale of intercultural integration and its core three principles of diversity (advantage), equality, and positive interaction**. It was also suggested to include a **matrix** to show the theory of change - how the four goals spelt in the Draft can be achieved through actions in the different policy fields, and what **measurable indicators of success** can be used to evaluate progress. In order to persuade national policy-makers of the effectiveness of inclusive/intercultural strategies, there is the need for a **better evidence base** to prove the [inter alia economic] added value of inclusive policies. It will be important to better illustrate the **win-win approach** of intercultural policies for more stable, peaceful and prosperous societies. The **SDGs, Global Compacts for migration and for refugees, and Agenda 2030** should be referred to.

The following Goals were considered at length:

1. EQUALITY

Equality is one of the tree pillars of the Intercultural integration model and together with diversity, (positive) interaction and active citizenship, one of the goals of an inclusive integration strategy. These topics are interconnected, and it is not easy to decide whether a specific policy action pertains to one to another goal. The important message is that integration policies are not only about individual rights but also about creating the conditions, in terms of community openness and inclusiveness, for individuals to develop their potential and make a meaningful contribution, as equals, to the common well-being. It is also important to pay attention to how institutions and people behave *vis-a-vis* newcomers (and their descendants) in all areas of life, whether the first unintentionally marginalise the second or deliberately include them, whether they create conditions for meaningful contact to foster respect and mutual understanding, build trust and sense of belonging. These factors will decide in the long run if integration is successful or if, spatial and “mental” segregation, lack of social mobility and resentment undermine community cohesion, safety and prosperity.

Equality as a policy goal has two main elements:

- 1) Ensuring effective anti-discrimination as a human right²;

² According to Protocol No. 12 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, “The enjoyment of any right set forth by law shall be secured without discrimination on any ground

2) Creating conditions for inclusion and societal cohesion by removing obstacles to economic, educational, social and political participation.

Equality and anti-discrimination policies, including no-hate speech, are policies in their own right, and are themselves transversal. They are usually developed by the Ministries of justice. Why should anti-discrimination policies be a part of inclusive integration policies? The answer is that equality is the basis of a human-centred approach to integration and inclusion, a guarantee that integration and inclusion policies uphold fully human rights and dignity, and a way of creating optimal conditions for newcomers to behave as citizens, and be looked at not just as people in need of protection and recipients of services. It is of utmost importance that integration policies are shaped and assessed through an “equality lens” and not, as it may sometimes be the case, through the lens of “pull factors”.

Equality is well established as a principle in law. Equality in the national narrative and public discourse is still work in progress, and unconsciously nurture and hide systemic discrimination. Language contrasting groups of people in cultural terms (majority-minorities, we-they) still prevails and fosters divide instead of cohesion. Public discourse and documents should use language and concepts referring to the assets and resilience associated with diversity rather than with its challenges.

It is important to outline that anti-discrimination measures should concern all residents – nationals, migrants (documented and undocumented) as well as minorities. In relation to undocumented migrants, the Draft should refer to the General Policy Recommendation n°16 of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance ([ECRI's GPR 16](#)) and the principle of “firewalls” it promotes (the strict separation of immigration control and enforcement activities from other state and private services and to prevent state and private sector actors from effectively denying human rights to irregularly present migrants by sharing of the personal data of migrants suspected of irregular presence or work with the immigration authorities for purposes of immigration control and enforcement).

Among good practice shared was the case of Finland which has an equality act obliging all organisations and institutions to promote equality by planning, with the participation of individuals from 16 different kinds of groups. All public institutions and education providers of over 30 employees must have equality plans; cities are also required to do so when they receive refugees according to agreed quota, and to have integration programmes, including also positive discrimination. The law does not establish the content of the plans but conditions for participation, consultation with users, citizens, as a basis for establishing the plans.

Some of the key actions to ensure equality of newcomers as well as of migrants descendants³ are:

- Develop a national narrative of equality which makes racism and discrimination unacceptable;
- Strengthening the role of equality bodies in monitoring discrimination on the grounds of nationality, visible diversity, sexual orientation and gender identity, religion and language, and suggesting policy measures to address systemic discrimination;
- New and existing legislation and other regulatory texts (eg. on the funding of faith institutions or on full-face veil in the public space) should be assessed from the point of view of possible undesirable discriminatory effects;
- Tackling systemic racism, unconscious bias, as well as racial and social profiling in all areas of life;

such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status”.

³ The term « migrants » is used here as a cover-all to include also refugees and irregularly residing foreigners.

- Raising awareness among potential victims of their rights and remedies in case of discrimination and hate crime;
- Training judicial, law enforcement, legal, and paralegal professionals about rights and remedies with regard to discrimination and hate crime, in particular via first-hand encounters with victims in order to understand the impact and consequences for individual and collective well-being;
- Training of administrative and service professionals about common discrimination cases and ways of avoiding them;
- Ensuring effective access to quality education for all residents, supporting teachers and parents association, in order to develop critical thinking, promote a common culture, and develop resilience to hate speech among youth;
- Organising continuous and informed public debate about migration, integration, diversity, equality and human rights, and relevant public policies;
- Ensuring access to rights for the irregularly residing migrants to ensure human dignity and facilitate possible future integration;
- Ensuring equal access and quality to all services for the regularly residing foreigners;
- Considering reasonable accommodation in education, public services and other fields as a condition for de facto inclusion;
- Monitoring and ensuring redress for online and political hate speech which can have strong negative impact on community cohesion;
- Introducing compulsory equality planning for public institutions and private organisations receiving public finance via subsidies or procurement;
- Consider establishing an Observatory or other independent body to monitor the progress towards living together in diverse societies;
- Encouraging innovation and multi-stakeholder partnerships to achieve equality goals, including inter alia with the private sector regarding access to the job market, and the media to effectively counter and denounce rumours and hate speech.

The other examples of policy actions for equality in relation to inclusive integration, listed in the Framework paper, were not re-discussed and can be considered as endorsed.



2. PLURALISM

Pluralism in online *fora* and social media and countering hate speech were among the topics discussed. Portugal has developed, in partnership with Facebook, an online algorithm and educational programmes for civil society groups, including migrants associations, to identify and report hate speech and develop counter-narratives. There are also trainings with the schools of journalists on countering fake news - a joint initiative with the union of journalists.

Besides, the High Commissioner for Migration (ACM) has worked with editors of major media following a racist abuse by police on preventing stereotyping and disinformation and has trained 150 police about hate speech.

Canada has a Federal internship programme to employ newcomers. The city of Montréal has a similar programme.

Dudelange (Luxembourg) have an integration commission whose members meet citizens in the public space (markets) and ask them what is important for them in relation to diversity and living together. These conversations will be the basis of a charter which will be distributed in schools and to newcomers.



Specific actions recommended:

- Teach history in a multi-perspective manner, as well as facts about major religions and about ethics in the school curriculum;
- Public administration and services should set annual employment targets for diversification of staff, to set the trend for employment opportunities for migrants (Bergen, in Norway, has successfully piloted policies in this field);
- Access to the job market should be facilitated at the earliest stage of integration, together with free access to language courses (the latter including for undocumented migrants);
- A legal framework should be introduced requiring public authorities at all levels to take diversity into account in policy design;
- Public authorities should gather and rely on quality statistics and research on the attitude and behavior of receptive society towards migration and diversity, in order to device specific policies based on real needs;
- Associations and companies that want to receive money from the city or the state should demonstrate that they take diversity into account in their human resources, management and corporate social responsibility actions;
- Public institutions should capitalise on the linguistic and cultural competence foreigners have, in the workplace and the social life;

- Public debates, conversations, consultations etc. should be regularly held in the existing spaces where people of diverse backgrounds and origins mingle.

Besides, participants considered that the term “Pluralism” should be included in the “thesaurus” to be added to the Draft, in order to clarify the meaning for the purposes of the document.

The other examples of policy actions for pluralism in relation to inclusive integration, listed in the Framework paper, were not re-discussed and can be considered as endorsed.

3. MULTI-LEVEL GOVERNANCE



The logic of the inclusive integration approach is that it is cross-sectoral and multi-level. Unless all state structures and levels of government abide by the same principles, share the same concept and ethos of integration, learn from each other and co-design integration strategies, the outcome will not be satisfactory.

The actions of different levels of governance need to be complementary and go in the same direction.

The paper so far does not contain much about the mechanisms of multi-level governance and must be enhanced.

Examples of good practice include the Advisory Board for ethnic relations set up by Finland. This is a dialogue platform for good ethnic relations built up under the Ministry of justice and composed of around 300 experts on integration, migrant and minority issues. The Advisory Board enhances cooperation between key stakeholders, provides expert advice, encourages partnership for the joint participation in research projects, and is an effective tool for the dissemination of information and good practices. It further provides an opportunity for State authorities to connect with civil society and NGOs who, in return, can influence decision makers. Similar bodies exist also at the Regional and local levels. Such a mechanism recognises local governments as independent bodies, not just as implementers of national policies.

Limassol, Cyprus, has recently created an intercultural council as a civil society counterpart for the development and implementation of its intercultural integration strategy.

In other countries and cities various forms of interethnic/migrant advisory boards or councils exist. Not always they have a key role in policy-making and the public debate.

In Poland the local and national governments participate in joint thematic committees: one of them could be on integration. The committees are a really important space for policy-making. Both parties are equal and set the agenda together. There is presently a debate about introducing a local government chamber of Parliament.

An “ideal” model for multi-level, multi-stakeholder policy-making on inclusive integration would involve a permanent platform where representatives of local and national governments, academia, and NGOs meet to discuss and jointly elaborate policies, and evaluate results.

Norway has a partnership agreement on resettlement issues between central and local government through the Assertion of local authorities, renewed every two year. There are bi-annual meetings to agree on quotas for reception and other relevant matters. For national integration strategies there are hearings and meetings but they are not as frequent as desirable. A migrant advisory board no

longer exists. On the contrary, once a year there are meetings of the government with migrant associations - a whole day of plenary and working groups. Cabinet ministers participate, so as local officials. This is perhaps a less democratic process but has proved to be more effective. For instance, more funds are now given to the local governments for implementation of territorial policies, as a result of the many years of dialogue.

In Finland the different Ministries are asked to comment on draft laws, and it will be unrealistic to organise instead large meetings and consultations with often short deadlines. In such cases it is more practical to consult experts and experienced minority/migrant representative directly. The Ministers are travelling extensively around the country to meet people, faith groups etc. which helps with the symbolic aspects of people being consulted.

Citizenship panels are a promising form of deliberative public consultation. Lublin had one on diversity and migration and its recommendations were mandatory for the city council.

In Spain there are plenty of institutions and mechanisms to enable cooperation between the state and the regions but there is scope for the improvement of dialogue. While there is a multi-stakeholder platform involving associations, trade unions, cities etc., there is not sufficient co-operation between the state level and the cities: there is a need for new opportunities to be created.

In Portugal ACM provide an overall framework for cities to draft local integration plans, involving the local community and the migrants in the process. However, only 21 of 100 municipalities have local plans. Cities however do participate, through the Portuguese ICC network and through ACM, in the national policy-making. ACM also mediates state responses when there are issues and problems on the ground.

In Germany there are lender-level platforms on integration indicators. This is the only example of multi-stakeholder regional platform. Thematic round tables and mechanisms for specific issues/laws also exist, as well as financing mechanisms which run in parallel.

CONCLUSIONS

Participants confirmed their commitment towards the Policy Lab and their willingness to continue working on the development of a Framework Model Strategy on Inclusive Integration.

On that basis, the draft framework paper will be amended following the discussions held (eg. strengthening the references to diversity advantage and the asset-based integration approach, intersectionality, the need for a pluralist and inclusive narrative, the planning for equality concept based on the example of Finland, etc..). The revised Draft will be checked by a group of volunteers composed of a lawyer, a regional, a local, and a national authority, before being disseminated to the whole group. Participants will further receive a request for policy actions that will be used to fill in the future matrix to be appended to the main document.

Regarding the methodology, future Policy Labs could also take the form of thematic meetings, during which specific topics or policy area could be assessed and discussed.

Finally, the fourth meeting of the Policy Lab will be held on 13-14 November, at the invitation of the city of Limassol (Cyprus).

