
Migrant integration: Bridging the gap between the local, national and European levels

I. Introduction

In September 2009, a row broke out between the European Commission and the Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi regarding the Commission's attempt to enquire after Italy's treatment of a group of African migrants who were allegedly sent back from Italian waters without having a chance to request asylum.¹ Irritated by the Commission's inquiry into matters of 'national concern', Prime Minister Berlusconi threatened to stall the decision-making process of the EU. At around the same time, a group of 130 major European cities represented by Eurocities called on the EU institutions to give local municipal authorities a bigger say in the immigration debate.²

In an increasing globalised context with an added level of complexity brought about by the area of trade and mobility, it is undeniable that migration represents a challenge for all levels of government from the supranational European Union to the local context where the most challenging aspects of migration manifest themselves. However, in spite of a widespread recognition of this reality, migration policies and practices have yet to be coordinated in a coherent manner across regional and administrative levels.

While the EU struggles to obtain a balance among Member State demands and acquired European competences on free movement, rights and integration, cities struggle to implement policies and funding programmes designed at a distance from the daily reality of migration. In the meantime, nation states struggle to strike a balance between public opinion and economic and demographic imperatives. This interplay of stakeholders, interests and actors often leads to a state of disorder and even contradiction that often reigns the migrant integration landscape of our societies.

Governments, European institutions and organisations recognise the need to move towards a coherent path for integration policies and practices although these efforts are often met with challenges and obstacles such as miscommunication and misinformation; short-term planning; tunnel vision; and competing interests.

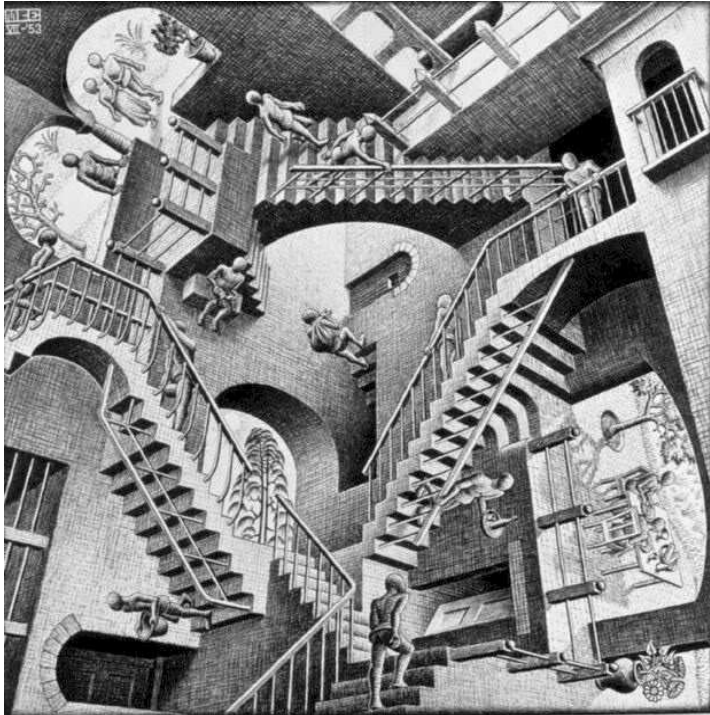
How can foundations working on and funding migration and integration issues make a positive contribution towards a constructive environment for migrant integration? Where can foundations add value and contribute to overcoming the obstacles that impede coherence in policy and implementation of migrant integration?

This document aims to disentangle the context where the obstacles to policy coherence and implementation in the field of migration play out as well as identify entry points for foundations to act as brokers and play a part in the successful integration of migrants.

¹ See "Berlusconi threatens to block EU over migrant row", EurActiv < <http://www.euractiv.com/en/opinion/berlusconi-threatens-block-eu-migrant-row/article-185030#> >

² See Pop, Valentina. "EU cities want bigger say in immigration debate" EU Observer < <http://euobserver.com/22/28551> >

II. The migration and integration labyrinth



M.C. Escher: Relativity

The aforementioned episode between the European Commission and the Italian government is illustrative of a trend of increasing European competences on migration alongside a reticence of national governments to give away sovereignty over issues of justice and home affairs.

Since 1997 when the Treaty of Amsterdam accorded the European Union institutions stronger powers to act on migration and asylum to the development and forthcoming adoption of the Stockholm Programme, a new five-year strategy for the development of the next phase of the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice, the EU has over the past decade gained a great deal of ground in the migration field. The reality is such that the EU has indeed made immense strides for increased political cooperation and collaboration in the field of migration, including some acquired competences on matters such as asylum, borders and mobility.

However, in spite of these advancements, Member States have been cautious about moving forward with measures which ultimately may diminish their control over what are often considered issues of sovereignty and nationhood. Therefore policies regulating issues such as citizenship, education, access to labour market, and others having a direct impact on migration and integration, have remained competences of Nation-States. To add to this complexity, while policies regarding migration are often being dictated at the European and national level, it is at the local or city level, where the practical issues of policy implementation come to the fore – thus the appeal from a group of cities to be considered more seriously in the European policy development process.

To add to this complexity and overlap of policy and implementation levels, is the administrative divide across ministries, entities and units that seemingly work alongside one another at the European, national or local level but sometimes, through working in silos, produce differing and even contradicting results when it comes to policy outcomes. Sometimes, trying to understand and find the way along the migration and integration path can be as confusing as the above depicted M.C. Escher sketch.

Table 1 at the end of this document provides a brief illustration of the array of actors involved in developing and implementing policy on migration and integration at the European, national and local levels.

Discussion questions:

- How do policies affect the context in which foundations operate? Does policy incoherence and fragmentation have an effect on the work of foundations? If so, how?
- What are the implications of an increasingly robust European Union infrastructure on the fields of migration and integration, including asylum?
- How are the issues of migration and integration framed in a European context? Does this differ from the discourse(s) at the national and local levels?

III. Bridging the gap to migrant integration

Migration is not very different to other fields such as environment, development, employment in that it represents a logistic and administrative challenge for funders. Foundations and others have been able to find creative ways support and/or run initiatives that address the policy gap and fragmentation between policy and practice in the field. Some of these approaches are outlined below and will include concrete examples collected from participating foundations and examples arising from the DMIIG meeting.

Some strategies include:

1. Supporting research to provide evidence to policy and implementation
2. Convening stakeholders
 - Enabling citizens and grassroots organisations to have access to policy makers
 - Supporting access to media
3. Supporting NGOs, Think Tanks and networks
 - Monitoring and Advocacy
 - Connect local to national level
 - Partnerships
 - Building capacity of charities and organisations working in the field
4. Promoting innovative and creative solutions – investing in projects that can lead to different conclusions than widely held assumptions about migration and integration

Discussion questions:

- What are some other entry points for foundations to the migration and integration policy debate?
- At which level – European, national or local – are foundations' actions more effective? Does this differ from one area to another?
- What are some of the lessons learned from foundations' approaches to bridging the gap between the local, national and European levels?
- How can foundations collaborate effectively, through DMIIG and other platforms, in order to effect a constructive coherent action in the arenas of migration and integration?

IV. Conclusion

This paper has tried to outline the context in which foundations working on migration and integration operate, one which is governed and influenced by an array of policies and practices developed and implemented at various levels and areas and often suffering from artificial administrative division.

By compiling examples from this field, this working paper will aim to illustrate how foundations are already working on addressing the policy gap by linking their work and supporting others to link the wider context with the reality on the ground, as well as the difficulties being encountered.

It is hoped that this paper will provide a basis for a discussion on the role of foundations in contributing to a coherent and constructive migrant integration policy and practice in Europe.

Table 1: Actors active on migration and integration in Europe – an initial glimpse

Level	Actor	Role
European	Council of the EU	- Make and approve legislative proposals alongside Member States
	European Commission, including:	- Draft legislative proposals - Manage EU funds, monitor implementation of policy
	DG – Justice Freedom and Security (JLS)	DG JLS is divided into units called Directorates dealing with specific areas such as: - immigration and integration - asylum - borders - human rights
	DG – Employment, social affairs and equal opportunities	Focus on the some of the following areas: - diversity and non-discrimination - mobility (EU citizens) - social inclusion
	European Parliament and Civil Liberties Committee	- present reports and opinions on justice and home affairs issues
	European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)	- provide opinions and reports on proposed EU decisions about employment, social spending, etc.
	Committee of the Regions	- provide opinions and reports on EU decisions with a direct impact at the local or regional level
	European Civil Society Organisations and networks working on migration and integration	An array of roles are performed by European Civil Society organisations, including: - bringing EU policy to agenda to partners and network members based nationally and locally - organising European campaigns on issues and seeking to influence European agenda - informing European policy with evidence from organisations working on the ground - advocating on behalf of target groups (refugees, undocumented migrants, etc) at the European level - developing activities that bridge national borders and exchange of practice and expertise - communicating with the public and media
	European Think Tanks working on migration and integration	An array of roles are performed by European think tanks, including: - providing research and evidence to EU policy - analysing EU policy and strategy - communicating with the public and media
National/ Regional	National and/or Regional Governments	- represent interests at the European level - legislate on issues of migration and integration - transpose EU law into national law
	Ministries of migration, interior, justice and home affairs, etc	- devise strategies for implementation of legislation - propose legislation on areas of expertise according to ministry
	Civil Society Organisations	- advocate on behalf of affected groups - promote evidence-base policy - seek to influence political agenda and discourse
	Think Tanks and research institutions	- similar role to European think tanks but at a national level
Local	Cities / Local governments	- legislate on local matters - implement state policy where it affects local level – service provision, administration, etc
	Civil Society Organisations	- advocate on behalf of affected groups - promote evidence-base policy and seek to influence political agenda and discourse - provide services to affected populations

NB: Other actors playing an influential role at local, national and European level include businesses and trade unions.