Integration Practice in Europe:

A Qualitative Study of the Views of Senior Professionals

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1. Summary

A new round of funding calls for integration projects throughout Europe is underway and the expansion and restructuring of this funding is likely to be implemented in 2020/21. Against this background, it's important to have a deeper understanding of current activity and attitudes of those who are active in this field.

What do the people who fund, design and implement integration programmes think are the current knowledge gaps and best practices – and what do they want from a project designed to help them in their work? These are the questions which were addressed in a series of structured interviews were held with 31 senior professionals holding management roles organisations involved with integration in a range of different countries and at EU level.

These organisations involve a wide-range of activities in both the governmental and non-governmental sectors at local, national and EU levels including migrant-led organisations. The roles fulfilled by participants include national government coordinator of integration programmes, city integration coordinator, international network coordinator, NGO chief executive, refugee network founder and project coordinator.

In summary:

» This is a dynamic and diverse field which is moving to a longer-term focus following a reactive approach during the recent periods of higher migration into Europe. Senior professionals working on integration recognise many strengths and weaknesses in current approaches and feel that the next two to three years will see significant developments in practices and funding.

» There is substantial consistency across organisations on issues such as engagement with research, the role of practice networks, the generation of new ideas and perceptions of knowledge gaps. However there are substantial differences in who the organisations see as the targets of their programmes and the stakeholders in their work.

» EU laws are central to initial integration activity with people who have been granted refugee status. However, the reliance of most organisations on the Union's AMIF funding programme gives it a wider role in influencing policy at all levels. As such the provisions related to integration funding in the new Multi-Annual Funding Framework will substantially shape practice in the medium to long-term.

» Professionals feel that they are rarely in the position to keep up with the latest research and that their engagement with research is often driven by the need to justify programme funding. Only larger organisations are in a position to employ personnel who have the time to remain close to the research base.

» Perceptions of knowledges gaps, or 'what we don't know that we'd like to know', are focused on the practical issues of understanding which general factors are important in influencing integration outcomes('what matters') and which specific programme approaches assist in achieving positive outcomes('what works'). In particular there is a wish to have more work which looks over a longer-term and goes beyond the already well-established measurement of economic integration.

» Evaluation is seen as a major weakness in the sector. Only larger organisations with substantial control over their own funding are in a position to undertake evaluations which go beyond activity levels and initial feedback. There is a broad belief that funding programmes should allow for more complete evaluation and that longitudinal evaluations are needed.

2. Introduction & Methodology

There are thousands of organisations and agencies which work on integration and related issues at local, national and European levels. They range from large-scale public services to small community-based groups. A detailed quantitative piece of research on the dynamics of policy formation, perceptions of practice and knowledge gaps would be of significant benefit to strengthening the evidence-base for integration policies.[1]

However qualitative research is increasingly well-established in the overall field of migration and integration studies and this approach has been applied here.[2] This report presents a general overview of the methodology followed in the interviews and the most significant findings.

2.1 How to Link Research and Policy in Integration?

We are very conscious of the debate concerning the need for academic research in the field of integration to be able to be carried out independently of a policy-driven agenda. The quality and originality of studies requires that they be capable of presenting results which both challenge existing assumptions and open up unanticipated perspectives. Equally, there is a legitimate interest on the part of policy makers in seeking answers to specific questions which they have identified as relevant to current and potential practice.[3]

This qualitative work with policy-makers is part of a wider body of work including quantitative and qualitative studies to be conducted during 2020 with refugees and host communities. These studies have been designed in light of detailed reviews of the scientific literature on the socio-economic and socio-psychological influencers of integration. The policy-maker feedback contained in this study will primarily be used to shape the use to which the research is put and, in particular, practitioner-focused research summaries and guides to best-practice, adaptation and evaluation.

2.2 Objectives

The overall objective for the interviews was to provide the FOCUS project with specific information to help guide its work and to maximise the project's usefulness and impact. More specific objectives are set out in Table 1: Interview objectives.

[1] Substantial work directly relevant to FOCUS is underway in Europe through both Horizon 2020 projects and the ongoing work of organisations such as the Migration Policy Institute(Europe) (see for example: Benton, M. & Embricos, A., 2019. *Doing More with Less: A new toolkit for integration policy,* Brussels: MPI. The FOCUS project will, in the context of later work, ensure cooperation with this wider activity.
[2] For a detailed discussion of this area see: Zapata-Barrero, R. & Yalez, E. eds., 2018. *Qualitative Research in European Migration Studies.* London:SpringerOpen.
[3] A full discussion of the issues involved and a review of the overall research-practice interface can be found in: Scholten, P., Entziger, H., Penning, R. & Verbeek, S. eds., 2015. *Integration of Immigrants in Europe: Research Policy Dialogues.* London: SpringerOpen.

To provide the following details:
» an overview of the target audiences of research on integration practice,
» perceptions of key knowledge gaps and best practices,
» engagement with research and evaluation,
» current processes for programme development,
» opinions on the usefulness and format of FOCUS's specific outputs.

Table 1: Interview objectives

2.3 Methodology

Choice of Countries

It was decided to focus the interviews on a mix of countries selected in light of ensuring a balance in terms of the scale of recent migration. Two measures were adopted to guide the choice: significant and lesser numbers of recent refugees, and different levels of public acceptance of refugees as measured in the Special Eurobarometer on this topic.[4] On this basis it was decided to conduct interviews in the following seven countries: France, Italy, the Czech Republic, Ireland, Sweden, Germany and Croatia. In addition, given the importance of international networks on both policy and practice it was decided to conduct interviews with selected cross-EU organisations.

Choice of organisations

Organisations were chosen on the basis of seeking interviews with four per country: one at national government level, one at local/municipal government level, one national level NGO and one predominantly local/municipally-based NGO. The governmental organisations were either the lead agency at national level or the lead agency in a significant local/municipal area (defined as being amongst the 10 largest areas in the country in terms of refugee residents).

It was viewed as particularly important to include local government organisations as recent research has demonstrated that significant policy innovation and new understanding of policy needs is to be found in this sector.[5] There is significant diversity between local governments in the structures used to develop and implement integration programmes – ranging from fully-mainstreamed programmes to arms-length bodies. This was reflected in the organisations approached.

The choice of NGOs was more complicated. All organisations not controlled by government (defined as there being no government role within the organisation and the organisation maintaining the ability, subject to resources, to implement programmes designed by the organisation itself) were considered, thereby including churches, foundations, etc. The focus was on organisations which have direct interaction with refugees and/or host communities and implement integration programmes.

[4] European Commission, (2017). *Special Eurobarometer 469: Integration of immigrants in the European Union*, http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/survey/getsurveydetail/instruments/special/surveyky/2169
[5] For this and wider descriptions of the unique place of local government in integration see: Careja, R., 2018. Making good citizens: local authorities' integration measures navigate national policies and local realities. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 45(8), pp. 1327-1344. & Dekker, R., Emilsson, H., Krieger, B. & Scholten, P., 2015. A local dimension of integration policies? A comparative study of Berlin, Malmo and Rotterdam. *International Migration Review*, 49(3), pp. 633-658.

All of the national-level NGOs both implement integration programmes and are policy advocates. The local/municipal level NGOs also perform both roles, but are predominantly focused on programme development and implementation. In addition, it was felt to be necessary to ensure the participation of migrant-led organisations and national and EU organisations were approached.[6]

At EU-level a number of organisations involved in coordination and advocacy were approached based on being identified by organisations at national or local level, as being important to their work.

Each organisation was approached and, where necessary, recontacted two further times seeking participation. In 6 cases where this was unsuccessful alternative organisations were approached because of a concern to ensure that the relevant country or sector was adequately represented. As such, a total of 40 organisations were approached.

Structure of Interviews

The interviews were structured to provide a range of information as well as to allow flexibility. Table 2 details the structure and topics covered in the interviews.

Background information » Remit/mission of organisation, target groups and main sources of funding. » Personal role and experience of participant.
Networks & Stakeholders » Main stakeholders. » Reporting responsibilities. » Participation in policy/practice networks. » Impact of EU policies on work. » Relevance of increasing trans-national/regional exchange of practice.
Knowledge Gaps » Issues or factors influencing refugee/host-community relations need to be studied in much greater detail. » Research sources relied upon and time to access research in field. » Relevance of short research summaries
Best Practice » Programmes seen as particularly successful. » Source of ideas for new programme. » Relevance and format of guide to best practice, local adaptation and evaluation.

Table 2: Interview structure

At the conclusion of interviews each participant was asked whether they wished to receive further information concerning FOCUS and its outcomes.

Each participant was sent a detailed note explaining the purpose and structure of the interview. Interviews were conducted on the basis that all outputs would be anonymous and no points would be directly attributed to any organisation or person.

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[6] For recent practically-focused research about migrant experiences and perceptions concerning a range of refugee issues see: European Migrant Advisory Board, 2019. *Ask The People: A Consultation of Migrants and Refugees,* Brussels: EMAB.

Analysis

Each interview was recorded in structured summary notes – with relevant direct quotes which might help illustrate a point being noted. At the conclusion of the main phase of interviews, the notes were collected and sections analysed by the interviewers. 14 topics were identified for closer analysis with coding applied to group similar responses. Four personnel involved in the design and implementation of the interviews independently reviewed and commented upon the draft outputs.

Description of Interviews

In total 30 interviews were conducted in the period 4/2/2019 - 10/5/2019. 10 were in-person interviews and 20 were conducted by phone. One interview involved two persons – joint deputy heads of function at national government level. Five interviews were conducted in French, four in Italian and the remainder in English. Each participant expressed comfort in being interviewed in the relevant language.

	Governmental	NGO	Total
Approached	19	21	40
Interviewed	13	17	30

Table 3: Organisations approached for interviews

On average, the interviews lasted over an hour.

	Governmental	NGO
Average	67 mins	61 mins
Median	65 mins	50 mins

Table 4: Duration of interviews

Description of Participants

In all cases participants played a significant role in devising organisation's integration policies. Participants were either the head or deputy head of the relevant organisation (or the integration function within the organisation) or were lead on the relevant policy or project within a wider organisation.

5 of the participants were both born outside the EU and either hold or have held refugee status in the country where they currently live. They have positions in both the governmental and non-governmental sectors.

Number of participants	Gov.	NGO	Total
Head/Deputy organisation or function	7[7]	9	16
Policy or Project lead	7	8	15

Table 5: Position of interview participants in their organisations

[7] 2 persons at this level participated jointly in one interview.

On average, participants who work in NGOs have worked for longer in the field of integration or a significantly-related area(such as humanitarian aid or social inclusion). The average period for work in the field for participants in governmental organisations is 9 years, and the relevant figure for NGOs is 15 years. While both groups have held their current positions for similar periods on average(5 and 7 years respectively), the median (3 and 4 years respectively) reinforces the fact that the majority had been appointed to their current positions during a period when migration has been a major public issue requiring engagement with a complex and more urgent range of issues.

Within both sectors there is considerable experience of dealing with previous periods of higher than average migration including post-1989 legal and undocumented migration and the major migration flows following the EU enlargement in 2004. In a number of cases participants had experience of longer-term refugee and resettlement programmes including, for example, Vietnamese families and major post-1989 'repatriation' programmes into European states.

	Gov.	NGO
Time working in field avg	9 years	16 years
Time working in role avg	6 years	7 years

Table 6: Participant years in current role and field

For both sectors, the most common area of past work outside of the integration and humanitarian aid fields is the general NGO and social policy field. This is followed by general administrative or business work. The most common academic qualifications are in the fields of political science, social studies, peace studies and geography/migration studies.

2.4 Who we are referring to (Refugees, Migrants, etc)

The scientific research being undertaken by FOCUS is very specifically designed to address issues relating to refugees and their host communities. However the factors, policies and practices which impact on refugee/host community integration operate within a much wider context. When discussing this area with policy makers it is clearly neither possible nor desirable to discuss only policies which are solely concerned with people holding refugee status. As such, while all organisations contacted are involved at some stage with issues which impact on refugee integration, many have a much wider area of activity.

In order not to limit responses and to reflect the reality of both practice and policy in integration, we used the term 'migrants' during the interviews except where specifically referencing refugee-only programmes. The same approach is reflected in this report.

3. Interview Outcomes

The interviews covered a wide-range of topics and participants emphasised the particular concerns of both their individual organisations and integration systems in general. Specific points which they raised overlapped very significantly. There is a broadly-shared sense of the key challenges standing in the way of successfully implementing integration strategies. Participants were highly engaged and candid in pointing to what they perceive as gaps in the system and pressures which prevent more effective policies and programmes. They confirmed a picture of a diverse 'real world' when it comes to policy formulation, implementation and evaluation.[8]

While individual participants in all countries reflected a personal and organisational commitment to integration one significant, and growing, difference relates to the political context in individual countries. Where the presence and integration of substantial numbers of migrants has become a point of political controversy – and especially where anti-migrant sentiment is seen to have a significant presence in representative institutions – this is impacting on future plans and perceptions of what is both required and possible. There is a shared belief that, even where the issue is not the number of migrants, integration policies in various EU member states may diverge further in the years ahead.

The recent higher level of migration from certain regions led policy-makers and practitioners to adopt what they refer to as an 'emergency mindset' to programme planning and implementation. This is widely seen by interview participants as having undermined the effectiveness of programmes and contributed to political exploitation and promotion of public fears of migrants. As a result there is a consistent belief in countries with significant numbers of migrants that policies need to be put on a more stable, long-term and evidence-based foundation.

It is essential to note that the source and stability of funding is a universal determinant of the ambition and innovation of integration programmes throughout the EU.

3.1 Who are we talking to?: The organisational context

Participants were asked a range of questions about their organisations including how they perceived their objectives, the groups they seek to serve and sources of funding.

3.1.1 Nature of Organisations

Section 2.3 above explains the broad balance of organisations represented. The governmental organisations each have primary responsibility at local or national levels for the broad policy and either funding and coordination or funding, coordination and implementation of integration programmes. Countries differ on the extent of mainstreaming of integration programmes and, as such, some emphasize coordination while others are more closely involved in implementation. They tend to be inflexible in terms of only dealing with migrants with legal status.

In contrast, there is a much greater diversity amongst NGOs active on integration in terms of both governance and primary motivation. They include church-linked organisations, human-rights and humanitarian organisations, project-focused organisations, private foundations, networks of organisations formed to maximise impact and migrant-led service and advocacy organisations.

[8] This is similar to work elsewhere which has suggested that structured policy-making processes are rarely implemented even within formal structured organisations. See for example: Hallsworth, M., Parker, S. & Rutter, J., 2011. *Policy Making in the Real World: Evidence and Analysis,* London: Institute for Government.

Even where an NGO did not originally see advocacy for migrant rights and policy changes as a role for their organisation, all have seen the need to be active in this space. As such, they are or seek to be full participants in both dialogue and policy development.

Where there is no strong political impediment to this, governmental organisations see NGOs as partners in their work and most convene advisory or coordination groups which include NGOs and governmental organisations.

One very significant difference between organisations in the two sectors relates to attitudes towards migrants without legal status or seeking asylum. Participants in both sectors acknowledge the deep relevance of attitudes towards these groups and their position in society in terms of influencing the integration of refugees with legal status – and especially in terms of issues such as racism, perceptions of refugee motivation and the 'othering' of refugees. However the governmental organisations are inconsistent in addressing this in their policies. There is a difference between local and national levels, with the local level being more likely to address ongoing refugee integration within the context of wider migrant and minority inclusion efforts.

In contrast, NGOs have a more inclusive approach which is, wherever possible and within very serious constraints, more 'status blind'. In addition, NGO participants are more conscious of the problems likely to arise in refugee integration from the failure to have a more inclusive approach.

3.1.2 Target Groups

Participants were asked to state who their organisations view as the target or targets of their integration-related work. There was a close alignment in the broad groups of targets identified but a significant difference in the number and the frequency of each being identified. In general, governmental organisations identified between one and two targets of their work while NGOs identified more.

All participants from governmental organisations identified refugees as a target. Following this were other public bodies involved in coordination or requiring assistance with capacity building. The next most frequently mentioned target was organisations, both public and private, involved in directly implementing or assisting integration programmes. This includes NGOs and employers. At a lower level, broad-civil society was identified and one local government organisation identified migrants in general irrespective of status as a target.

In contrast, non-governmental organisations most frequently identified migrants in general as a target of their work followed by refugees and organisations implementing or assisting integration programmes. A number of organisations identified specific migrant groups as a target of their work, with vulnerable young people and those with trauma from experiences such as torture amongst the groups mentioned. Public bodies were identified as a target in terms of both coordination of work and policy advocacy. Finally, civil society in general was identified, including efforts to reach out to journalists.

Governmental	NGO
Refugees	Migrants in General
Other public bodies (coordination and capacity building)	Refugees
Organisations implementing or assisting programmes(incl. employers, NGOs and Agencies)	Organisations implementing or assisting programmes(incl. employers, NGOs and Agencies)
Civil Society	Specific migrants groups (e.g. vulnerable youth, torture victims)
Migrants in General	Public bodies (coordination advocacy)
	Civil society

Table 7: Target groups of organisations (in order of number of references)

It is notable the relatively low level at which the general public was identified as a target. While public education and engagement is understood as an important issue which is, in fact, an essential part of achieving integration, it is not a priority focus.

In fact, it is a common belief in both governmental and non-governmental organisations that most integration work is still effectively based on assimilation rather than the 2-way process identified in key strategies. This said, there is significant support within NGOs for anti-racism and social inclusion campaigning and many of the organisations which have other activities seek to mainstream integration in some way within this work.

3.1.3 Funding

The level and source of funding for all organisations is central to the scale and nature of their integration work. There are very significant differences between sectors in terms of the source and security of their funding.[9]

For governmental organisations the most important funding sources is, unsurprisingly, the national public budget. The second-most referenced funding sources is the EU's Asylum, Migration & Integration Fund(AMIF). AMIF funding is used for a variety of activities including non-integration tasks such as enforcement, but the distinct integration funding is being accessed. Local government organisations receive some of their integration funding from the discretionary element of their local budget. In addition to these sources, a number of governmental organisations mentioned other EU funding as being relevant including the European Social Fund (ESF), especially in the context of social inclusion projects, and Horizon 2020 research projects.

In contrast, NGOs most frequently cited AMIF as a source of funding. It is generally held within the sector that AMIF is absolutely central to integration activity and that this reliance is increasing because of the emphasis being placed in national government budgets on border controls and other routes to limiting migration. Funding from private foundations and private donations is important for many organisations and allows greater flexibility in responding to new needs. In a 2013 review of practices in this field the European Commission itself found that regular, predictable programmes with sustained funding were central to successful practice: European Commission Directorate General for Internal Policies, 2013. *Comparative study on the best practices for the integration of resettled refugees in the EU member states,* Brussels: European Commission.

[9] In a 2013 review of practices in this field the European Commission itself found that regular, predictable programmes with sustained funding were central to successful practice: European Commission Directorate General for Internal Policies, 2013. *Comparative study on the best practices for the integration of resettled refugees in the EU member states,* Brussels: European Commission.

Governmental	NGO
National government budget	AMIF
AMIF	National government budget
Local government budget	Private foundations
Other EU sources (e.g. ESF, H2020)	Other EU sources (e.g. H2020, DGHome)
	Private donations
	Local government budget

Table 8: Sources of funding for integration work (in order of number of references)

Many NGOs feel an acute sense of insecurity concerning their funding. This has a number of dimensions.

First, there is a lack of funding for core organisational functions (referred to by one participant as "the funding hole in the middle of the doughnut") which limits the ability to think strategically and beyond project periods.

Second, there is a gap between what they identify as the priority needs and the activities for which they can obtain funding, and this gap hinders their effectiveness.

Finally there is the impact of anti-migrant politics which is bringing into question the continuation of essential funding. This last issue is also beginning to impact on the work of governmental organisations in some countries.

Organisations which have the security of long-term church or private foundation funding have a capacity for flexibility and innovation is often missing in organisations reliant on other sources of funding.

3.2 Stakeholders, Networks & role of EU policies

In order to give a fuller picture of how the organisations see their role and to identify the policy and practice communities they belong to, participants were asked a range of questions concerning who they view as their organisations' stakeholders, what policy and practice networks they belong to and the relevance of EU policies to their work.

3.2.1 Stakeholders

There are substantial differences between organisations in the two sectors in terms of who they view as the stakeholders in their work – that is those who they see as important to the effective operation of their integration function.

Participants from governmental organisations referenced a narrower range of stakeholders with other public bodies by far the most referenced. These are seen as stakeholders because they play roles as bodies to be reported to, they participate in coordination forums, they deliver services for the organisation or they provide funding. Civil society organisations in general and those which assist with or implement integration programmes were also referenced by most participants in this sector. The final group mentioned, at a lower level, was international organisations which oversee asylum policies.

In contrast, NGOs referenced a wider group of stakeholders including refugees and migrants themselves. Public bodies comprise the most referenced stakeholder group. These are stakeholders in terms of the NGOs participating in coordination forums and receiving funding, but also as providers of services for individuals and groups of migrants and as the focus of advocacy work. Politicians and representatives bodies are seen as stakeholders because of their importance to policy and funding as well as in setting a wider public atmosphere for integration.

It was stressed by participants from the non-governmental sector that it is necessary to create an atmosphere where the views of migrants can be heard. The justifications for this range from a rights-based approach through to the practical issue that programmes are unlikely to be effective unless migrants are actively consulted in terms of design and evaluation. In addition, it was emphasised that it is necessary to specifically encourage a culture of meaningful feedback and that central to this is that migrants not be afraid to express their opinions or to provide essential information.

NGOs see networks, both national and international as important stakeholders (see 3.2.2 below). Because of the distinct emphasis which NGOs place on the role of wider social discourse in influencing integration they frequently see civil society in general and the media as stakeholders in their work.

Governmental	NGO
Other public bodies(for reporting, coordination, service delivery, oversight and funding)	Public bodies(for coordination, funding, advocacy and access to services for individuals and groups)
Civil society organisations	Politicians and representative bodies
Organisations assisting or implementing integration programmes	National network in field
International networks	International network in field
	Refugees/Migrants
	EU
	Media
	Civil society in general

Table 9: Stakeholders in integration work (in order of number of references)

3.2.2 Networks

A consistent piece of feedback from the interviews is the importance of networks to the integration work of governmental and non-governmental organisations. This is both formal and informal and involves both the coordination of programmes and shared policy advocacy.

Governmental	NGO
Formal and informal coordination groups of integration programme-delivering organisations	Formal and informal coordination groups of integration programme-delivering organisations
EIN	ECRE
EMN	European Network Against Racism
Project-based networks	Networks of parent organisation
EASO	Issue-based networks
	Migrant networks (formal and informal)
	PICUM

Table 10: Policy and Practice Networks (ranked in order of number of references)

For governmental organisations the most common network involves the leading of and participation in groups which are responsible for delivering integration programmes. The role and membership of these coordinating groups varies significantly, ranging from extremely close governmental/NGO cooperation with joint responsibility for delivery to a much looser arrangement which is more akin to ongoing negotiation and advocacy. The structure of these groups is closely linked to who has responsibility for

services and programmes. Where there is a heavy emphasis on mainstreaming, they are effectively inter-agency bodies which are likely to have an added-on consultation structure. Where integration programmes are more separate and involve a mix of sectors the coordinating groups are more inclusive. In this context, NGOs also participate in and lead transversal networks on specific integration challenges such as health and housing.

On a policy level, the European Integration Network[10] (EIN – an EU-administered group which involves lead officials from member states in information exchange and, in some cases, mentoring) and the European Migration Network[11] (EMN – a EU-administered network which includes national experts who seek to gather comprehensive data on migration in the EU) are important networks. Participants see the EIN as having an increasing important in terms of sharing ideas for new programmes.

Governmental organisations also participate in discreet topic-based networks (e.g. health and education) and networks which are focused on specific projects, including research projects.

For NGOs, national-level networks of organisations involved in integration are seen as central to their work in terms of both policy advocacy and programme-delivery. Even in cases where self-funded and stand-alone organisations have previously belonged to none they are now becoming involved in such networks. This is because they see the need to bring greater structure to the sector after the initial response to Syrian migration. They are now focusing on long-term sustainability and they recognise a need for stronger advocacy work.

Where NGOs, such as church and faith-based groups, form part of a wider international structure this provides an important network for knowledge-exchange and mentoring.

The European Council for Refugees and Exiles[12] (ECRE) is the next most referenced network. ECRE is seen as a space for sharing learning with similar organisations and participating in work to influence EU-level legal and funding policies. The Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants[13] (PICUM) and the European Network Against Racism[14] (ENAR) are viewed as important networks in aiding organisation to advocate for the most-vulnerable group of migrants and to work against the factor which is seen as the single largest barrier to integration in many countries.

Finally, many NGOs reference participation within formal and informal networks of migrants in ensuring that they respond to evolving needs and opportunities.

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[10] Founded in 2016, EIN members are senior officials in the national authorities with principal responsibility for migration in member states and two EEA states. Its meetings involve a range of presentations on current practice in countries, discussion of current policy issues and engagement with researchers. In addition it has held study visits to member states to informally examine integration policies. (https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/network/european-integration-network-3)

[11] Founded in 2008, the EMN is an EU-funded and overseen network of national contacts charged with providing objective, comparable and policy-relevant material on migration. The national contact points vary significantly in the scale and nature of their work. The EMN hosts regular conferences and published national and pan-EU data. (https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network_en)

[12] PICUM was founded in the 1990s and its 162 members from 32 principally European countries are active in a full range of activities relating to undocumented migrants. PICUM is an active participant in migration-related research projects. (www.picum.org)

[13] ENAR is a network of over 100 member organisations from EU and Council of Europe states which is focused on issues of structural racism. Member organisations see it as a means of maximising policy advocacy and sharing information. (www.enar-eu.org)

[14] The Common European Asylum System has been developing since 1999 on the basis of a provision of the Treaty of Amsterdam which gives authority to develop measures such as the Reception Conditions Directive and the Qualification Directive which are central to the reception of asylum seekers and deciding on the granting of refugee status. The European Asylum Support Office is its principal coordinating body and the Commission has proposed that it become the European Union Agency for Asylum. (https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum_en)

3.2.3 Role of EU policies

There are three areas in which EU policies are viewed by organisations as being important to their work.

The primary cited role for EU policy by participants from both sectors relates to rules governing asylum procedures.[15] For governmental organisations, the emphasis is on identifying legal responsibilities, implementing appropriate programmes and fulfilling reporting obligations. For NGOs the emphasis is on policy advocacy at EU-level seeking change to common asylum policies.

The next most commonly referenced EU policy is the quota resettlement programme[16]. In countries where the governments support the programme public bodies see preparing for the effective integration of the agreed quota of migrants as a priority challenge. For NGOs, helping the integration of resettled migrants is also a priority but there is also a belief in the need to advocate for greater transparency on the operation of quotas and urgency in addressing what they see as incomplete preparations in some countries.

The final area referenced by participants is programme and research funding. As mentioned above (3.1.3) AMIF funding is central to NGO integration work and is also an important funding source for governmental organisations.[17] 88% of AMIF funding is distributed via programmes operated at national level subject to a range of requirements in areas such as inclusive programme delivery and minimum activities in different fields. In this way EU funding becomes a more significant policy tool in its own right. In addition, ESF, H2020 and DG-specific funding programmes are relied upon both programme development and implementation. Programmes are frequently shaped specifically with EU-funding in mind. Current negotiations about the role and level of integration funding within AMIF and ESF (currently due to be renamed AMF and ESF+) are seen as defining much integration practice in the EU post-2020. [18]

[15] The Common European Asylum System has been developing since 1999 on the basis of a provision of the Treaty of Amsterdam which gives authority to develop measures such as the Reception Conditions Directive and the Qualification Directive which are central to the reception of asylum seekers and deciding on the granting of refugee status. The European Asylum Support Office is its principal coordinating body and the Commission has proposed that it become the European Union Agency for Asylum. (https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum_en)

[16] In September 2015 member states agreed to commence a programme of resettlement of persons in need of international protection from Italy and Greece on the basis of a set target figure and a quota for each country. Some member states have refused to participate. The Commission has proposed to replace the temporary scheme with a permanent Union Resettlement Framework (COM(2016)468), (https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160713/resettlement_system_en.pdf)

[17] AMIF is funded at the level of €3.14bn during the multiannual funding framework period 2014-20. It is administered by DGHOME and has four areas of activity: asylum, legal migration and integration, return and solidarity. (https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/financing/fundings/migration-asylum-borders/asylum-migration-integration-fund_en). For a review of the operations of AMIF see: ECRE and UNHCR(2018a). *Follow the Money: Assessing the use of EU Asylum, Migration and Integration(AMIF) funding at national level,* ECRE and UNHCR:Brussels (https://www.ecre.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/follow-the-money_AMIF_UNHCR_ECRE_23-11-2018.pdf

[18] For the original Commission proposal see: European Commission (2018a), *Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Asylum and Migration Fund*, 2018/0248(COD) and European Commission (2018b), *Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Social Fund Plus(ESF+)*, 1018/0206(COD). For statements of some of the issues involved and the importance for integration practice see: Beirens, H. and Ahad, A.(2019), *Money Wise: improving how EU funds support migration and integration policy objectives*, Migration Policy Institute (Europe) policy brief (www.migrationpolicy.org/research/eu-funds-migration-integration-policy-objectives) and ECRE and UNHCR(2018). *The Way Forward: A comprehensive study of new EU funds on Asylum, Migration and Integration,* ECRE & UNHCR:Brussels (www.ecre.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/MFF-UNHCR-2.pdf)

3.3 Where do Ideas & Programmes Come From?

The interviews addressed the broad topic of where ideas for new programmes come from and the role of research and evaluation in programme development and review. In general, participants from both sectors felt that there is no 'centre of gravity' in this area. Practice and capabilities vary dramatically between organisations.

3.3.1 Role of Research

Integration is recognised as a field where there is a very large research base in terms of core principles but a less substantial research-base in terms of guidance on 'what works in practice'. Where an organisation is large enough to have a dedicated research function there is a higher level of comfort that nothing major is being missed, but there is no evidence of systematic engagement with academic research or case studies and there is a sense of there being no 'centre of gravity' for structured engagement with relevant research.

There are two predominant models of engagement with the research base. First there is the focused search for research relating to already identified needs including justifying funding applications or 'sense checking' proposed programmes. Second research is highlighted in the context of international networks. At national government level, this means in particular bodies such as the EIN. At local government level this involves project-based networks or membership of an organisation such as Eurocities.[19] For NGOs, ECRE, PICUM, church networks, project-based networks and research organisations which are active in networks (especially the Migration Policy Institute (Europe) (MPI(E))and the Migration Policy Group (MPG)) [20] are important.

Only a few of the participants believe that they currently have the time or capacity to maintain an active engagement with new research. There is a desire for more short summaries of research with clear practice implications identified and links to new work. While there is some awareness of initiatives such as the EC's European Website on Integration their use is infrequent.

> **"The volume of research is too high even though we have a full time researcher and a formal contact with a research institute"** Nat. gov.
>
> **"There is so much going on it's very hard"** EU-level NGO network
>
> **"We engage with journalists therefore it is important for us to be on top of statistics and reports"** Nat. NGO

There are specific national exceptions to this overall picture. In two countries included in the research efforts are underway to build a base of reference studies which can be drawn upon by organisations. In other countries the national-level work of the EU's European Migration Network is being used to explore integration research beyond the narrow data-gathering approach evident in many countries.

3.3.2 Sources of new ideas

There is a substantial overlap between the two sectors in how they identify ideas for reforming or developing programmes. Taken together they represent contrasting bottom-up and top-down approaches which are both led by identified needs and the pragmatic consideration of obtaining funding.

[19] Eurocities is an organisation for larger cities (140 at present) which aims to advocate for urban interests at EU level and facilitate joint work and information-sharing between members. The organisation has a working group on integration and is active in policy and practice research programmes. (www.eurocities.eu)
[20]MPI(E): https://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/mpi-europe. MPG: https://www.migpolgroup.com/.

The most referenced source for ideas comes within the organisations' work, defined as being close to day-to-day integration work and, through this, noticing both gaps and opportunities. This is supplanted by more formal gap analyses which identify very specific needs and lead to specific new activities. These analyses occur in the context of medium-term planning or funding applications. While this may happen in practice, participants did not explicitly mention including migrants within this process.[21]

On a more general level. Participants referenced the value of network interactions – hearing from colleagues in other organisations about programmes or approaches which work or newly identified needs. For governmental organisations, those who have participated in the EIN's more formal policy exchanges or projects such as Eurocities' policy mentoring,[22] cite them as very helpful. NGOs reference more active and informal interactions at both national and international levels.

Requirements to obtain funding, be it project or more mainstream funding, have a direct influence on new programme ideas being considered or looked for. For NGO's, this is a dominant constraint save where there is an independent source of funding from a parent organisation.

The final significant source of new activities is compliance with new regulations or legal requirements from both European and national bodies. Participants from governmental organisations emphasised that all significant changes in EU policy have a ripple-effect which extends as far as elements within integration programmes. Similarly, broader legal initiatives in the areas of rights, employment and access to services can have a very significant impact. The policy move to 'mainstreaming' in some countries has a defining impact on the nature of integration programmes.

Participants from national governmental organisations referenced some use of EU Assessment tools and checklists.

3.3.3 Evaluation

Participants were asked to talk about how integration programmes are evaluated. The most common response was that this is a significantly under-developed area which overwhelmingly focuses on activity levels rather than impact. This said, there is a general belief that a more systematic, impact-focused approach to evaluation is required but that funding is a major barrier.

> **"We used independent experts to advise us in constructing the integration programme and we will use them to evaluate it – but we are not clear on the best timing for this." Nat. gov.**
>
> **"Evaluation of impact is a weak point for integration activities in general." National NGO**
>
> **"Proper evaluation requires time and resources – and these are not included in the programme funding we receive." Local NGO**
>
> **"You cannot measure success with short-term evaluations." Local gov.**

There is an overlap between the sectors as to how they approach evaluation of integration programmes. All monitor activity levels including numbers reached and levels of engagements. These are also measured in the context of reporting and compliance requirements for funding. Labour market integration activities involve the most significant data, covering training and employment outcomes. Activities focused on social and cultural issues are far more informal in their reporting.

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[21] The need to systematically include migrants in programme development is one of the points made in the recent comprehensive survey carried out by the European Migrant Advisory Board: EMAB (2019). *Ask the People: A consultation of migrants and refugees*. (https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/inclusion-migrants-and-refugees/ask-people-consultation-report-european-migrant-advisory-board)

[22] See for example the Cities Grow mentoring project which has involved 16 cities in the period 2017-19: http://integratingcities.eu/integrating-cities/projects/cities-grow. During the preparation of this report a city knowledge-exchange roundtable between Prague and Munich was attended.

Larger countries with a greater critical mass of programmes and dedicated research functions have a more active approach to evaluation, but this is still relatively short-term and activity-focused.

Organisations which directly implement programmes receive qualitative feedback from those delivering the programmes and migrants participating in them. The predominant form for this is the distribution of feedback forms at the end of an activity.

Where NGOs have funding security they are more likely to say that they aim to commission extensive external evaluation and participants who have operated with multi-annual funding from their parent church body or private foundation identified the need for fully external evaluation before seeking new long-term funding.

There is substantial evidence of an impatience with the current lack of more systematic evaluation and that this is leading to a search for innovative approaches to evaluation. Participants mentioned a number of small initiatives which they are undertaking such as the use of online quantitative surveys tools (e.g. Survey Monkey) and building permission for a 12 month re-contact of programme participants into programme design. There is full openness to undertaking evaluation which can be implemented within available financial resources and expertise.

While acknowledging the inadequacy of current evaluation practices and, in particular, the dominant focus on activity levels, the point was made by participants from both sectors that the impact of integration can only truly be measured over the long-term. As such, they believe that activity levels linked to soundly-based practices are a reasonable proxy for success if you have to evaluate work in the short or medium-terms or with limited resources.

> "We get ideas from talking to people." Nat. gov.
>
> "My contacts might ring up and say 'hey, are you interested in this?'" Local gov.
>
> "Often the best information comes through well-established networks which can be down to the personnel and their individual relationships. So, it can be ad hoc." Nat. NGO

3.4 Knowledge Gaps: What needs to be better understood?

Each participant was asked for their views on "which issues or factors which influence refugee/host-community relations need to be studied in much greater detail?" (paraphrased as 'what do you not know that you would like to know?'). There was a very high level of overlap between the sectors on this topic. The two broad categories into which the responses can be grouped refer to general questions concerning integration dynamics and strategies and more specific questions concerning particular programmes, programme elements or policies.

By far the most common issue raised was the need for more comprehensive longitudinal studies which would give a deeper understanding of a wider set of integration issues including broad integration strategies. The lack of such longitudinal research is seen as hampering the better design and implementation of policies and programmes.

Also mentioned on a frequent basis by recipients was the need for greater understanding of specific factors such as mental health, racism, the best use of volunteers and the role of civic society in general. More practical issues raised concern how to measure cause and effect in relation to specific programmes and the extent of a gap between the theory and practice of access to services.

Long term impact of different general approaches	Best use of volunteers
Difference between practice and theory in access to services	Mental health - importance and appropriate actions
How to measure impact (cause & effect)	Most effective role for civil society
Integration needs of both refugees and host communities post reception phase	Role of racism in determining integration outcomes

Table 11: Most frequently referenced knowledge gaps

A wider range of issues was raised on a less frequent basis with a particular emphasis on answering specific questions relating to factors which influence the impact of particular programmes and approaches. The number of questions which relate to the issue of 'what works?' reflects the perception of limited hard research on programme effectiveness. Significantly, a recent comprehensive review of reports on integration activities came to the conclusion that there is a very limited evidence base in this field and that this needs to be addressed through more comprehensive research and the pilot-testing of programmes.[23]

Alternative approaches when appropriate cultural mediators not available	Impact of perceptions of legal status
Best approaches to working with unaccompanied young men and minors	Impact of specific short-term and longer-term programmes
Best practice in collaborations between organisations	Impact on host community of perceived competition for resources with migrants
Degree and nature of consultation required to build trust with host community	Positive outcomes - what has worked with evidence
Effective actions to reduce polarisation	Prevalence and impact of disinformation about migrants amongst host communities
Effective means of combating damaging rumours concerning asylum amongst migrants (establishing trust in information)	Role of political leadership in influencing integration
Effective strategies for media engagement	Role of resources on success/failure of integration policies
How to empower local level to be informed and active	Scale and needs of undocumented migrants
Impact of additional emphasis on host communities	Ways to frame data significance and cultural significance of refugees
Impact of community-led integration	What are the factors influencing decision to stay or to leave and become secondary migrants.
Impact of forced return on hosts and remaining migrants	Impact of concentrating migrants in marginalised communities
How best to include migrants in programme design, delivery and evaluation.	

Table 12: Other knowledge gaps referenced

[23] Gonzales Garibay, M. & De Cuyper, P (2018), "Is there and evidence base for immigrant integration policies? A methodological enquiry", *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, vol.8 no.1, pp. 15-24.

3.5 Best Practice Ideas

Participants were asked to identify integration projects which they see as particularly successful. A total of 60 projects and project-elements were mentioned, which included many overlaps and duplicates. These have been included in a separate FOCUS report.

3.6 Attitude to FOCUS Outputs

At different stages of the interviews participants were asked questions about proposed or potential outputs from FOCUS. The detailed responses will be used within the context of WP5 and WP6 to shape this work. In summary:

New Practice-Exchange Communities

The time, resources and specific benefits of such exchanges were raised. As most organisations already participate in practice networks the expectation is that new activity would fit within these existing networks. Close mentoring and exchange schemes between host communities, such as those organized in the governmental sector by the EIN and Eurocities, are valued but they are seen as requiring significant effort and as exceptional rather than ongoing activities.

Regular short summaries of research

Research summaries are useful when they are focused on concrete needs and are short (max 1 page with links for those who want to read more). All efforts are welcome which make the research base accessible and present findings in a practical manner (i.e. 'what does this finding mean in terms of adjusting existing programmes or designing new ones?'). As mentioned in Section 3.3, the lack of a current 'centre of gravity' for accessing practice-relevant research means that new approaches to dissemination are required.

Resource for identifying best practices

This would be useful if user-friendly, accessible and focused on practical needs. Crucially it should outline the financial and personnel resources required to deliver the programme. Such a resource should also fit within the reality of how needs are identified by organisations which they then seek evidence and programmes for. Existing resources are not widely referenced and are felt not to be sufficiently focused on information critical to programme development in new contexts. The majority of participants see a best practice resource as being online.

Guides for adapting and evaluating programmes

Guides which would assist in the adaptation of programmes to new countries and communities and in the evaluation of programmes would be welcome – in both online and printed formats. The guides should reflect the reality of different levels of expertise and financial resources between organisations.

4. Conclusions

This qualitative study of the views and experiences of senior professionals working in the field of integration provides important insights into current practice and expectations. While there are many commonalities, significant differences are evident depending on the level (local, regional, national, international) and sector (governmental, non-governmental) of organisations active in this field.

As integration work emerges from a period of significant pressure there is an understanding of the need to move to an emphasis on long-term sustainability and impact.

At present there is no clear 'centre of gravity' for identifying best practices and programme ideas in the field of integration, with both formal and informal networks being central to current programme development. Similarly, engagement with academic research in the field is determined by the availability of funding for research personnel.

EU funding is critical to practice in this field and the next multi-annual EU budget is expected to be central to future activity. The process of applying for funding will require the review of existing activities and development of new programmes.

There are a range of knowledge gaps which can be roughly grouped as concerning the questions "what matters?" and "What works?" This concerns a desire to more fully understand the drivers of successful integration as well as more practical issues of which programmes and programme elements to emphasize.

There is a widespread belief in the need to move to more systematic and inclusive evaluation of the impact of integration work, however for this to happen it requires funding for evaluation to be incorporated within funding programmes and for an understanding of the limits of what can be evaluated using different methodologies.

The impact of radical anti-refugee politics is being felt by organisations in some countries and regions, leading to uncertainty about funding and the ability to implement programmes.

For FOCUS's work to be relevant and useful it must link within existing networks of integration policy development and practice. In addition, it should seek opportunities to cooperate with other research projects in the field.

FOCUS's proposed outputs would be welcomed within the sector however particular attention needs to be paid to providing practical information and making short summaries which are accessible to non-academics.

This work will be updated after the mid-term review of FOCUS as work moves from the field studies to the testing of specific practices.

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