

## Evaluation Framework Guidelines to identify and analyse regional integration practices

### INTRODUCTION

There are many examples of practices toward the integration and inclusion of migrants and refugees led by cities and municipalities in the European Union (EU), notably through the [Partnership of the Urban Agenda for the EU on the inclusion of migrants and refugees](#). However **there seems to be less visibility and understanding of the regional role in migrant integration.**

Regional authorities, like local authorities, have **formal and soft competences** to deliver a range of public services linked to migrant integration and inclusion (e.g. education and training, health and welfare, labour, housing, etc.).

In addition, one other clear finding from the work undertaken by the [REGIN Project](#) is that Regions have a **key pivotal role in vertical coordination** between EU, Member State level and local level and **horizontal coordination**, as catalyst of a wide range of territorial stakeholders building real interactive ecosystems with common challenges and goals.

For instance, **Regional authorities:**

- **Implement EU and national policies** at territorial level;
- **Develop territorial strategies and policy guidelines:** most regions see the social and economic inclusion of migrants as an **integral part of their regional development strategy** and have integration plans, programmes and instruments, either specifically targeted at migrants or where migrants are included in wider inclusion policies, to address the **multi-dimensional aspects of integration.**
- **Have an overall vision of the specificities and needs of their territory.** Migrant populations are generally concentrated in bigger towns and cities, which have more experience and resources for dealing with integration issues, but **smaller towns and rural areas often need extra support.** Regional authorities can adapt their actions and practices accordingly.
- **Federate, coordinate and support relevant stakeholders within their territory** to provide effective action (local authorities, NGOs, CSOs, faith-based organisations, diaspora associations, private sector) to pool resources, avoid

duplicating efforts and ensure a coherent cross-cutting and whole-of-community approach.

Another challenge reflected when analysing migrant integration at regional and local levels is the **lack of monitoring & evaluation tools, as well as the lack of standards or benchmark** in this field.

The **REGIN Project aims to fill both these gaps** by looking at the impact of instruments and practices at regional level to better understand the role and needs of regional authorities and to provide them with indicators and tools to help them plan, monitor and evaluate their policies and actions on migrant and refugee integration.

## OBJECTIVE

As part of the activities planned under the “Integration Lab”, the objective is to design a **Common Evaluation Framework and Matrix** representing a series of key questions to help Regions evaluate their practices on migrant and refugee inclusion.

The Integration Lab is designed as **sustainable and rolling tool based on learning processes**. Through the collection and analysis of regional practices, it is expected to keep feeding and extending the shared knowledge base beyond the project lifetime, so that it can be available as a resource to regions to help them plan their own actions using the evaluation tools and inspiring from similar practices carried out in other regions.

The approach is to not only focus on good and innovative practices, but to also collect information from regions that have faced challenges or tried practices that have not produced expected results, to understand what could be the factors that could have hindered the action. The idea is to **learn from each other not only about what works but also what does not work**, considering limiting factors and areas where there is room for improvement.

An Integration Lab in the form of lessons learnt can help regional and local authorities in exploring **potential outcomes of a practice** already performed by other Regions, adjusting its future intervention in the same area.

Examples of practices have been gathered by REGIN regional partners to set evaluation criteria and define the scope for identifying and categorising the type of practices to collect, in line with the MIPEX-R questionnaires, and that can help understand why a practice could be considered a good one, or which are the limitations to understand why it was not fully successful.

As a transnational project, the REGIN Integration Lab focuses on categorising and analysing regional practices in order to **extract the processes that can be transferable to other regions** to solve common problems, taking into account the diversity of regional competences and contexts throughout Europe.

## SCOPE

The practices included in the database aim to **emphasise the regions' contribution either directly, or indirectly through coordination and support of social actors**, in developing and implementing migrant integration actions and policies.

The Evaluation Framework covers a **list of topics falling within identified regional competences** (cf. MIPEX-R questionnaires) and addressing the priority areas set out in the European Commission's 2016 Action Plan on the Integration of Third Country Nationals<sup>1</sup> and the EU Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027<sup>2</sup>, these being stated as:

- Pre-departure and pre-arrival measures, including actions to prepare migrants and the local communities for the integration process;
- Education, including actions to promote language training, participation of children to Early Childhood Education and Care, teacher training and civic education, higher education;
- Employment and vocational training, including actions to promote early integration into the labour market through skills recognition and migrant entrepreneurship;
- Access to services, such as housing and healthcare;
- Active participation and social inclusion, including actions to support exchanges with the receiving society, migrants' participation to cultural and social life and combating discrimination.

In order to organise these topics in a structured way, they have been grouped into **4 main blocks** (not mutually exclusive) taking inspiration from the 12 OECD objectives for effectively integrating migrants at the local level<sup>3</sup>.

### Multi-level Governance

- Vertical coordination
- Participatory / co-design approach
- Managing funding and programmes

### Regional capacity-building

- Improving internal services, holistic approach and mainstreaming
- Cooperation with stakeholders
- Interregional cooperation
- Monitoring and assessment

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<sup>1</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160607/communication\\_action\\_plan\\_integration\\_third-country\\_nationals\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160607/communication_action_plan_integration_third-country_nationals_en.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/pdf/action\\_plan\\_on\\_integration\\_and\\_inclusion\\_2021-2027.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/pdf/action_plan_on_integration_and_inclusion_2021-2027.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> OECD (2018), Working Together for Local Integration of Migrants and Refugees, OECD Publishing, Paris. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264085350-en>

## Living Together

- Diversity management, cultural orientation and mediation, interculturality
- Anti-discrimination and gender mainstreaming
- Targeted inclusive, disability-and age-sensitive responses to groups in a vulnerable situation (for example, unaccompanied children, women at risk, victims of trafficking...)
- Social inclusion and participation, sport and culture (leisure), digital skills / access to technology to facilitate exchanges / access to people, rights and services

## Sectoral Policy Areas

*Within and beyond formal competences, access to services and progress within each area. The subcategories below have been defined in coherence with the existing [CPMR mapping](#) and the MIPEx-R questionnaire.*

- education
- health
- housing
- language skills
- social welfare (including counselling, legal and administrative support services)
- labour market inclusion (matching skills to employment, professional training)

**Outcomes of the integration practices should consider the impact at 3 levels:** individual (personal integration path, social bonds), community (living together, connections with people of a different background / social bridges), institutional (regional authority but also other levels of administration - local, national, EU / social links):

### Individual

- Building personal and social relationships
- Health and well-being
- Developing personal skills (social, professional, language), empowerment

### Community

- Promoting community participation
- Creating an inclusive community that fosters diversity and pays special attention to people in a vulnerable situation (refugees, unaccompanied children, women at risk...)

### Institutional

- Ensuring a coordinated service system
- Best use of resources
- Targeted actions
- Influencing policy guidelines and recommendations (local, regional, national, EU)

## METHODOLOGY

To build the Evaluation Framework, we have looked first at a selection of existing practices to determine to what extent they help overcome barriers to integration.

An initial analysis has helped to understand factors that have led to less successful or failed practices, generally those that did not adopt a holistic, multi-level and multi-sectorial approach. In contrast, we see that more innovative practices are those aiming to go beyond conventional segmented actions.

On this basis an **Evaluation Matrix** has been developed using the **5 OECD-DAC criteria**<sup>4</sup>:

- Relevance
- Effectiveness
- Efficiency
- Impact
- Sustainability

Integration practices can only be evaluated in relation to **specific populations in a particular context and within a particular timeframe**. Therefore, the aim of the exercise has been to develop a broad set of key questions and an indication of what to look for, with a view to measuring the rate of progress of the action in relation to each criterion.

Since integration is a long-term process, it is difficult to provide examples that show quantifiable results in terms of impact and sustainability. The evaluation will therefore serve to identify those practices with potential regarding these two particular areas.

To establish a level of comparability between the different regional practices that will be collected and to avoid labelling them “good” or “bad”, we have chosen rather to determine **4 levels of progress for each of the 5 criteria**. A scoring system on a scale of 0-100 will allow the action to be categorised as follows:

- Limited (0-25)
- Emerging (26-50)
- Developed (51-75)
- Advanced (76-100).

To avoid bias, scores will be applied *a posteriori*.

The Evaluation Framework therefore aims to provide a **unified and systematic tool for analysing and categorising integration practices**. Indeed, considering the differences among the Regions involved in the project and that integration is a contextualised process, a **pilot test** was carried out to explore methodological issues, identify potential types

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

of bias and develop a research procedure to ensure that the Evaluation Framework would work in practice. In detail, each regional partner was requested to identify one integration practice - with different characteristics - through the administration of an *ad hoc* questionnaire and to provide their independent review on the survey and the data collection. Once collected, the integration practices were analysed and categorised with the collaboration of research partners to explore the **validity and accuracy of the data evaluation and categorisation**. Indeed, the pilot test would help to develop standards and procedure for the survey, as well as to test the validity and robustness of the indicators to refine the Evaluation Framework and Matrix.

## DATABASE SEARCH TOOL

The structure of the Evaluation Framework serves to define multi-criteria search filters for the **database of regional integration practices**, that will be developed under the Integration Lab.

**3 search filters** will be applied:

**1. By theme of action:**

- Multi-level governance
- Regional Capacity Building
- Living Together
- Sectoral Policy Areas with sub-categories:
  - education
  - health
  - housing
  - language skills
  - labour market inclusion
  - social welfare

**2. By criteria:**

- Relevance
- Effectiveness
- Efficiency
- Impact
- Sustainability

**3. By Level of progress:**

- Limited
- Emerging
- Developed
- Advanced