

INTEGRATION OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

What would success look like?



INTEGRATION OF MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL: WHAT WOULD SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

Recent migration to OECD countries has been substantial. Five million additional people migrated permanently to OECD countries in 2016, up 7% compared with 2015. But migration to the OECD is not a new phenomenon. More than 10% of OECD residents in 2016 were born abroad while in 90% of OECD regions, foreign-born populations are largely made up of settled migrants who have been in the host country for more than ten years. Refugee arrivals in Europe reached a new high in 2015-16, with several European governments and cities offering dynamic and innovative approaches to hosting refugees. Today, public attention has shifted towards how to effectively integrate migrants into their new societies.

Why place matters for integration

Where migrants go and how well they integrate into their new communities depends on the specific characteristics of a city or region.

Two thirds of migrants settle in metropolitan areas, particularly in capital cities. Cities are attractive due to the presence of already established migrant communities as well as better access to jobs and public services. Asylum seekers however, are typically more spread out across the country. In many European countries some small and medium-sized cities, including in rural areas, have also become asylum seekers destinations. Some are seeking to revive their economic and demographic base, including through welcoming migrants, and these cities may look for ways to entice newcomers stay.

The characteristics of the places receiving migrants have an impact on their integration. The structure of regional economies, especially their sectoral composition (traditional industries, service and technology economies, etc), is significantly related to migrants' labour market outcomes.

Compared to the native-born, migrants in urban regions experience worse housing conditions, which directly affect their well-being.

Local perception of migrants varies. Migrants are more likely to be seen as contributing to the local economy in regions with larger migrant communities and lower unemployment among the native-born population.

Why the local level matters for integration

Integration efforts need to start as soon as migrants arrive and last over time to ensure long-term success. These efforts must happen where migrants integrate: into their new neighbourhoods, the schools where they send their children, and the workplaces where they find a job.

The integration of migrants and refugees requires concerted efforts across all levels of government. Subnational governments manage many of the policies that support migrant integration, such as housing, language classes and education, as well as support to local employment and welfare services. Local leaders know their cities and towns and where the best opportunities are for newcomers. They know how migrants can contribute in many areas, from meeting employment gaps to diversifying economic and cultural opportunities for all residents.

Many local authorities are familiar with integration challenges due to the presence of long-settled migrants in their cities. Over time they have developed good integration practices, often before the formulation of a national plan. In many cases, local associations are key partners and 'living archives' of what has been done to support migrants, in particular vulnerable ones, over time.

Taking a holistic approach, this report takes stock of what has been done at the local level and highlights innovations that could be replicated in other contexts.

Why multi-level governance implementation matters

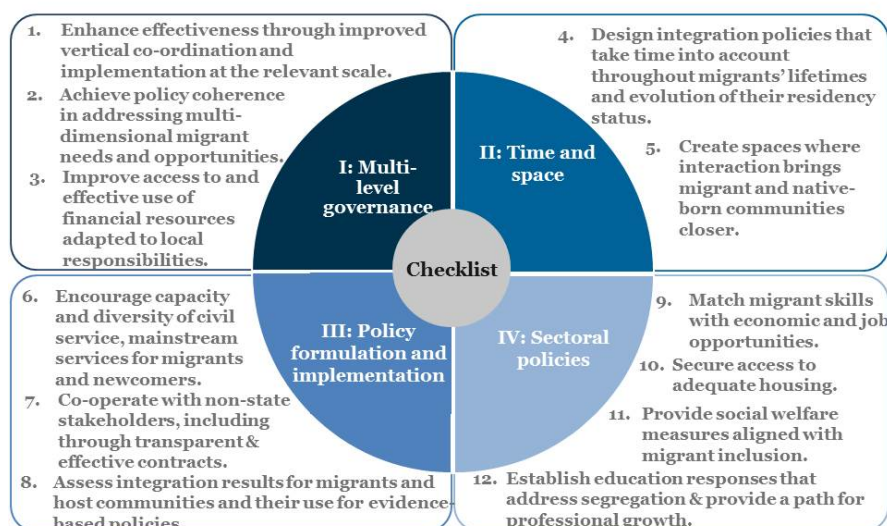
Cities and towns know that integrating people means integrating policies, and that this can only happen through cross-level and cross-department coordination. To respond to multi-dimensional needs and create opportunities for migrants, there call for strong coherence in implementation measures related to housing, health, employment, education, welfare, etc.

However, this is easier said than done. The survey conducted finds that 90% of the 71 participating European cities, including the ten project partner cities, experience challenges in coordinating and sharing information with higher levels of government in regards to integration. To address this challenge, the report explores, across nine EU countries, the multi-level governance approach that establishes who does what and with what resources.

Recent increases in new arrivals, not only exposed cities' structural deficiencies (particularly in the housing sector) and underlying governance weaknesses, also spurred governance innovations. Across-the-board services have been updated to respond to refugees needs, bringing together decision-makers across policy areas and non-state actors in some of the cities analysed. Some of these innovations could be considered pilots, and through close monitoring the city could evaluate the feasibility of extending it beyond asylum seekers and refugees. More and more people today in Europe face the crucial passage from reception systems to reaching autonomy as recognised refugees in the host country or city.

A smooth exit from reception systems depends on effective links between the administrations in charge of reception and universal housing, welfare, health and education system.

12 objectives for public action to integrate migrants at the local level



Next Steps

An important added value of this report is the compilation of a wide range of city integration practices from many different countries into a Checklist for Public Action to Migrant Integration at the Local Level. This checklist offers a systemic way to understand and assess migrant integration policy at the local level. These 12 action points are a tool for self-assessment and peer-to-peer learning. They build on discussions with supra-national, national and local partners and can be implemented in any country, region or city.

Based on the findings of this report, the following actions (among others) are suggested:

- ▶ Develop indicators around each checklist objective, to evaluate policy implementation and progressively measure the impact of governance instruments on migrant outcomes (labour, education, housing, etc) and local development over time in a given city.
- ▶ Align objectives, measurement and information across levels of government to apply more coherent integration policies and create platforms for national dialogue for territorial integration of migrants and refugees, including the representatives from all levels of government, NGOs, migrant associations and the private sector.
- ▶ Explore the potential that newcomers represent for small and medium cities, particular in rural areas, looking at how migration will impact housing, education, labour, health services and how make migrants stay.

Working Together for Local Integration of Migrants and Refugees, describes why and how countries, regions and cities should adopt a territorial approach to migrant integration. It brings together lessons around 12 objectives for the development and implementation of migrant integration programmes at the local level, thanks to its Checklist for Public Action. This report draws on both a statistical database on migrant integration outcomes at subnational level and a survey of 72 cities.

Among those surveyed ten in-depth case studies have been undertaken in nine large European cities (Amsterdam, Athens, Barcelona, Berlin, Glasgow, Gothenburg, Paris, Rome, Vienna) and one small city in Germany (Altena).

The OECD worked with the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and Eurocities to better understand city perspectives.

For more information
<http://oe.cd/migrant-integration>

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