



Promoting Dynamic Integration in Europe

Using Funding and Programme Development to Improve the Impact of Integration Practice

During FOCUS's work, practitioners and policy makers were asked about how programmes are developed and where ideas come from. The central role of funding guidelines and evaluation procedures in shaping integration practice was an important theme which emerged. This short policy note details some of the relevant findings and makes recommendations for how to use funding and programme development to promote effective practices.

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

FOCUS STUDY OF THE VIEWS OF SENIOR PROFESSIONALS

To aid our understanding of how integration practice works in Europe, structured interviews were conducted with senior professionals in a range of countries. Those interviewed work in both the public and NGO sectors at EU, national and local/regional levels. The results of the study included a review of other research on integration policy development.

Amongst the key findings emerging from the work were:

- ◆ This is a highly diverse community of policy and practice which is eager to evolve by incorporating more **long-term sustainability** and impact into programme design, implementation and review.
- ◆ **Programme ideas** are currently driven by 2 principal sources:
 - ◆ Guidelines and requirements of funding programmes (chiefly AMIF but also private and national priorities) determine the scope and priorities of programmes.
 - ◆ Networks of both governmental bodies and NGOs are the principal sources of innovation in concrete programme content.
- ◆ Organisations have limited capacity to access and incorporate **research and best practices**.
- ◆ Current practice is rarely 'two-way' and there is limited engagement of **receiving communities** – which is felt to be the single largest practice gap.

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



OTHER RESEARCH

FOCUS has completed the first broad surveys which have explored, in a European context, both the socio-economic and socio-psychological dimensions of integration. Key findings in the research include:

- ◆ 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.*
- ◆ 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.

All qualitative and quantitative FOCUS research findings are available for download [here](#).

Development of the FOCUS Approach to Dynamic Integration

An effort to make the knowledge base available and useful to a very diverse community of integration practice has led to the development of the [FOCUS Approach to Dynamic Integration](#).

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](#).



The Approach was validated in a series of 5 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.

Development of the Implementation Guide for Dynamic Integration

To support dynamic integration programming, FOCUS has issued the **Implementation Guide for Dynamic Integration**: a practice-informed guide for policy makers, civil society organizations and communities, developed with the active engagement of end-user organisations and representatives, to help understand important dimensions of dynamic integration and how to implement them at all stages of the project cycle: Assessment & design, Planning & implementation, and Monitoring & evaluation.

Download the full **FOCUS Implementation Guide for Dynamic Integration** [here](#).

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The new *EU Action Plan* and revised ESF+ and AMIF programmes have begun a new period of programme development and a diverse range of other funders are seeking to improve their impact. The following recommendations concern how the development, funding and evaluation of integration programmes could better reflect both best practices and existing gaps:

- ◆ Programme development, applications and evaluations should, in addition to other matters, incorporate consideration of four elements:
 - ◆ **Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)** in general and not simply through referral to medical settings.
 - ◆ **Engagement of both Arriving and Receiving Communities**, with volunteerism potentially playing a very significant role.
 - ◆ Use of **Participative & Co-creative Approaches**.
 - ◆ **Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships and Coordination** where possible.
- ◆ Given their central role in shaping practice, funding and evaluation forms should reflect these key elements.
- ◆ The impact of racism and discrimination on integration should be recognised and understood as an issue to be considered throughout integration practice.
- ◆ Medium-long term funding is required to credibly promote dynamic integration.
- ◆ Evaluations should focus on practices and assess their quality, impact and levels of innovation, rather than on artificial or unrealistic targets.
- ◆ Ongoing support should be provided for practice networks within the public and NGO sectors, and for initiatives which enable easier access to the research base.

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