



Researching Functioning Policy Practices in Local Integration in Europe: A Conceptual and Methodological Discussion Paper

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1. Introduction

This paper sets out the methodological and conceptual framework for the European Migration Academy (EU-MIA) project. EU-MIA is a research and action project, funded by the European Fund for the Integration of Third Country Nationals (EIF), delivered by the International Training Centre of the International Labour Organisation (ITC-ILO), the International and European Forum of Migration Research (FIERI) and the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS) of the University of Oxford.

The aim of the project is to establish dynamic and operational connections between researchers, practitioners and training institutions in Europe. This will create an innovative structural base on which local integration policies are generated and implemented in the EU. The project will do this by: increasing the systematic sharing of knowledge on key features of local integration policies in European cities on the basis of rigorously researched criteria for selecting “functioning practices”; widely spreading practical knowledge on successful integration measures and practices, utilising and extending existing evidence and networks which will in turn help sustain a European-wide community of reflexive practice on integration; improving the capacity of key actors in the field of integration at city and neighbourhood levels through training-related activities; and reinforcing and expanding multi-stakeholder and multi-level European networks that share innovative experiences and knowledge on migrant integration in urban contexts.

The project has three phases. In a first phase of background research, using existing contacts and networks we will create a repertoire of promising European “functioning practices” in the field of integration at city and neighbourhood level. In a second phase of fieldwork missions, ten field visits will be carried out in the selected cities; these will include in-depth interviews with local stakeholders and the production of short videos about each selected “functioning practice” to be included in the training kits for the Academy. Finally, we will develop a cooperative learning kit based on the research component of this project. This will form the basis of the Migrant Integration Academy.

This paper is part of the first phase, setting out the theoretical and methodological considerations that inform our detailed methodology. It indicates how we define the key terms of the project, including integration and integration policy. It then sets out the current policy context in which we undertake the research, showing the centrality of local and regional levels of governance, the importance of mainstreaming, and the challenges posed by fiscal austerity. In the next part, it goes on to explore the methodological challenges of the research, and how we will address them.

2. Local and regional integration policy

2.1 What is integration?

Different actors define integration in different ways and develop policies and measures pursuing different goals. Therefore, from a policy analysis perspective the meaning of integration is an object of investigation rather than an *a priori* assumption. We therefore avoid the normative perspective which has prevailed in the last decades in the literature on national and local integration policies – named by Scholten (2011) as “model thinking” – since it has given scant attention to what actually happens on the ground, i.e. to how policymakers perceive and frame integration policies (Zincone and Caponio 2012; Caponio, Ponzo and Ricucci 2013).

For the purposes of this project, then, we define integration loosely, as *the dynamic, multi-actor process of mutual engagement that facilitates effective participation by all members of a diverse society in the economic, political, social and cultural life, and fosters a shared and inclusive sense of belonging.*

This process is shaped by the interaction between migrants and the receiving society – an interaction between parties that are fundamentally unequal in power and resources (Penninx 2009:5). And it is a process which occurs at several different geographical scales at the same time: labour markets may be sub-regional, housing markets may be local, political systems may be national, and so on. These geographical scales have complex and dynamic relations: decisions made at one level may have effects at other levels. But it is clear that the local level is profoundly important. As Rinus Penninx puts it:

The interaction between the receiving society and individual migrants (and immigrant groups) takes place in the very concrete contexts of streets, neighbourhoods, schools, work places, public spaces, local organisations. In other words, integration takes place at the local level, even if some of its mechanisms are steered by institutional rules that have been established at higher (regional, national or international) levels (Penninx 2009:5).

2.2. What is integration policy?

We define public policy not just as norms issued by public authorities, but as decisions and actions taken by any actor (including private sector and non-profit) and at any stage (including implementation), which produce consequences of public interest (Lasswell 1956; Jordan 1990; Rhodes 1990; Pressman and Wildavsky 1973; Lipsky 1980).

At all levels of government, policies are developed to facilitate integration or to direct it in particular ways, according to prevailing political imperatives and contextual conditions. However, it is not just integration policy as such which has an impact on integration; all policy fields make a difference. For example, it may be mainstream employment policy, rather than migrant integration policy as such, which has a greater effect on migrants' employment opportunities in a given territory. In the next section, we outline the recent

development and current state of integration policy across Europe, before focusing in on the local and regional level.

2.3 What is the current state of integration policy in Europe?

EU efforts to develop a common migration and asylum policy began in 1999 when migration competence was conferred upon it by the Amsterdam Treaty.¹ Following this, the October 1999 Tampere European Council Presidency Conclusions called for the development of a common EU policy on the management of migration flows, in the context of building a European area of freedom, security and justice. European Union policy on migration in general and integration in particular can be understood in the context of its three five-year programmes from 1999 – Tampere (1999), Hague (2004) and Stockholm (2009) – although communications issued by the European Commission within the programme periods have developed policy considerably, and occasionally the agenda has been shifted by the Member States holding the rotating presidency. In general, these three programmes have all focused on border security and the management of migration as priority goals rather than on integration.

EU integration policy has developed within this framework but is strictly limited to *supporting measures* aimed at legal migrants, rather than any attempt at harmonisation. This is most explicit in the Lisbon Treaty, which delineates the legal competence of the Commission to pursue integration policies: Article 79.4 states that “the European Parliament and the Council, acting in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure, may establish measures to provide incentives and support for the action of Member States with a view to promoting the integration of third-country nationals residing legally in their territories, excluding any harmonisation of the laws and regulations of the Member States”. Hence, the 1999 Tampere presidency conclusions only highlighted two points relating to integration: the fair treatment of third country nationals (TCNs) and the greater approximation of the rights of long-term residents TCNs to those of EU citizens. In this, Tampere promoted the legal-political rights and responsibilities which underpin the processes of integration, rather than addressing the processes of integration themselves.

Support for the processes of integration themselves have been developed within EU policy since 2003, when an important Communication on immigration, integration and employment was issued by the European Commission. The Communication adopted a “holistic” approach, focusing on six key areas:

- Integration into the labour market
- Education and language skills
- Housing and urban issues
- Health and social services
- The social and cultural environment
- Nationality, civic citizenship and respect for diversity²

1. European Parliament Draft Report on the Communication from the Commission on immigration, integration and employment, Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, European Parliament, 2003/2147(INI). See Solidar (2010:5)

2. Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on immigration, integration and employment, COM (2003) 336 final, 3.6.2003

The first of those key areas, the labour market, has been a prominent strand in EU integration policy, and was very much the focus of the 2003 Communication.

There was also, however, a strand of integration policy which framed integration in terms of a *condition* to be placed on migrants. For example, the 2003 Council Directive on the right to family reunification (2003/86/EC) recognises that family reunification is a necessary way of facilitating the integration of third-country nationals in a Member State – but it also makes the right to family reunion contingent upon compliance with integration measures. The European Pact on Immigration and Asylum of 2008 strengthens this element, asking Member States to take account in their national legislation on family reunification of their own reception capacities, and the integration capacities of families (their resources, accommodation and knowledge of the host country's language).³

This conditional approach to integration policy – stressing migrant responsibilities rather than opportunities and making integration a condition of civic inclusion rather than an outcome of it – has been partly driven by a handful of mainly Northwest European Member States – Netherland, UK, Denmark, Germany and France.⁴ In these states, the national political debate has been led since the late 1990s by the widespread rejection of “state multiculturalism”, a stronger emphasis on cohesion and migrant responsibility and a securitisation of the integration agenda – in the face of demographic change and a mainstreaming of populist political themes (Zapata Barrero 2011).

However, this has been balanced by a stronger articulation over time of the two-way and participatory dimensions of integration, more congruent with the European scholarly consensus on integration outlined at the start of this paper above. These dimensions tend not to feature in legislation but rather in *soft policy*: “(non-legally binding or enforceable) instruments and networks, with the Commission playing a coordinating role in the exchange of national practices and experiences on the integration of TCNs among member states representatives” (Carrera and Wiesbrock 2011).

This soft policy approach was a hallmark of the Hague Programme period. In 2004 the European Council adopted the Common Basic Principles (CBPs) on Immigrant Integration, intended to offer Member States a non-binding guide on policy, starting with the statement that integration is a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States. In 2005, in its key Communication, *A Common Agenda for Integration*, the European Commission developed these principles into a framework with action points at national and European levels.⁵ And in May that year, the European Commission launched its five year Action Plan for Freedom, Justice and Security. One of the ten key areas for priority action was to “adopt, support and incentive [sic] measures to help Member States deliver better

3. See Kate and Niessen p.41, which locates this within a move to greater stringency on family reunification; this accompanies the emphasis in EU and UK migration on prosperity and managed migration and perhaps reflects the weakening of European states' relationships with their former colonies.

4. Carrera and Wiesbrock (2009). See also the wealth of country-based and comparative analyses produced in the framework of the PROSINT project (“Promoting Sustainable Policies for Integration”) coordinated by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD): <http://research.icmpd.org/1429.html>.

5. See Council Conclusions, Immigrant Integration Policy in the European Union, 14615/04 of 19 November 2004 and the Communication from the European Commission on A Common Agenda for Integration – Framework for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals in the European Union, September 2005, COM (2005) 389. Cited in NGO Network of Integration Focal Points, Civic and political participation: Recommendations for the Integration of Refugees and Migrants in Europe, October 2006: 5.

policies on integration so as to maximise the positive impact of migration on society and the economy”.⁶ This was affirmed in 2008 under the French presidency at the ministerial conference on integration at Vichy, with the adoption of the common principles for a common immigration policy, the third one of which, “Prosperity and Immigration: Integration is the key to successful immigration”, states that:

The integration of legal immigrants should be improved by strengthened efforts from host Member States and contribution from immigrants themselves (“two-way-process”), in accordance with the Common Basic Principles on Integration adopted in 2004. Immigrants should be provided with opportunities to participate and develop their full potential. European societies should enhance their capacity to manage immigration-related diversity and enhance social cohesion.⁷

The Communication noted a number of measures towards this, including the mainstreaming of TCNs into society through equal opportunities and anti-discrimination measures in the workplace and elsewhere, exchange of best practices on the management of diversity, support for specific integration programmes including language and induction programme, and the greater approximation of TCN access to basic entitlements to that of citizens.

Consequently, under the Hague Programme, several integration soft policy instruments were developed. The European Commission held a series of seminars on integration which resulted in the publication of the Handbook on Integration, with editions in 2004, 2007 and 2009, as well as the Web Site on Integration launched in 2008, and the Integration Forum meeting from 2008. After this high tide mark for the concept of integration as a two-way process, the EU continued to affirm integration’s importance – but also continued, as in the 2008 European Pact on Immigration and Asylum, to stress integration in terms of the duties and responsibilities of migrants, as well as the importance of acceptance of the core values and national identities of Europe and its Member States.

In December 2009, the European Council adopted the Stockholm Programme, which indicated no radical departure from the path set out in the earlier period. An area of freedom, security and justice for all and the principles of social cohesion, democratic values and intercultural dialogue were all affirmed. The technocratic soft policy approach was confirmed too, in line with the Lisbon Treaty’s exclusion of the harmonisation of immigration policy.

However, in the Stockholm Programme period, two themes have received renewed focus in European integration policy, which are central to the aims of the EU-MIA project. The first of these is a stronger recognition of the importance and competence of sub-national (and especially local) governance in facilitating the processes of integration. The second is to shift integration policy away from a discrete, specialist, migrant-targeted approach and towards using mainstream policy instruments to achieve integration outcomes, by bending mainstream budgets and enhancing the competence of agencies within mainstream policy fields.

6. COM (2005) 0184 final

7. COM (2008) 359 final

2.4 The importance of local and regional integration policy

In discussing integration policy, it is crucial that we recognise that it too has a multi-level and multi-scalar dynamic: although integration mainly happens at the scale of the local, the ingrained disadvantages experienced by migrants are probably beyond the power of local governments and require larger policy levers. Nonetheless, local governments do have significant powers to shape integration outcomes, and not least to shape public attitudes.

A series of European Commission statements in the last decade have articulated a growing recognition of this local and regional role in integration. The Ministerial Conference at Vichy in 2008 concluded that “local agents’ roles in integration especially the role of local administration and cities in the building and carrying out of integration programmes are crucial”. The Zaragoza ministerial declaration on integration in 2010 re-affirmed this emphasis on localism:

Cities and their districts are privileged areas to foster intercultural dialogue and the promotion of cultural diversity... It is necessary that local governments develop and obtain capacities and synergies to better manage equality and diversity. For that purpose, they should develop tools in order to help design public policies which could be adapted to the needs of the changing population.

While much of the academic literature on integration has emphasised national models (e.g. Joppke 1998, Favell 1998), on the ground it is clear that city level policies have their own dynamic. An emerging literature has begun to explore the local level (Alexander 2007, Caponio and Borkert 2010, Penninx et al 2004). Cities often lead the way in relation to their national contexts. Local governments act as innovators and as policy entrepreneurs, and can significantly influence the course of policy development at a national level or be at odds with it (Jørgensen 2012, Poppelaars and Scholten 2008). For example, as Peter Scholten shows, in an “old” migration context, Amsterdam developed a multiculturalist model at a local level, originating policies that were later rolled out nationally and seen as a Dutch national model for some time; in contrast, Rotterdam preceded the Netherlands in developing integration policies, and did not follow national trends until the rise of Pim Fortuyn in 2002, when his party Liveable Rotterdam (*Leefbaar Rotterdam*) entered local government and the city developed an assimilationist agenda (Scholten 2012). Similarly, in Spain, a “new” migration country, it is the “plans” developed by cities and by regional level autonomous communities – often those facing more rapid demographic change than the country as a whole – that have led the emergence of integration and especially intercultural policy innovation (Arango and Brey 2012). Consequently, patterns of policy innovation at city level can – and often do – cut across the ideal type national models in the academic literature.

2.5 Mainstreaming integration policy

At national and sub-national levels of governance, where the policy agenda on integration has been engaged with by policy communities there has been the creation of agencies with specific competence in this area. We can see this at the national level, as with the High Commissioner on Integration in Portugal or the *Ausländerbeauftragte* in Germany, and at local levels too, as in many German cities which have municipal Integration Commissioners (often of migrant origin) or many Dutch or Danish cities which have a deputy mayor with specific responsibility for integration. Such high-level focus signals taking integration seriously and has been seen as a sign of advanced integration policy.

However, as noted above, it is often not “integration policy”, at either a local or national level, which makes a difference to integration, but simply *policy in general* – mainstream policies that affect the different domains of life in which the processes of integration occur, from housing to employment, from civic participation to public space. Therefore, it is encouraging that the European Union has increasingly foregrounded the idea of mainstreaming migrant integration since the Common Basic Principles of Integration (2004) and European Common Agenda on Integration (COM 2005, 389). The second European Handbook on Integration developed this approach more concretely, identifying three principles: that the perspective of migrant groups should be incorporated into all policies at all levels of governance; that organisations tasked with addressing the needs of the general society or community should ensure equal access to their services by an increasingly diverse population; and, that government agencies must learn to balance mainstreamed approaches with targeted measures in those contexts where more specific migrant needs are evidenced (Niessen and Schibel 2007:14).

This type of mainstreaming is referred to in the political science literature as “deconcentration”: taking policy responsibility from one agency or department of government (at whatever level) and sharing it with others (Petrovic et al 2012). This approach can be seen in almost all European countries. It has the value of shifting the integration discourse away from a stigmatising focus on migrants as representing problems to be solved or needs to be met; integration is increasingly seen as a whole society challenge, as an issue of citizenship and inclusion.

2.6 Local integration policy in a time of crisis

However, these two welcome steps – localisation and mainstreaming – have occurred in a context of economic crisis and generalised fiscal austerity. Hence, the growing recognition of the importance of local and regional level activity for integration has not resulted in growing budgets for local and regional work. In this context, we can see the shift to mainstreaming at a local level as an alibi for cuts (and cuts whose impact is felt by the most politically voiceless). As the Migration Policy Institute has documented, funding and support for integration policy has been declining across Europe recently, at every geographical scale.⁸ In the context of austerity, many public agencies see integration as a dispensable luxury, while in other contexts the backlash against multiculturalism means that migrant-focused policies are out of fashion. In

8. <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/TCM-integration.pdf>

the Netherlands, for example, integration spending is being phased to zero, and national and local officials are facing the challenge of how to deliver integration outcomes without a dedicated budget; in the UK, the Coalition government since 2010 has developed a localist and “Big Society” approach to integration, rolling back state intervention in favour of bottom-up and locally initiated but un-resourced civil society activity.

2.7 Mainstreaming and urban policy

However, the development of innovative approaches to mainstreaming must also be seen as a sign of maturity in the field, a recognition that migrants and minorities are here to stay. And, if we take a holistic approach to integration – seeing it as a natural process that occurs across several domains – means *some kind of “smart mainstreaming” is the only credible approach*. As Saggar and Somerville (2012) argue, it is mainstream policy rather than tailored migrant-oriented policy that has the greatest purchase in securing better public outcomes for migrants across the main socio-economic domains – but most effectively when attention is paid to the evidence on where particularly intense disadvantage persists. Hence, as Han Entzinger wrote in a recent report on integration policy in Amsterdam and Rotterdam, “good integration policy is really nothing more and nothing less than good urban policy” (2012).

Our intervention in the EU-MIA project, therefore, is to take seriously the EU definition of integration as a multidimensional, multi-domain and multilinear process which occurs naturally in a given territory. Thus, we take as a starting point the assumption that policy and practice in all the domains in which integration occurs – from local and national belonging to labour markets and housing markets – is relevant to integration. Forward-thinking municipalities are aiming at whole communities by default, while using evidence to understand the persistent disproportionalities, exclusions, barriers and disadvantages that require more focused action with particular groups or localities.

2.8 Addressing the gaps in developing local integration policy: Developing training for municipal integration policy

If, as argued above, patterns of municipal policy innovation cut national models, possibilities are opened for transnational, interlocal policy learning and transfer (Jones and Gidley 2013). But what are the appropriate mechanisms and platforms for this? At present, there is a growing body of work at the interface of research and policy, but *training* policy-makers and practitioners is an underdeveloped area.

Currently, there are opportunities for sharing learning at network conferences (e.g. Eurocities Integrating Cities), inspiring the transfer of innovative practices – but these events can by their highly public and performative nature discourage honest reflection on failure. Secondly, there is a proliferation of good practice lists, guidelines, toolkits, capturing the range of emerging approaches municipalities can take – but too often based on weak anecdotal evidence and are not always concretely useful to practitioners seeking to transfer practices to radically different contexts. Thirdly, there are some very ambitious peer review and peer mentoring schemes (e.g. CLIP, DIVE). Although the reports of these are widely used by local practitioners,

they necessarily directly involve only a closed circle of cities and thus require further elaboration to be generalizable beyond the participants.

The value we seek to add in EU-MIA is to build on this work and go beyond its limits, to provide practical, practitioner-oriented training based on scholarly research. EU-MIA seeks to work with municipalities to document promising practices in integration, to use in developing training materials to work with cities on improving policy. We do not hope to find perfect models of integration policy which can be adopted wholesale across different city contexts, but we believe there is a wealth of effective activity being carried on by cities, in partnership with civil society, across Europe, often despite diminishing resources. In the following sections, we present our methodology in identifying and documenting this range of practice.

3 Towards an analysis of functioning local integration practices

3.1 Functioning Practices: what, why, how

The approach adopted in EU-MIA project could be certainly connected to the *Best Practice* approach which is increasingly used both by policy-makers and scholars and which is deeply related to policy learning aims. In this regard, Brannana et al. (2008) underline that the concept of *Best Practice* draws on two sets of literature. The first concerns innovation and its diffusion and starts from the assumption that an innovative practice operating in one place spreads, sometimes as a result of conscious intention to emulate, across space (Walker 1969; Gray 1973; Rogers 1995; Wejnert 2002). In this perspective, identifying and promoting *Best Practice* may be seen as one method of dissemination that may speed up, or indeed alter, patterns of diffusion. The second bulk of literature concerns policy transfer and it is commonly drawn upon in exploring and assessing processes of *Best Practice* (Rose 1991, 2005, Wolman 1992, Dolowitz 2000, Dolowitz and Marsh 1996).

The tight correlation between the perspectives of the above-mentioned literature and the goals of EU-MIA project should therefore be evident. In fact, the concepts of *Best Practices* and *Functioning Practices* may overlap to different extents according to the meaning given to the first. We can indeed define *Functioning Practices* as Bendixsen and Guchteniere (2003) define *Best Practices*, i.e. a term that “relates to successful initiatives or model projects that make an outstanding, sustainable, and innovative contribution to an issue at hand” (p. 677), so that “[*Best Practices/Functioning Practices* are] about accumulating and applying knowledge of what is working and not working in different situations and contexts” (p. 678).

Why use the term *Functioning Practices* then? Mainly, to avoid misunderstandings. Since *Best Practices* is a term partially over-used, its meaning varies depending on setting and purpose and there is not yet a share definition of them; therefore, the risk is to use the same word having actually in mind different meanings. Furthermore, much of the literature indicates that *Best Practices* may not actually be the best ones, but they may rather be practices that can work elsewhere or can improve the existing practices (Jennings 2007;

Jones and Gidley 2013), then the adjective “best” could be misleading. Finally, we have chosen the term *Functioning Practices* to stress that the effectiveness of integration measures is strongly related to and embedded in the specific context.

Actually, several authors dealing with the concept of *Best Practices* highlight that it is unlikely that they are universal and that their applicability depend on time, place, and organizational, social, and political context (Rose 1991; Maynard 2006; Brannana; Durosea; Johna and Wolmanb 2008). In particular, Jennings (2007) raises the issue of generalizability of best practices both related to geographical contexts (will a finding in one setting hold true in other settings?), policy context (can the particular features that characterize the practice be generalized to a broader set of activities?), time context (does a practice remain equally efficient although the goals pursued by governments and the balance among competing values change over time?).

This embeddedness in the context arises several problems if we consider that the main goal of EU-MIA project and more in general of this kind of approach is to foster policy transfer and learning. If the context is crucial for the functioning of these practices, how can we transfer them? To cope with this issue it may be useful to recall the definition of policy transfer coined by Dolowitz and Marsh (1996): a process by which “knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in one political setting (past or present) is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in another political setting” (p. 545). We can then distinguish “soft” forms of transfer – such as the spread of norms and knowledge – from the “hard” transfer of policy tools, structures and practices: the transfer concerns only the first and impacts just on framing (Stone 2004). To make it clear, Dolowitz (1997) highlighted the possible objects of transfer:

- Policies
- institutions
- ideologies or justifications
- attitudes and ideas
- negative lessons

It is then clear that transfer may be limited to specific aspects, specific pieces of policies, and this would make embeddedness of *Functioning Practices* less problematic. The idea of *Functioning Practices* indeed recalls to us the image of a mechanism, something made up of pieces that can be disassembled.

What does this perspective imply in terms of analysis? The EU-MIA analysis of *Functioning Practices* will take into account not only policy outcomes, but also policy making *processes*. The analysis of policymaking is indeed a way to disassemble policies since it looks at the various aspects of formal and informal decision processes, such as actors involved (public actors and institutions, non-profit organisations, private foundations, trade unions, private enterprises, research institutions and experts, media, etc.) and relations among them, actors’ policy frames, means employed to carry out a specific practice (norms and sanctions, economic resources, community resources and social capital, symbolic resources, etc.) and ways in which

the abovementioned means have been raised (financing mechanisms, communication strategies, mobilisation processes, etc.), outputs and outcomes including the negative ones.

Furthermore, this approach should produce some relevant advantages for our project. First, it should allow us to go beyond the general statement that context matters and to understand which context features actually matter in each investigated *Functioning Practice*. How much do the institutional setting or the legal framework (distribution of competences among different public authorities, laws, etc.) matter for the functioning of a specific measure? To what extent are the specific profiles of actors involved (e.g. amount of NGOs and charities' own resources, their size, lobbying capacity, etc.) crucial to make a certain practice function? How much do the specific characteristics of the target (e.g. length of stay in the country, language skills, legal status and share of EU citizens, etc.) count for the success of the investigated measures? The weight of these factors, just to mention a few, is not the same in all possible local integration measures.

Second, the analysis of policy making process should allow us to identify assets and obstacles, achievements and failures, successful aspects and tricking aspects of investigated measures. This perspective is particularly relevant to EU-MIA project since failures are part of the knowledge that should be transferred. As we said, negative lessons are part of policy transfer as well (Dolowitz 1997; Bendixsen and Guchteniere 2003).

3.2 Towards an overview of 'functioning practices'

Following on from this, the process of case selection in the EU-MIA project is mainly articulated into two main stages:

- the production of a long list based on pre-requisite criteria;
- the scrutiny of this long list based on qualifying criteria to ensure a shortlist of ten *Functioning Practices* to be investigated through field missions.

Concerning the stage 1, the main tools employed to build the long list have been:

- literature review and web browsing;
- consultation of experts;
- nominations (including a majority of self-nominations) by local stakeholders through a Call for practices addressing stakeholders.

3.2.1 Use of existing platforms and consultation of experts

At the European level, collections of integration measures are several and are increasing in number. They can be divided into two broad categories: those focusing on (mainly local) policies and practices, and those consisting of (often national) laws, institutional devices, rights and formal provisions.

- Collections belonging to the first category are usually strongly related to city networks and aimed at fostering exchanges between local administrations and stakeholders rather than at carrying out comparative and/or evaluating research across Europe to rank policies and practices according to specific criteria. In any case, a detailed comparison of actual practices and outcomes would require huge investments.

- On the contrary, the second category – whose best example is probably MIPEX⁹ – usually consists in comparative analysis based on clear criteria and empirical data. This more systematic analysis is probably due both to the different aims of this platforms (e.g. to provide broad comparative picture across Europe) and to the focus on formal institutions and regulations usually disregarding measures developed by actors outside the institutional policy making as well as practices and outcomes beyond the official ones. This makes this broad and systematic approach sustainable.

Given the aims of EU-MIA, we mainly used the first kind of practice collections. As we said, they are not usually based on strict criteria, but from our perspective this may represent an advantage since it allows us to employ our own criteria rather than others’.

In particular we used the materials provided by:

- **CLIP** (Cities for Integration Local Policies, <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/areas/populationandsociety/clip.htm>), a network established in 2006 by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, the city of Stuttgart and Eurofound with the support of the Committee of the Regions and the Council of European Municipalities and Regions and terminated at the end of 2012. The network comprised of a steering committee, a group of expert European research centres and around thirty European cities. It was divided in yearly thematic modules (housing, diversity policy, intercultural policy, ethnic business) and it produced city reports based on case studies and compiled by the CLIP research team in cooperation with the partner cities, aimed at enabling local authorities to learn from each other and to deliver more effective integration policies.
- **Intercultural Cities** (www.coe.int/interculturalcities) is a Council of Europe’s programme which includes a wide range of actors in the city: local authorities, professionals, social services, civil society organisations, and the media. It provides policy-auditing expertise, strategy development guidance, networking and learning opportunities for cities. A second strand of the programme, carried out in partnership with EUROCITIES, is aimed at facilitating dialogue and exchange of good practices between politicians, citizens and municipal service providers.
- **European Website on Integration** (<http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/>) which is an initiative developed by the European Commission under the responsibility of the Directorate-General Home Affairs. The Website provides policy makers and practitioners working on integration in Europe with a tool for the exchange of information and good practices. It benefits from a network of Country Coordinators who collect content at national level and are responsible for promoting the website in their respective countries.
- **Cities of Migration** (<http://citiesofmigration.ca/>) is promoted by the Canadian private foundation Maytree and it addresses integration issues that relate broadly to international migrants and their families and it seeks to improve local integration practices in major immigrant receiving cities worldwide through information sharing and learning exchange. It addresses full range of stakeholders engaged in the

9. MIPEX (Migration Integration Policy Index) measures integration policies in all European Union Member States plus Norway, Switzerland, Canada and the USA, Australia and Japan. Using 148 policy indicators MIPEX creates a rich, multi-dimensional picture of migrants’ opportunities to participate in society by assessing governments’ commitment to integration. By measuring policies and their implementation it reveals whether all residents are guaranteed equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities. See www.mipex.eu.

integration of urban migrants, including foundations, city government officials, community sector organizations, colleges and universities, employers, labour unions, resident and business associations, and private and public enterprise in all fields of work. The main tool for that purpose is the Cities of Migration website which features a collection of promising practices in integration and a set of integrated tools that provide innovative and practical solutions to common problems and challenges to help city-level practitioners, community and funder networks to develop stronger ties and increase the effectiveness of local integration practices.

- **IBIS** (Integration - Building Inclusive Societies, <http://www.unaoc.org/ibis/>) is an interactive community jointly built by the UN Alliance of Civilizations and the International Organization for Migration to collect and highlight successful models of integration of migrants to counter polarizing speech and stereotypes and to encourage the replication of these models in other contexts. As a source of information and a virtual space for exchange and learning, IBIS supports coordination and cooperation between integration practitioners.

We looked also at country and local reviews and platforms in national languages relying on different language skills of the two research partners, COMPAS and FIERI, in order to include also local actors which do not belong to international networks.

- In **France**, the main source used to identify *Functioning Practices* was Apriles – Agence des Pratiques et Initiatives Locales (Agency for Local Practices and Initiatives) <www.apriles.net>, a national network funded in 2006 by the Observatoire national de l'action sociale décentralisée (National Observatory on Decentralised Social Action) with the aim of fostering social development at the local level through the capitalisation and sharing of local experiences among different stakeholders throughout the country. The functioning of Apriles is based on a network of more than 400 people representing “resources of social development at the local level” (i.e. local correspondents; local stakeholders employed in the public or non profit sectors and directly involved in planning and implementing practices and initiatives; and “social developers” active in promoting social development in their own territory).
- In **Sweden**, the main platform used to identify practices was the Swedish Integration Fund. It is managed by The Swedish ESF Council, a government agency under the Ministry of Labour, and it is part of the EU Integration Fund, which looks at the management of migration streams. The Fund supports projects that aim to improve systems for reception and integration of third country nationals in Sweden, contributing to the implementation of the 11 EU common basic principles for integration in the country. Projects supported by the Integration Fund fall under the categories cooperation, citizenship, health, intercultural and religious dialogue, and empowerment. The Fund's practices target third country nationals, non-EU nationals living in Sweden who have entered Sweden for family reunification, or labour purposes, or who have granted the right to stay for exceptional circumstances. Private, public, and non-profit organisations can apply to the Integration Fund.
- In **Denmark**, the Ministry for Social Affairs and Integration had in late 2012 initiated a compilation of integration projects. Whereas guidelines for integration policy are developed at the national level, projects are implemented at '*kommune*' (municipality) level. But in order to identify practices that were

- perceived and recognised as functioning and innovative in the specific national context, the selection process first and foremost focused on practices shortlisted for 'Integration practice of the year' awards.
- In **Germany**, a number of different platforms are available. The German Federal Agency for Migration and Integration provides an overview over policies implemented at the national level. As to the local level, the Bertelsman Stiftung Foundation has since 2004 compiled a collection of integration practices. These are organised according to thematic categories and include practices implemented in cities as well as in smaller towns and rural areas.
 - In **Austria**, the Austrian Integration Fund is the main platform for showcasing integration practices; however, the annual integration awards provided probably more useful indications of where to find the most successful and innovative functioning practices.
 - In **Spain**, the platform IntegraLocal.es represents a useful source but it is accessible only by public administrations; to other subjects the only accessible information is the name of practices, therefore it can be use just as starting point for further research.

Along with internet research, we carried out a review of the literature paying a special attention to the grey literature with the aim to identify updated information (whereas information in books are often not up to date due to time needed for publication) and to find out less known and investigated practices.

Parallel to these reviews, we consulted experts asking them to identify local functioning practices over Europe relying on their professional knowledge. For this online consultation of experts, we used two main channels:

- **Members of IMISCOE** (International Migration, Integration and Social Cohesion in Europe) which was established in 2004 as Network of Excellence within the VI EU Framework Programme and turned into a self-financed Research Network in 2010. It puts together thirty research institutions and hundreds of experts on migration from all over Europe.
- Country Coordinators of the European Website on Integration described above.

3.2.2 Survey Monkey and self-nomination of local stakeholders

Alongside the abovementioned methods, we circulated a Call for practices addressing stakeholders who were invited to fill in an on line Survey Monkey with details of local integration practices carried out by themselves or by other local authorities.

The self-nomination of stakeholders is rather common in projects which adopt a *Best Practice* approach; at the same time, it is often portrayed by scientific reviews as one of the main pitfalls. And probably it is, if regarded from the point of view of traditional comparative research where criteria of selection must be theoretically significant and chosen in order to answer to the research questions. However, the *Best Practice* approach starts from different assumptions and adopts other perspectives, according to which active self-evaluation of stakeholders could be an added value rather than a shortcoming.

First, as we said above in Section 3.1, the *Best Practice* approach is based on a sort of benchmarking aimed at fostering diffusion of working practices and innovation; it is in between policy evaluation and comparative research. Therefore, if observed from only one of the two perspectives, it cannot but be inadequate. On the contrary, if alongside the comparative perspective we consider also the policy evaluation perspective, it will appear less knocked up and self-evaluation of stakeholders will make sense. Among the methods of policy evaluation, probably the closest to *Best Practice* approach is the Case studies method which is generally used when the evaluation requires a detailed understanding of the multiple perspectives on an intervention or when exploring factors accounting for different models of delivery where multiple actors are involved in designing or implementing an intervention (Purdon, Lessof, Woodfield and Bryson 2001). In this perspective, the subjective perspectives and judgments of stakeholders on outcomes appear far from being irrelevant or misleading.

Second, being policy learning a voluntary process (Stone 2004)¹⁰, actors and agency should be regarded as crucial elements. The so-called institutional capacity related to financial, personnel, facilities, expertise resources of organisations is essential in learning processes (Brannana et al. 2008). Furthermore, while transferring practices actors may cope with obstacles such as bureaucratic interests, issues of feasibility and economic sustainability, as well as with different political situations (political instability, majority changes, etc.) which may impact upon actual receptivity to change (Wejnert, 2002; Walker, 1969). We can then affirm that policy learning requires both the capacity and the willingness of the actors to learn. It is thus evident that their active engagement and the self-evaluation of their ability to cope with this kind of process are fundamental to make the latter work successfully.

To sum up, if the self-candidacy process is not declared, not handled and not regulated, it may certainly become a source of shortcomings whereas when properly planned and managed it may provide an added value in policy learning and in the dialogue between research and policy, so to avoid the risk that policy analyses remain in scholars' drawers.

10. Policy learning is considered as one of the mechanisms through which policy transfer can take place and which emphasises the voluntary logic of choice and selection of policy ideas. The transfer of ideas and information does not indeed turn spontaneously into structure thinking and cognitive reframing and then into institutionalised practices (Stone 2004). This is not always carefully taken into account in research projects aimed at policy learning which sometimes seem to consider it a sort of spontaneous result of the exchanges of information through policy reports and workshops.

3.3 Selection criteria and process

Looking at the literature on *Best Practices*, one of the main challenges – and of the weaker aspects in the literature – is certainly represented by the identification of criteria for selection. In order to overcome this usual shortcoming, here we will explain the selection criteria used in EU-MIA and their theoretical and practical justifications.

The criteria for selection of local integration *Functioning Practices* employed in EU-MIA project can be distinguished into two broad categories:

- pre-requisites employed to produce the longlist;
- qualifying features used to define the shortlist.

Prerequisites

In the first stage of selection we look for measures characterised by the following pre-requisites.

- Measures in any fields which have clear goals in terms of integration of people with a migrant background, be they migrant-focused or not. As we said in par. 3.1, the concept of mainstreaming has gained increasing relevance in European cities. The rationale is that the adaptation of mainstream policies and services to address the needs of the entire diverse population including, but not limited to, immigrants has the potential to build a more inclusive society (Petrovic, Collett, Scholten and Gidley 2012). Integration policies have shifted from the respect for cultural and ethnic groups to the development of cohesive societies made up of people with different backgrounds (Wood 2004; Wood and Landry 2008; Alexander 2007). Therefore, we intend to adopt a perspective able to catch these trends.
- *Measures carried out at local level.* We include not only city level, but also lower levels such as neighbourhoods and districts, and higher levels such as provinces or metropolitan areas whereas we exclude regional and upper levels. Actually, whilst throughout the 1990s immigration scholars in Europe focused on the nation state as the key level for understanding processes and policies of immigrant integration, in the mid-1990s the focus started to shift to local level with particular regard to cities (Caponio and Borkert 2010; Penninx et. al 2004). Finally, in the last decade smaller urban units such as neighbourhoods have shown up in migration studies although they have not gained yet the same attention devoted to cities (Body-Gendrot and Martiniello 2000; Fonseca 2007; Galster 2001; Simon 2000; Pastore and Ponzio 2012). Following these last trends, in this project we adopt a broad perspective which includes all the different levels at which local policies can be displayed.
- *Measures involving public authorities.* Public authorities must be involved in the selected measures, although not necessarily as main actors: they may be just partners, sponsors, etc. when leaders and promoters are NGOs, profit companies, civil society organizations etc. Involvement of public authorities is indeed a strategic element in policy transfer. Some scholars have highlighted that the non-governmental status of non-state organisations is often a major structural constraint to policy transfer since non-state actors cannot bring about policy transfer alone but are dependent on governments and international organisations to see policy transfer activated (Stone 2004).

- *Live actions or recently closed actions*, i.e. on-going or ended no more than two years ago, and *consolidated measures* with at least two years implementation life. These requirements are driven mainly by practical reasons and in particular by the concern to identify practices whose actors can still be contacted and interviewed, and which have been carried out for a time span long enough to assess their outputs and outcomes.

Measures belonging to a variety of policy fields. We select policies from different sectors in order to build a viable and attractive training initiative addressing practitioners coming from different fields.

Qualifying criteria

The qualifying criteria are employed to scrutinise the long list and select the ten *Functioning Practices* to investigate in the next phase of the EU-MIA project.

- *Degree of innovation.* As we said, the concept of innovation has always been strongly related to the concept of *Best Practice*. To Brannana, Durosea, Johna and Wolmanb (2008) the adoption of best practice is one way of innovating since it consists in the adoption of a new practice through following some generally accepted view amongst practitioners of what is a ‘state of the art’ approach. This last approach also reminds us that innovation is a relative concept in itself, i.e. it can be assessed only in relation to the existing realm. Therefore, we do not define innovation in absolute terms and *a priori*: we assess what is innovative by comparing the identified practices by policy sector since within the same sectors objects, means and outcomes are more comparable.
- *Degree of success*, meant as achievement of the policy objectives. Using Jennings’ terminology, it can be meant also as validity, i.e. the degree to which a practice actually produces its intended results (Jennings 2007). It is worth saying that objects are not identified *a priori*, but are the objects stated by policies themselves. Indeed we would try to avoid the normative perspective which has prevailed in the literature on national and local integration policies for a long time¹¹ and to look at how policymakers perceive and frame integration policies since frames are part of policies and not external elements (Zincone, Penninx and Borkert 2011; Caponio, Ponzio and Ricucci 2013).
- *Degree of economic and financial sustainability.* This is particularly relevant in this specific period of economic crisis and cuts of public expenditure (Collet 2011). More generally, the economic sustainability facilitates the actual policy transfer since, as we already said, the latter may be constrained by issues of feasibility and funding shortfalls (Stone 2004); furthermore, we can assume that the greater is the impact on budget, the larger is the consensus required to adopt a certain measure, the tougher is the policy transfer.
- *Degree of transferability.* As we already explained, one of the main goals of EUMIA project and generally of this kind of projects is policy learning and transfer, therefore transferability cannot be completely disregarded. The assessment of the degree of transferability is actually very complex. We can however identify some policy features which are relevant in this regards such as the following:

11. In this regard, Scholten (2011) maintains that initially studies of local policies have essentially reproduced the “model thinking” prevailing in the literature on national level policies giving scarce attention for what actually happens on the ground.

- capacity and willingness of the local actors to learn showed by the availability of being involved in an in-depth independent research and training project; indeed, this availability could be regarded as an hint of favourable institutional capacity (par. 3.2.2) and the active engagement which are needed to make the learning process work.
 - simple governance devices are more transferable than complex and multilevel governance mechanisms which requires specific institutional settings;
 - incentive devices are more transferable than sanction devices based on enforcement of specific national/local law;
 - in terms of collective social capital (Coleman 1990), organisational devices are more transferable than mutual trust.
 - It goes without saying that these criteria could not always be fully applied during selection, which is carried out before the fieldwork, since some information is lacking and hard to verify. Furthermore, there might be a sort of trade-off between transferability and impact of measures on local society since the latter is usually deeper when practices crosscut different policy fields, involve a large range of actors, and pursue long-standing strategies. Trade-offs are however unavoidable in any project, what matters is to make decisions consistent with project aims.

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If you want more information on the project please visit our website: www.eu-mia.eu or contact:

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