

Policy Note #1 / April 22

Promoting Dynamic Integration in Europe

Expanding Research & Practice – Project Summary



As FOCUS concludes its work, the project is issuing a series of short policy notes which summarise key findings and outputs. This first note provides a general overview.

FOCUS & ITS WORK

FOCUS is an international consortium funded by the European Commission which has undertaken a deep look at key factors underpinning integration in Europe through both research and practice-focused activity. Using the EU's definition of dynamic integration, FOCUS has – explored the dimensions of 'what matters?' and 'what works?'. The project's outputs range from detailed field surveys to a structured approach to promoting dynamic integration in this broad and diverse field.

What do we mean by dynamic integration?

"In the EU context, a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of EU Member States."

Action 1, section 2 of Communication on a Common Agenda for Integration, COM(2005) 389 final

RESEARCH ON INTEGRATION

The project has conducted broad surveys and focus groups which have explored, for the first time in a European context, both the socioeconomic and sociopsychological dimensions of integration.

- ◆ Over 5,000 people participated in extensive qualitative and quantitative studies undertaken in Germany, Sweden, Croatia and Jordan.
- ◆ Research was carried out with post-2015 refugees from Syria (the arriving community) and the longer-term residents of the cities where they now live (the receiving community).
- ◆ Involving over 100 questions, the results provide a deep understanding of the current situation of these communities.

Key findings in the research include:

- ◆ Contrary to many predictions at the time, the fundamental influences on integration have not changed significantly with the migration of this group to Europe.
- ◆ Integration is accepted by both communities as their preferred objective in terms of acculturation and there are many positive attitudes which can serve as a basis for integration.
- ◆ However, the levels of contact between communities remain low. This is particularly an issue with the receiving community, where the responsibility to promote integration is abstract rather than internalised – putting responsibility on institutions rather than communities. This remains the single biggest overall barrier to integration.



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- ◆ There are significant misperceptions of the current status of refugees (e.g. underestimating education levels and overestimating dependence).
- ◆ Issues which emerge as barriers to integration faced by refugees include delayed determination of legal status, non-recognition of qualifications, a lack of access to appropriate language supports and delayed or blocked family reunification.

To read more about the FOCUS survey findings see full report [here](#). All qualitative and quantitative FOCUS research findings are available for download [here](#).

INTEGRATION PRACTICE

The practice stream of FOCUS carried out a detailed review of current practices and guidance in the field of integration in Europe and then, through a series of practice case studies and a co-creative process, developed a structured approach to effective practices in the design, implementation and evaluation of integration programmes.

Review of Current Policy & Practice Development

- ◆ A qualitative study was carried out with senior policy and programme makers ranging from the European Council to regional, exploring the policy-development process, use of integration research, policy networks, perceptions of knowledge gaps and preferred format for practice guidance.
- ◆ A review of current integration practices was completed providing details of the content, scope and objectives of the practices.

To read more about this study see the full report [here](#) or summary [here](#).

Development of the FOCUS Approach to Dynamic Integration

A systematic process of engagement and cocreation was undertaken to determine the most effective way of making the knowledge base available and useful to a very diverse community of integration practice. The key output of this is the [FOCUS Approach to Dynamic Integration](#).

- ◆ The FOCUS Approach was developed through key informant interviews, group consultations and workshops with integration practitioners. Starting with a general discussion, and drawing on the research base, the process was gradually developed in terms of both key principles and practical implementation guidance.
- ◆ The Approach was validated in a series of five practice [case studies](#) which explored its relevance as a means to structure the development, implementation and evaluation of integration practices. The practice case studies were completed in Austria, Germany, Denmark, Sweden and the UK.
- ◆ The FOCUS Approach forms part of the [Living Well Together Resource](#) which includes practice case studies and implementation guidance.

The FOCUS Approach to Dynamic Integration is a practical framework to strengthen existing promising integration practices and support the development of new ones.

At its core is the idea of fostering social bonds, connections, and bridges among arriving and receiving communities. The FOCUS Approach highlights key elements to promote trust and reciprocity, social connectedness, wellbeing, resilience and a sense of belonging of all community members.

Read more and find further resources on the different dimensions of the FOCUS Approach in the [Living Well Together Resource](#).



POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Each element of FOCUS's work has direct policy implications, but the following are amongst the most important recommendations:

- ◆ The active promotion of more extensive and substantive engagement between arriving and receiving communities needs to be addressed as a core priority in integration work.
- ◆ Actions should include a greater element of targeting and tailoring to individuals and community contexts.
- ◆ The lack of contact between the communities increases the need for more active work to ensure that basic facts are shared. In particular, information showing both the real situation of arriving community members and the progress of integration needs to be regularly disseminated and the media engaged.
- ◆ Core practical barriers to integration remain important: legal status and right to employment, recognition of qualifications, family reunion, housing quality and support beyond reception period. Addressing these can have a very positive impact.
- ◆ The impact of racism and discrimination on integration should be recognised and understood as an issue to be considered throughout integration practice.
- ◆ A structured approach should be taken to ensuring that integration programmes are developed, implemented and evaluated in light of four key elements. Specifically, they should address:
 - ◆ **Mental Health and Psychosocial Support** (MHPSS) in general and not simply through referral to medical settings.
 - ◆ Engage both **Arriving and Receiving Communities**, with volunteerism potentially playing a very significant role.
 - ◆ Programmes should be developed and implemented through **Participative & Co-creative Approaches**.
 - ◆ To maximise impact, where possible programmes should involve **Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships and Coordination**.
- ◆ Given their central role in shaping practice, funding and evaluation forms should reflect these key elements.

THE FOCUS PROJECT (2019-2022)

Coordinator

Sabina Dziadecka Gråbæk / IFRC Psychosocial Centre

contact@focus-refugees.eu

www.focus-refugees.eu

