

European Competence Centre for Social Innovation  
ESF+ Social Innovation+ Initiative

# **Community of Practice on Migrant Integration**

## **Work Programme**



This initiative is implemented under the EaSI strand of the ESF+

CoP	Migrant Integration
Programme year	2023–2024
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## Background

### 1. Framing Migrant Integration in Member States (MS)

#### Migration in the EU: Overview

Increasing migration movements<sup>1</sup> have brought a large number of Third-Country Nationals (TCNs) into several European regions, including applicants for international protection. Approximately 5.3% of the EU population<sup>2</sup>, or 23.8 million citizens of non-EU countries, currently reside in an EU Member State (MS), and 10% of young people born in the EU have at least one foreign-born parent<sup>3</sup>. This has resulted in specific obstacles due to the growing population and the need to cater for health, housing, education, and employment requirements, as well as systemic adaptation to diverse cultural frameworks and countries of origin. Nevertheless, it has also proven to be an opportunity<sup>4</sup>, as, due to ageing in European societies, the population would have shrunk by half a million in 2019 if migratory influx had not occurred.

An emerging trend within migration flows into Europe over the last decade is the increase in the number of arrivals of highly educated migrants<sup>5</sup>. Over a quarter of current migrants are highly educated, and almost 40% are overqualified for the jobs they hold. They provide resources, ambition, and motivation but they are frequently unable to put these skills to use<sup>6</sup>. While the EU competes for talent around the world, it cannot afford to waste this potential. At the same time, nearly one-fifth of migrants having only completed primary school education (38.5% of migrant adults had a low level of education in 2019) require additional, targeted support to match EU skills demands for a smoother integration pathway<sup>7</sup>.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU noted a drop of 8% in migrants from 34 million in 2019 to 23.7 million – that is 5.3% of the EU's total population – who were non-EU citizens in January 2021. From 2021 to 2022, the growth in returns increased further by 28%<sup>8</sup>. However, UNHCR reported an increase in refugees during the same period, with 26.4 million in 2020 and 32.5 million in 2022<sup>9</sup>. Parallel to this, since Russia's military invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Europe has seen the largest number of people fleeing war since World War II<sup>10</sup>, with 3.7 million persons fleeing Ukraine<sup>11</sup>. Also, due to the Russian invasion, Europe witnessed an unprecedented energy crisis, high inflation, rising poverty, and industrial supply chain disruptions.

Bringing Europe's existing inequalities to the forefront, where vulnerable households are even more at risk of poverty and/or social exclusion, and, in many cases, investment and actions on previous migrant groups of other origins were left behind, implies an increased risk of even more people's exclusion and vulnerability. All of this, combined with pre-existing variables, boosted and changed migration patterns, intensifying migration group diversity, and exacerbating intersectional requirements<sup>12 13</sup> and discrimination at the national and European level, whilst social

- 1 International Organisation for Migration (IOM). (2023). Europe Arrivals | Displacement Tracking Matrix. <https://dtm.iom.int/europe/arrivals>
- 2 Eurostat. (2022). Migration and migrant population statistics - Migration and migrant population statistics - Statistics Explained. <https://europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained>
- 3 European Commission. (2020). Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027.
- 4 European Commission. (2023, May). Statistics on migration to Europe. [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/statistics-migration-europe\\_en#:~:text=Fact%20to%20consider%3A%20Without%20migration%2C%20the%20European%20population.](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/statistics-migration-europe_en#:~:text=Fact%20to%20consider%3A%20Without%20migration%2C%20the%20European%20population.)
- 5 OECD, & European Commission. (2023). Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2023: Settling In. OECD Publishing.
- 6 OECD, & European Commission. (2023). Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2023: Settling In. OECD Publishing.
- 7 European Commission (2020, November). Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027. Brussels, 24.11.2020.
- 8 Scapolo, F., Dario, T., Alvarez Alvarez, M., Belmonte, M., Kajander, N., Kalantaryan, S., Loeschner, J., Minora, U., Sermi, F., & Tintori, G. (2022). *Atlas of Migration - 2022* (D. Bongiaro, L. Carrozza, I. Crespi, A. Dara, V. Pisapia, I. Sofos, & S. Zviagintsev, Eds.). Publications Office of the European Union.
- 9 UNHCR – Refugee Statistics. (n.d.). <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/>, referred to in Scapolo, F., Dario, T., Alvarez Alvarez, M., Belmonte, M., Kajander, N., Kalantaryan, S., Loeschner, J., Minora, U., Sermi, F., & Tintori, G. (2022). *Atlas of Migration - 2022* (D. Bongiaro, L. Carrozza, I. Crespi, A. Dara, V. Pisapia, I. Sofos, & S. Zviagintsev, Eds.). Publications Office of the European Union.
- 10 Statistics on migration to Europe. (2022). European Commission. [https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/statistics-migration-europe\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/promoting-our-european-way-life/statistics-migration-europe_en)
- 11 Scapolo, F., Dario, T., Alvarez Alvarez, M., Belmonte, M., Kajander, N., Kalantaryan, S., Loeschner, J., Minora, U., Sermi, F., & Tintori, G. (2022). *Atlas of Migration - 2022* (D. Bongiaro, L. Carrozza, I. Crespi, A. Dara, V. Pisapia, I. Sofos, & S. Zviagintsev, Eds.). Publications Office of the European Union.
- 12 Full respect for LGBTI people fleeing Ukraine (11th May 2022). European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights.
- 13 Council of Europe. (2022). Protecting the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls. Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)17 adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

budgets for migrant integration are under increased pressure, all raising alarming risks<sup>14,15</sup> and requiring a more targeted understanding of inclusion and integration measures.

## 1.1 Challenges of Migration Integration

The migration process remains quite complicated. To begin with, people are forced to migrate in increasingly severe conditions. Furthermore, the combined effect of **more restrictive migration policies and a polarisation of the migration discourse has contributed to the increasing marginalisation of newcomers**. Hostility and discrimination against people who have had first-hand experience with migration as well as people of migrant heritage, namely second and third-generation migrants, impede social cohesiveness and jeopardise smooth integration. **Marginalisation results in being more vulnerable in the labour market and being more vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion<sup>16</sup>**. Migrant communities are more prone to tolerate inadequate working conditions, receive lower wages<sup>17</sup>, and face greater barriers to accessing health, childcare, education, housing, etc.. This combination of circumstances exacerbates the frequently inferior mental health conditions migrants face compared to the resident population<sup>18,19</sup> of the society in which they have moved.

Mitigation is made more difficult as cultural competence in health and government services is not growing at the same speed, and planning and predictions of migration remain a challenge due to various external and often unexpected factors affecting migration flows and resulting in substantial changes both in the reasons for migrating and in numbers.

## 1.2 Understanding migrants' needs, stages, and intersectionality

There is a recognition that the term *migrants*<sup>20</sup>, generally referring to a legal framework rather than socially describing a given group of people, is extremely broad and does not characterise the specificities of the needs associated with distinct migration statuses, stages, human qualities, and groups (ages, gender expressions, skills, health statuses, languages, and knowledge sets, etc.). Therefore, the broad umbrella legal term does not address needs. For example, the integration needs of people who migrate as adults, children, European native-born with foreign-born parents, humanitarian migrants, and labour migrants, amongst many others, differ greatly in terms of language understanding, abilities, social network, cultural frameworks of society, and diversity awareness. According to the 2018 Briefing Paper<sup>21</sup>, many groups of migrants are systematically being disregarded in several remits of integration that MS may not have sufficient capacity for. At the same time, it is crucial to acknowledge that the MS are at different stages of migrant integration, with EU countries that have been on the first-arrival front to TCNs, versus later integration in other EU countries and varying levels of culturally competent services.

Additionally, integration policies and actions should consider migrants' intersectional traits to improve society through diverse backgrounds, knowledge sets, and skills and to recognise the demands and challenges that may arise. Different ability levels, cultural and gender<sup>22</sup> identities, age groups, and other vulnerabilities require unique treatment. That is, **MS' services and local governments must improve their ability to recognise and accommodate newer populations with different cultural frameworks and norms to the majority population and the system**. Public service professionals can benefit from training and professional development to better understand intersectional layers, minimising misunderstandings, discrimination<sup>23</sup> and lack of understanding, which may lead to an unsuccessful integration process and labour market integration.

Apart from diverse intersectional characteristics and the different stages of migration, the lack of recognition of

14 Evans, G. (2020). *Europe's Migrant Crisis: The Year that Changed a Continent*. Europe: BBC World.

15 World Economic Forum. (2022). *The Global Risks Report 2022, 17th Edition, Insight Report*.

16 Dražanová, L. (2021). *Breaking the cycle of poverty for a more social and inclusive Europe*. European Union: European Commission, Regional and Urban Policy. [https://futurium.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2021-10/Just city - Article 6 \\_PDF.pdf](https://futurium.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2021-10/Just%20city%20-%20Article%206%20-%20PDF.pdf)

17 United Nations. (2016). *Leaving no one behind: the imperative of inclusive development*. New York: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. <https://desapublications.un.org/publications/report-world-social-situation-2016-leaving-no-one-behind-imperative-inclusive>

18 World Health Organisation. (2022). *World Report on the Health of Refugees and Migrants*. Geneva. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

19 United Nations Human Rights Office for the High Commissioner. (2022, May). Forcibly displaced LGBT persons face exacerbated challenges in search of safe haven. Statement, International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia.

20 IOM. (2019). *Glossary on Migration*. International Migration Law. Geneva: International Organization for Migration.

21 Wolffhardt, A. (2018). *The integration of migrants from outside the EU*. Briefing Paper. European Court of Auditors. [https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/integration-migrants-outside-eu\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/integration-migrants-outside-eu_en)

22 United Nations Human Rights. (2022, May). Forcibly displaced LGBT persons face exacerbated challenges in search of safe haven. Statement by human rights experts on the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia. Geneva and Washington.

23 Official Journal of the European Union. (2021, June 30). Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy, Article 9(2) and (3) and Article 28. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021R1060>

qualifications that allow migrants to work in appropriate sectors, affordable housing, discrimination, and other layers of obstacles faced by migrants and their vulnerabilities in EU MS prior to COVID-19 were exacerbated during the pandemic, resulting in migrants being disproportionately more likely to catch COVID-19<sup>24</sup>. Furthermore, the lack of effective family support, personal assistance schemes, and flexible working and qualifications access made migrants more vulnerable to unemployment due to the pandemic. These long-term repercussions highlight the need to recognise intersectional features and requirements while adopting activities.

### 1.3 Benefits of migration and integration

Migrants and EU citizens of migrant origin play an important role in the European economy and society. The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the importance of their contribution<sup>25</sup>. Many worked in essential services and supply chain in health, making them also amongst the most vulnerable to the pandemic, owing to increased exposure, limited healthcare access in their host nations, and poor shared housing conditions. The EU requires everyone's contribution to recover and strengthen our economies, as well as to confront future challenges.

After all, migrants play a critical role in designing culturally responsive processes and products, vibrant local cohesion and economies<sup>26</sup>, as well as inclusive social innovation<sup>27</sup> within the urban ecosystems in the EU to meet current social needs of all persons. The progressive approach to social innovation 'aims at changing social relations and power asymmetries in satisfying social needs by empowering the most vulnerable groups'<sup>28</sup>.

Fully integrating migrants into the labour market could result in significant economic gains, including fiscal profits, contributions to national pension systems, and overall national welfare. It also encourages the organic development of more diversified services to meet society's current requirements and promotes social cohesion by learning from or leveraging diverse cultural frameworks. According to OECD's 2023 'Settling In' report, long-term investment in labour market integration leads to better outcomes over time, with employment rates improving over the length of stay, including for women, whose progress is noted at a faster rate<sup>29</sup>.

Intersectionality poses specific challenges to the success of migrant integration processes due to mismatches in needs and services, especially affecting labour market integration, health outcomes, and the promotion of inclusive cohesive societies. However, **when managed as an asset, diversity, has shown to help societies flourish, develop more sustainably and cohesively**<sup>30</sup>.

In conclusion, the integration of migrants in the European Union presents both benefits and challenges. Integration is a multi-directional, dynamic, and highly contextual process that requires informed investment from both the host and the newly arrived or settling groups, based on respect and pursuing mutual understanding. **For societies and economies to thrive<sup>31</sup>, we need to support everyone who is part of them, with integration and inclusion being both a right and a duty for all. This dynamic two-way learning process requires continuous long-term investment, intentionally engaging both migrants and receiving societies<sup>32</sup>, including local and regional authorities, service providers and third-sector partnerships.** Such principles to sustain this process can foster conditions for equal access to services and to avoid discrimination and exploitation, in an effort to promote cohesive communities.

Therefore, it is not only a moral duty in line with the EU's fundamental values but also an economic imperative to step up action in promoting integration and inclusion, and make the most of the competences, ideas, and vitality migrants bring to the Union.

24 Balakrishnan, V. S. (2021). *Impact of COVID-19 on migrants and refugees*. The Lancet Infectious Diseases, 21(8), 1076–1077.

25 Bodnár, K., O'Brien, D. (2022). *The role of migration in weak labour force developments during the COVID-19 pandemic*. European Central Bank, Economic Bulletin, Issue 1/2022.

26 Zhang, P., Wei, X., & Mao, G. (2023). *Cultural diversity, social integration, and migrant entrepreneurship – evidence from the China migrants dynamic survey*. China Center for Special Economic Zone Research. China: Shenzhen University.

27 Patuzzi, L. (2020). *Driving Migrant Inclusion through Social Innovation: Lessons for cities in a pandemic*. Brussels and Geneva: Migration Policy Institute Europe and International Organization for Migration.

28 Campomori, F., Casula, M., & Kazepov, Y. (2023). *Understanding social innovation in refugee integration: actors, practices, politics in Europe*. Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research, 36(2), 158–170. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13511610.2023.2211893>

29 OECD, & European Commission. (2023). *Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2023: Settling In*. OECD Publishing.

30 Arant, R., Larsen, M., & Boehnke, K. (2021). *Acceptance of Diversity as a Building Block of Social Cohesion: Individual and Structural Determinants*. Front. Psychol. 12:612224. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.612224>

31 International Organisation for Migration. (2017). *Key Elements for Reaping the Benefits of Migration*. Global Compact Thematic Paper, Integration and Social Cohesion, 2 May 2017, IOM. [www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1486/files/2018-07/IOM-Thematic-Paper-Integration-and-Social-Cohesion](http://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1486/files/2018-07/IOM-Thematic-Paper-Integration-and-Social-Cohesion)

32 Bouronikos, V. (2022, May 26). *The Importance of Local Communities in Immigrant Integration*. Institute of Entrepreneurship Development. <https://ied.eu/blog/social-inclusion-blog/the-importance-of-local-communities-in-immigrant-integration/#:~:text=Therefore%2C%20integration%20is%20not%20just%20about%20accepting%20or>

## 2. EU's context addressing this topic

Recognising the opportunities of migration and integration, the EU took concrete steps to maximise the benefits.

### 2.1 The Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion

The EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion (2021-2024)<sup>33</sup> identifies four initiatives that require additional attention from MS to incentivise and support integration on a national, regional and local level for both migrants and EU citizens with migrant backgrounds<sup>34</sup>. These are: inclusive education and training; improving employment opportunities and skills recognition; increased access to health care; and increased access to appropriate and affordable housing<sup>35</sup>. The action plan examines the integration process holistically, recognising the **various stages** such as **pre-arrival, reception and early integration, long-term integration**, and activities aimed at promoting inclusive and cohesive societies.

### 2.2 The response to the UA situation and measures taken

Through the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD), the EU could react quickly and organise aid for people fleeing Ukraine, despite some indications that specific groups - such as LGBTIQ - may still be subject to further exclusion in some country contexts<sup>36</sup>.

Additionally, recognising the considerable strain caused by the above-mentioned crisis, the Council adopted the regulation Cohesion's Actions for Refugees in Europe (CARE)<sup>37</sup>, which includes legislative amendments of the 2014-2020 European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) and the Fund for European Aid for the Most Deprived (FEAD) in line with Member States' efforts to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic impact while also allowing for the transfer of funds between the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund to address the inflow of refugees<sup>38</sup>. These legislative amendments were further facilitated by the adoption of the FAST-CARE regulation<sup>39</sup>, which is an emergency package to assist European cities in dealing with the consequences of the Russian invasion with easier access to European funding<sup>40</sup>.

### 2.3 ESF+ Overview

The ESF+ is the European Union's (EU) main instrument for investments in people and supports the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, in alignment with the European Semester country-specific recommendations. With a total budget of EUR 141.9 billion (of which EUR 95 billion is the Union's contribution) for the 2021-2027 programming period, the ESF+ makes a significant contribution to the EU's employment, social, education, and skills policies, including structural reforms in these areas.

The new programming period has also introduced a Specific Objective for the Integration of Third Country National. Furthermore, the fund is one of the cornerstones of EU's socio-economic recovery from the coronavirus pandemic and its consequences, including increased inequalities, pressure on health systems, and changes in labour participation.

The ambitious objectives of the ESF+ Social Innovation+ action mirror changing societal context of 2022, characterised by intersectional challenges brought to light by differing characteristics and needs of diverse target groups of migrants, further exacerbated by recent crises leading to the need for a deeper understanding, more focussed skills, and targeted approach. The 13 specific objectives of ESF+ focus on employment, education and training, social inclusion, and addressing material deprivation. The ESF+ targets various end users such as children and youth, disadvantaged groups, third-country nationals (TCNs) including migrants, marginalised communities, and persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion<sup>41</sup>.

33 European Commission. (2020). *Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027*. European Commission.

34 "EU citizens with migrant background" are TCNs who became EU citizens through naturalisation in a Member State or EU citizens with a migrant background through their foreign-born parents, also referred to as second or third-generation migrants. European Commission. (2020). *Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027*, p. 2.

35 European Commission. (2020, November 24). *The EC reveals its new EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion (2021-2027)*. European Website on Integration. [https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/ec-reveals-its-new-eu-action-plan-integration-and-inclusion-2021-2027\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/ec-reveals-its-new-eu-action-plan-integration-and-inclusion-2021-2027_en)

36 *Full respect for LGBTI people fleeing Ukraine*. (2022, May 11). European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. <http://fra.europa.eu/en/news/2022/full-respect-lgbti-people-fleeing-ukraine>

37 Official Journal of the European Union. (2022, April 8). Regulation (EU) 2022/562 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 6 April 2022 amending Regulations (EU) No 1303/2013 and (EU) No 223/2014 as regards Cohesion's Action for Refugees in Europe (CARE).

38 European Commission. (2022, April 4). *Ukraine: final adoption of CARE*. European Commission. <https://ec.europa.eu/european-social-fund-plus/en/news/ukraine-final-adoption-care>

39 European Commission. (2022b, June 29). Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and Regulation (EU) 2021/1060 as regards additional flexibility to address the consequences of the military aggression of the Russian Federation FAST (Flexible Assistance for Territories) - CARE.

40 European Parliament. (2022). *FAST-CARE: MEPs fast-track EU support in response to Russia's war in Ukraine* | News | European Parliament (M. VASS, Ed.). European Parliament. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20220912IPR40205/fast-care-meps-fast-track-eu-support-in-response-to-russia-s-war-in-ukraine>

41 ESF+ in partnership | European Social Fund Plus. (2017). <https://ec.europa.eu/european-social-fund-plus/en/esf-partnership>

The specific objectives (i) and (j) are directed at the socio-economic integration of TCNs and marginalised communities, which will be the main focus of this CoP Migrant Integration (CoP MI).

### 3. Setting up the CoP on Migrant Integration

#### 3.1 Promoting integrated approaches within MS

In their best efforts to address migrant integration, most MS have primarily responded to areas of inclusion separately. Hence, **the goal of this CoP is transversal information exchange to encourage collaboration**. While the siloed approach may have strengthened structuring focused actions or outreach to specific groups, for example, through language learning programmes, on the other hand, when specific actions are not implemented in context, people who have recently arrived in the country may still not have fair labour market access due to a lack of appropriate language skills in the newly acquired language. Furthermore, to achieve sustainable job market inclusion for migrants, MS would need to certify or acknowledge their educational paths, competences, and qualifications in the welcoming country<sup>42</sup>. Taking a closer look at the topic of the labour market integration, the following underlying issues can be found. Childcare and education are not provided inclusively for children of newly arrived migrants. Healthcare access is less accessible, due to fees, language of practice, type of health conditions known in the reception country, etc., than it is for national population families. Mental health provision does not widely respond to the needs of displaced people, nor it is offered in languages of comfort. Housing conditions are not ensured fairly and safely. LGBTI and disability norms are not being enforced to ensure safe inclusion. All these factors disenable an active and fair reach of the job market to suit their full capacities. The [European Economic and Social Committee](#) also called for a need to change attitudes to mediate bias and discrimination. On top of this, working conditions of migrants (as well as of the national long-standing population, in some cases) still represent a very significant issue across EU countries, mostly affecting women and intersectionally more vulnerable groups.

#### 3.2 Role and Methodology of Social Innovation + initiative and the CoPs

ESF+ Social Innovation+ 2022-2027 aims to facilitate transnational cooperation to boost the transfer and scaling up of innovative solutions focused on reducing inequalities across the EU, especially in the policy areas of employment, skills, and social inclusion, including those affecting migrant groups. Transnational cooperation activities, including mutual learning and capacity building, will be organised in the framework of the following Communities of Practice (CoPs): (1) Employment, Education, and Skills; (2) Social Inclusion; (3) Social Innovation; (4) Migrant integration; and (5) Material Support (formerly FEAD community). Mutual learning activities will also be organised and supported within the EU-Roma network and the network supporting the implementation of the ALMA initiative in the Member States.

#### 3.3 Policy Frameworks relevant to the CoP

The policy frameworks and actions particularly relevant to the Migrant Integration CoP are:

- EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027
- Erasmus Teacher Academies
- Youth Guarantee
- Child Guarantee
- ESF+ regulation and Common Provisions Regulation
- European Partnership for Integration
- European Integration Network
- Urban Academy for Integration
- Employers Together for Integration initiative
- International Migration, Integration and Social Cohesion (IMISCOE) network for migration, integration and diversity studies, bridging policymakers, researchers, and civil society organisations.
- Geneva Refugee Convention and Protocol
- Temporary Protection Directive
- The 1951 Refugee Convention
- Directive on the status of non-EU nationals who are long-term residents
- Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union
- CARE and FAST-CARE regulation

42 [Fernández-Macías, E., & Paniagua de la Iglesia, T. \(2018\). \*Migrants in European labour markets are persistently disadvantaged by region of origin\*. European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions. <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/en/blog/2018/migrants-european-labour-markets-are-persistently-disadvantaged-region-origin>](#)

## Rationale

In line with the ESF+ objective, the Work Programme (WP) aims to improve overall integration of people who have migrated into Europe, focusing on multiple key areas that hinder their full potential and inclusion in the labour market. Recognising that the latter outcome cannot be achieved as a standalone goal, **the WP will work towards addressing the multiple components that need to be strengthened to enable holistic inclusion and integration of migrants.**

The objectives of the WP will be met through a participatory approach that takes into account the differences in each Member State, stages of integration, and cohorts of migrants, all of which result in different demands and needs. As a result, this WP acknowledges that participants' opportunities and needs for on-the-ground learning differ significantly. Therefore, this CoP maintains awareness of each country's specific integration process and the different stakeholders involved in the process in order to anchor its work, as well as the diversity of key areas mirrored by the CoP.

The feedback from the participants in the first Plenary Session on Migrant Integration<sup>43</sup> and from the workshop held during the Social Innovation Forum<sup>44</sup> recognised the importance of designing actions based on the intersectional needs of migrants, namely social inclusion, access to education, enabling active participation in society, transition into adulthood, housing, awareness of different migrant profiles, combatting discrimination, culturally informed services, closer collaborations, and simplified information tools.

**The CoP activities will allow stakeholders to reflect on the different components that enable integration, ultimately leading to inclusion and more effective integration processes through learning exchanges. The initiative will also promote the identification and exchange of practices in migrant integration projects and initiatives, along with scaling up opportunities.** This will be achieved by bringing together managing authorities, ministries, experts, experts by experience, practitioners, decision- and policymakers, entrepreneurs, and researchers who share common concerns or interests in the field of migrant integration. Furthermore, the CoP will aim to identify and foster synergies between EU funding programmes, particularly AMIF and ESF+. The most effective solutions in the fields of employment, education, skills, health, and social inclusion could thus be spread across more regions, benefiting more people.

This WP builds on previous work carried out in the Thematic Network on Migrants. The Thematic Network on Migrants focused on labour market integration and any other necessary initiatives to enable individuals to seek employment, undergo training, regularise legal status, and ensure housing. The Thematic Network presented five learning points, some of which will serve as a starting point for this CoP, namely:

1. Increasing awareness of complementarity between EU Funds can enhance impact and reduce overlaps.
2. The added value of the ESF is not fully captured in current measures.
3. Multi-stakeholder approaches, built on successful partnership working, effectively address complex barriers to integration.
4. Early contact with social and professional settings is a key enabler of integration.
5. The ESF can play a greater role in supporting social innovation around migrant integration<sup>45</sup>.

Building on the key topics of this CoP, the lessons learnt from the Thematic Network on Migrants, and an understanding of the current migrant integration context in Europe, the **CoP MI will pursue addressing these issues in a holistic manner to support and amplify the capacity of the stakeholders involved.**

## Objectives

The two key objectives of the CoP on Migrant Integration (CoP MI) for 2023-2024 are to improve overall integration, with a specific focus on the elements that represent hurdles to labour market integration, mainly through:

- Programming and implementation of the ESF+ and/or other related EU Funding for third-country nationals, including people of migrant origin<sup>46</sup>; and
- Support for people fleeing Ukraine, notably in the context of the Temporary Protection Directive, mainly through CARE and FAST-CARE regulations.

These goals will be primarily accomplished by bringing together ESF+ Managing Authorities, Ministries/Departments, and other relevant stakeholders with a focus on migrant integration and/or experience in working with individuals fleeing Ukraine under the TPD in order to share effective practices for the best use of the ESF+ and increase the

43 Online event held on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2023.

44 Onsite event held on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

45 Marangozov, R. (2019). *How the ESF can advance migrant integration: key learning from the ESF Thematic Network on Migrants*. ESF Transnational Platform.

46 Listed under the target group of marginalised communities in the ESF+ programme.

relevance and efficacy of future actions. It also necessitates collaboration between various CoPs of ESF+ to ensure that migrant integration is considered in a holistic manner.

Recognising that integration actions cannot be carried out in silos, this CoP will assist members in adopting a country-wide perspective and transversally addressing complementary key areas in order to incorporate multi-input interventions into the broader context. Therefore, each country's use of the fund should be informed by local vulnerabilities, as well as specific challenges and needs migrants may have in various areas. At the same time, the intersectional principles and Member States' horizontal obligation to ensure non-discrimination and equal opportunities will guide the types of projects proposed.

Some of the expected topics to be discussed, depending on the current needs of the CoP MI, are:

- Integration of migrants from different origins in the labour market.
- Migrant social inclusion and mutual promotion of cohesive communities by national society and recently arrived groups.
- Family reunification.
- Integration measures within childcare and education systems in the country.
- Facilitation of education, training, and skills integration through the recognition of qualifications, validation of skills, and training to leverage previous professional expertise and knowledge.
- Access to health and, more specifically, mental health.
- Housing.
- Active participation of migrants in society, politics, etc., to seed and then foster social inclusion.
- Social innovation as a tool for social change and tackling power imbalances.
- Factors that may lead to discrimination and exploitation through building capacity around diversity management.

To achieve the **first objective (i)**, the following actions will be carried out:

- Promote discussion on how ESF+ can be used as a tool to support mechanisms for social inclusion in each country's context and at different stages of integration to strive for socially cohesive and more equitable communities.
- Identification of potential actions and measures addressing both the relevant priorities within ESF+ and the EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion.
- A mapping of ESF+ and AMIF actions, and effective practices of synergies between ESF+ and AMIF projects in the MS.
- Ongoing reflection on challenges faced by migrants and relevant stakeholders to better identify their overall causes and offer targeted and comprehensive support and exchange of examples.

To achieve the **second objective (ii)**, the following actions will be carried out:

- A discussion on CARE and FAST-CARE and how these regulations have supported the integration of Ukrainians fleeing the Russian Invasion.
- A mapping of ESF+ funded effective practices and actions implemented towards the protection and integration of people who fled Ukraine.
- Research on other countries that experienced similar migration flows as that following the Russian invasion in Ukraine.
- Lessons learnt from the interventions aimed at the protection of Ukrainians fleeing the Russian Invasion to propose good practices for similar humanitarian crises and possible scale-up projects for the general migrant population.

In conclusion, this CoP MI addresses ESF+ objectives of the socio-economic integration of migrants and marginalised communities through employment, education and training, health, social inclusion, and material deprivation. Collaboration with other CoPs on social inclusion and integration issues will contribute towards better solutions and innovation for third-country nationals. It will also identify better use of different EU funding programmes, mainly ESF+ and AMIF, to improve migrant integration.

This CoP also provides a space for MAs, experts on the topic, and experts by experience to exchange knowledge and practices and improve the implementation of funds. This CoP recognises that Civil Society is at the forefront of responding to Migrant Integration needs through Social Inclusion initiatives and will support continuous engagement.

Thus, the support from this CoP MI can strengthen ESF+ funded initiatives, pilot projects, measures, and policies to enhance successful integration processes and actions in MS of the CoP's participating members.



## CoP participants: key target groups

Undeniably, the EU plays an important role in migrant integration through policies and guiding mechanisms. Similarly, the primary responsibility for implementation and adjustment lies at the national, regional, and local levels of each MS.

Hence, the target group of this CoP MI should include:

- Managing Authorities at the National and Regional level
- Desk Officers
- Line Ministries
- Organisations implementing ESF+ programmes or projects for migrants, including NGOs, private foundations, and Civil Society Organisations
- Experts by experience, both on migration paths and social inclusion solutions
- Members of the European Integration Network (EIN) that gathers national public authorities from the 27 EU MS and of the European Programme for Integration and Migrations (EPIM)
- Intermediate Bodies
- Social Partners
- Human Rights Bodies
- Public Employment Services (PES)

Looking at the stakeholders of CoP MI more closely, the rationale reflects considerations on how crucial Migrant Integration is to all sectors in European societies that are increasingly diverse.

**Desk Officers** play an essential role in bridging the gap between the EC and Managing Authorities by sharing needs and key learnings that can be transposed into future funding programmes and the selection of projects.

**Managing Authorities** (Regional and National) that oversee ESF+ funds are responsible for fostering the social inclusion of migrants, labour market integration, and cohesive communities by enhancing effective practices learnt from implemented projects.

**Ministries** and Government Authorities use migration, asylum, and integration funds according to their national policies. They should be linked to practice exchanges within the broader topic to improve country results and to promote rights-based approaches and effective cohesion measures. Ministries and Entities with the integration and employment portfolios are directly responsible for the first steps needed for migrant integration to enable effective and long-term social inclusion and cohesion, as the lack of employment and self-sustenance hinders self-sufficiency for housing, training and learning, family integration, health, active citizenship, etc.

This CoP MI includes third-sector **organisations** and private foundations using ESF+ for migrant integration. Frontline actors can share knowledge and insights on specifics, challenges, and best practices. According to Supreme Audits Institutions Reports (cited in ECA Briefing Paper<sup>47</sup> 2018), a shortcoming highlighted was the lack of involvement of all relevant stakeholders in the integration process, including civil society organisations that often respond to migrant integration needs and social inclusion initiatives that promote positive attitudes among hosting populations. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Civil Society Organisations have filled the gap of country inclusion systems and responses, albeit limited resources often hindering quality and outreach<sup>48</sup>.

Engaging the broader community of **experts** enhances learning exchanges, funding implementation **relevance**, and relevant practice development and exchange. Therefore, to ensure ESF+ implementation and project efficacy, as well as future sustainability, CoP MI must also engage end users of the funding mechanism - '**experts by experience**' with **lived migration experience** and ideally reflecting intersectionality considered in this WP. Contributions may include practice exchanges, design relevance, brainstorming on issues, criteria formulation for applications, assessment measure outline, and evaluation of projects<sup>49</sup>, and many other roles.

Other experts in the field, such as other **CoP members** and **European Integration Network (EIN) members**, can bring expertise to the topic of integration while highlighting national issues and providing a deeper understanding of EU-level and MS practices. Similarly, the European Programme for Integration and Migration, **EPIM** or Philea's Diversity, Migration and Integration Thematic Network members can offer practical knowledge to inform effective approaches and capacity strengthening. Other **intermediate bodies** should be consulted and encouraged to actively share their knowledge.

47 European Court of Auditors. (2018). *The integration of migrants from outside the EU*. Briefing Paper.

48 MPI Europe. (2021). *Healing the Gap: Building inclusive public-health and migrant integration systems in Europe* ([migrationpolicy.org](https://migrationpolicy.org)).

49 Lore Van Praag. (2021). *Co-creation in Migration Studies: The Use of Co-creative Methods to Study Migrant Integration across European Societies*. Leuven University Press.

The underlying idea is, ultimately, to encourage Managing Authorities, entities, and groups or organisations working on Migrant Integration to co-produce and engage in partnerships at different levels of programming.

### Proposed approach to ensuring members' involvement

With the aim of ensuring a participatory approach throughout this CoP, a clear, common goal based on shared recognised needs and a willingness to collaborate and mutually exchange knowledge will be defined and aimed at continuously. Since this is a new CoP and WP, the initial mobilisation of **key participants** through direct input to the WP and event learnings will shape the development and direction of this CoP.

To achieve this, an **online platform** (Microsoft Teams) shall be used as a communication channel with the aim of sharing relevant information and documents, which may also require input from participants, and will serve as an informal channel to share practices and engage together to create a sense of community.

The proposed approach shall be **informed by the dynamics with stakeholders** who join the CoP MI, with a minimum of two of the following as **guiding principles**:

- a. **Method. PARTICIPATORY:** Collecting learning needs and wishes for practice exchange (through a short online survey). Likewise, during the CoP MI events, a participatory approach should be used by balancing information provisions and smaller group exchanges with a moderator noting topics, issues, and learnings to feed into the bigger CoP group later.  
  
Input should serve as stimuli based on topics they already mentioned or from the ground to show how it works in practice, to then discuss both between countries with similar experiences and needs and with countries with totally different issues to learn from each other.
- b. **Content. TARGETED:** Assigning a clear topic for each event with a prior question to participants, which is fed back at the beginning of the event, results in every stakeholder who contributed to 'be seen' - a crucial ingredient for involvement and engagement.
- c. **Insight. MUTAL:** By bridging policy and practice, Managing Authorities and public entities working on Migrant Integration will benefit from examples of how this bilateral process between migrants and host societies works on the ground, as this may support increased relevance in the future design of actions. Example topics to be focused on when addressing this may include: selection criteria to allocate funding in each country, what other MA most value, learning from European organisations and networks working on social inclusion engaging migrants and host societies (such as EIN, EPIM, NEF, etc.)
- d. **Partnerships. BENEFICIAL:** Given the obvious mobility characteristics of many TCN and people fleeing from Ukraine, there are clear benefits for stakeholders from different MS nurturing connections and knowledge on practices of Migrant Integration. It is fundamental to have end users engaged in programming, bearing in mind how methodology design has to adapt to different cultures and influence the way we engage and participate in group activities and in the exercise of active citizenship. Example topics to trigger or nourish partnerships may be selected around the mechanisms and dynamics, for example, in the selection (constitution of a diverse jury, criteria for funding allocation, etc.) of projects in Member countries that get funded, project evaluation measure design, in-project intermediate assessment.

### Proposed activities and outputs (results)

Activities and topics mentioned in this section are merely suggestions, as they will vary according to the needs identified by the CoP MI members once formed. At this stage, the proposed activities, results, and outputs are:

Activity (A)	Result (R) & Output (O)	Timeframe
Meeting with country desk officers and EC representatives	<b>R:</b> Understanding MS needs to form the basis of the WP <b>O:</b> Informing the 1 <sup>st</sup> draft of WP	30 <sup>th</sup> March 2023
Outreach to possible members to join the CoP	<b>R:</b> A network and CoP made up of diverse members, each benefitting and contributing to the CoP <b>O:</b> MS Teams channel set up with all CoP members	July 2023
Drafting the first version of the WP	<b>R:</b> The EC is presented with the draft MI WP for feedback <b>O:</b> Draft WP	May 2023

Drafting the second version of the WP	<b>R:</b> Amended WP based on EC feedback <b>O:</b> Internally approved WP for presentation to CoP Members	September – November 2023
First Plenary session: Migrant Integration CoP Introduction	<b>R:</b> A plenary session with the CoP members to introduce each other, the draft WP and to allow for discussion and inputs to the Work Programme. <b>O:</b> Template with feedback from Plenary Session participants informing amendments on WP	3 <sup>rd</sup> October 2023
Pre-Social Innovation Forum Workshop Survey	<b>R:</b> Gather examples of MI practices for different Stages of Integration, for exchanges at the workshop and clearer understanding of participants' integration stages focus <b>O:</b> Workshop includes examples from the survey	October 2023
Social Innovation Forum Workshop: Stages of Integration	<b>R:</b> Identifying different stages of integration, facilitating exchange and sharing of effective practices per stage <b>O:</b> Summary report on the workshop with feedback from the workshops	26 <sup>th</sup> October 2023
Update of MS Teams Channel	<b>R:</b> Updated documents shared on MS Teams Channel and invitations for introductions and collaboration <b>O:</b> Active MS Teams Channel	November 2023
Presentation of the final Work Programme	<b>R:</b> Final WP distributed with all members and public <b>O:</b> Final Migrant Integration CoP Work Programm	November – December 2023
Ongoing compilation of a table on MI Practices	<b>R/O:</b> Active ongoing documentation of a table of practices shared by participants, including those emerged at Plenary and in survey results, identifying the integration stages they were implemented for, to be distributed amongst CoP Members to show ongoing collection (till 2024)	December 2023
Working Group Meeting (online): MA & Desk Officer Meeting	<b>R:</b> MA and Desk Officers meet for a better understanding of the country's needs <b>O:</b> Sharing Effective Practices live document is shared with all participants	18 <sup>th</sup> January 2024
Interactive Session: Understanding EU Funding and Management (Objective 1)	<b>R:</b> Introduction of members of the CoP; Better understanding of ESF+/AMIF actions and Managing Authorities <b>O:</b> Mapping of EU Funding Calls and Management Styles	6 <sup>th</sup> March 2024
Joint event with Social Inclusion CoP	<b>R/O:</b> TBC	4-6 <sup>th</sup> June 2024
Interactive Session: Sharing good practices and scaling up (Objective 2)	<b>R:</b> Sharing effective practices and learnt lessons programming and implementing ESF+ for third-country nationals/ migrants/ support for people fleeing Ukraine. <b>O:</b> Report with examples that have been effective and proposals for scaling up	6 <sup>th</sup> June 2024 TBC – Portugal Hybrid
Launching a collection exercise for CoP members and affiliates to identify effective practices in MI	<b>R:</b> Identifying effective practices in 1-2 MS on different remits of MI <b>O:</b> Draft plan for the Study Visit <b>O:</b> Finalising document on lived MI Practices	May – June 2024
Plenary Session	<b>R:</b> Overview of achievements of WP so far; discussion on the future of WP and needs <b>O:</b> Report; updated WP	17 <sup>th</sup> September 2024

Draft Work Programme 2025	R: 2 <sup>nd</sup> WP (2025) drafted and presented O: 2 <sup>nd</sup> WP covering 2025	September 2024- November 2024
Study Visit and Peer-Review to prepare for the updated 2025 WP	R: Members of the CoP visit effective practices. Bridge policies and practices through discussion with Networks and Civil Society. O: Report with lessons learnt from the study visit and suggestions for future WP	27 <sup>th</sup> - 28 <sup>th</sup> November 2024
Activity Social Innovation Forum	R: Bridges between the 5 CoPs and actors created O: Report on synergies	TBC between 5 <sup>th</sup> -14 <sup>th</sup> November 2024

## Dissemination of results

Given the potential for the growth of data and knowledge production focusing on Migrant Integration and Social Inclusion, and in order to increase future exchange and learning opportunities within the scope of this WP, the team is committed to documenting learnings (potentially, by topic, pending on how much emerges within the CoP MI dialogues). It strengthens awareness of best practice examples, encourages partnership and replication with other migrant groups, and supports strategising scaling opportunities. Thus, these outputs and results of the exchanges shall be widely disseminated, as well as the recordings of the virtual meetings, via the MS Teams Community of Practice on Migrant Integration.

The outcomes of the meetings will also be shared within the community through the Microsoft Teams CoP channel or other media depending on CoP MI requests, as well as any documents and recommendations produced by the team as a result of the CoP MI shared knowledge or needs.

To reach a wider audience, the CoP will make use of other communication channels such as social media, the SI+ website, and MS Teams.

## Teamwork organisation and logistics

Both consultants were mobilised for this task at the end of March 2023. In the first instance, listening to Country Desk Officers and subsequently being able to access previous papers and action plans developed with the EC since 2018 on Migrant Integration. With the aid of a Microsoft Teams channel to store and access joint documents, the work commenced. Thus, using such background work, in April, the drafting of this WP started, including the proposal of 4 events for CoP MI to be set up and advice on widening the range of stakeholders to be engaged in the CoP.

This WP, event planning, and any supporting documents and Outputs are always subject to EC approval. The final versions always stem from joint reflection and discussions between the ESFA team and experts, the EC representative(s) for MI, and any other individuals who may be relevant according to the specific topic.

The CoP coordinator and ESFA acts as the secretariat, responsible for organising work and administrative collaboration. They provide assistance with logistics, technical support for online apps and tools, and technical experts.

Once the CoP MI is formed, a Taskforce Team, which includes the Thematic Experts, CoP coordinators, and Chair/Co-chair, will coordinate, implement, and monitor the activities of all CoPs. Thematic experts will work closely with the CoP Chair and co-chair to develop and revise work programmes, organise activities, and set priorities. They will also contribute to the development of all outputs, prepare documents, and implement a wider dissemination strategy.

