



Promoting Dynamic Integration in Europe

Civil Society Networks and Integration: Principles for Programme Development

As FOCUS concludes its work, the project is issuing a series of short policy notes which summarise key findings and outputs. During various earlier stages of the project the importance of key NGO networks to policy and practice was established. It emerged from this work that CSOs would welcome a short summary of FOCUS's work which could assist in guiding key elements of the process for designing, implementing and assessing policy and programmes.

FOCUS is an international consortium 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.

With a primary focus on post-2015 refugees from Syria and the communities where they now live, the research involved:

- ◆ The first broad surveys which have explored, in a European context, both the socio-economic and socio-psychological dimensions of integration. Over 5,000 people participated in extensive qualitative and quantitative survey work undertaken in Germany, Sweden, Croatia and Jordan.
- ◆ A study of the views of senior policy and programme makers concerning current practices and knowledge gaps.
- ◆ A study of current integration practices and in-depth co-creative engagements with integration practitioners to ensure that FOCUS outputs reflect the needs of today and that practitioner expertise is capitalised and championed. Based on this work the FOCUS Approach to Dynamic Integration was developed and validated by [FOCUS Approach to Dynamic Integration](#), [Focus Implementation Guide](#) and [five case studies](#) are available on the [Living Well Together online resource](#) five case studies. The key outputs co-designed by integration practitioners.

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

INTEGRATION PRACTICE AND CSO NETWORKS

FOCUS conducted a series of structured interviews with senior policy and programme makers at local, national and European levels. Amongst other issues, this explored how ideas are generated, research capacities and attitudes to knowledge gaps. Amongst the findings were:

- ◆ This is a diverse community of policy and practice which has, in the past, been accustomed to having to develop initiatives at short notice and in response to 'crises'.
- ◆ Civil society organisations are extensively involved in integration programmes but have limited resources available to keep up with research and new programme ideas. As part of this evaluation and monitoring is limited and shaped by donor requirements.



- ◆ A limited range of sources are important when it comes to new programme ideas and accessing research. The most important of these are the ECRE and PICUM pan-Europe networks, the publications of the MPG and MPI(E) and the European Website on Integration (EWSI).
- ◆ There is a need for research to be made more accessible and relevant to the three phases of development, implementation and evaluation – with short summary notes linked to in-depth material as the preferred form.
- ◆ Because of the importance of EU policy and finding programmes in the sector (in particular the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, AMIF, and European Social Fund Plus, ESF+), guidance on relevant research and practice would be welcomed.

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](#).



ACTION POINTS FOR PROGRAMME AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Encourage 2-way integration

Over 80% of members of both receiving and arriving communities who participated in FOCUS’s surveys chose a preferred mode of acculturation which involved retaining multiple identities and cultures. However, the research also showed that levels of contact are low, with the receiving community not accepting a personal role in promoting integration – instead putting responsibility on institutions. In a related finding, the research showed that there are significant factual misperceptions of the current status of refugees (e.g. underestimating education levels and overestimating dependence). ***The lack of a 2-way dimension in current work is acknowledged as the biggest current gap in integration practice.***

If integration is defined as a dynamic 2-way process, practitioners in the civil society must shift away from a sole focus on peer to-peer (e.g., migrant-to-migrant) social relationships to support settlement – as is often favoured in integration programmes – but ensure that receiving communities are equally actively engaged and able to contribute to the integration process. In a programme development the importance of establishing and reinforcing continuous social bonds, social bridges between receiving and arriving communities, and community members’ social links to relevant services should be acknowledged.

See: [FOCUS Approach to Dynamic Integration](#), [Field Study Reports](#), [Triangulation Report](#), [Qualitative Study of the Views of Senior Professionals](#), [Summary of Socio-Psychological Factors and Integration](#)

Empowerment is essential – Co-creation should be a guiding principle

Practices which assign a passive role to participants reinforce the sort of disempowerment which directly undermines integration. The use of co-creative and participatory methodologies can have a powerful and positive impact on practice. Building these into programmes from the earliest stage is practical and readily achievable with programmes ranging from small initiatives to system-wide programmes. Also, ensuring the targeted communities (including both receiving and arriving community members) are part of programme assessment, design, implementation, monitoring

and evaluation is crucial to strengthen community ownership of dynamic integration practises. In addition, these approaches ensure that practices more directly meet the needs of a diverse range of individuals.

See: [FOCUS Approach to Dynamic Integration](#), [Practice Case Studies](#), [Implementation Guide](#)

Seek multi-stakeholder partnerships

Multi-stakeholder partnerships can be central to developing effective programmes in all contexts. The needs and opportunities in arriving and receiving communities are diverse and always stretch beyond programmes offered by individual agencies or organisations. Adopting a multi-stakeholder approach helps to ensure that diverse and changing needs are addressed.

See: [FOCUS Approach to Dynamic Integration](#), [Practice Case Studies](#), [Implementation Guide](#)

Promote access to health services and in particular mental health services

FOCUS's field studies supported the idea that equal access to health services is essential – with issues of information about rights and the availability of language support being raised. A core principle arises from FOCUS's work is that mental health and psycho-social support need to be seen in a much broader context than just trauma-related services. Incorporating Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) as a standalone integral dimension to successful integration practices highlights the importance of concretely addressing mental health and psychosocial needs. For the programme design, the FOCUS Approach to Dynamic Integration recommends moving away from a sole focus on trauma-informed care and ensuring that mental health and psychosocial needs are considered more broadly at the community level.

See: [FOCUS Approach to Dynamic Integration](#), [Summary of Socio-Psychological Factors and Integration](#)

Promote Access to Quality & Affordable Housing

Secure and appropriate housing is essential to integration and has both socio-economic and socio-psychological dimensions. In addition, segregation undermines the opportunity for positive social connections. In the qualitative research, housing emerged as the field where both perceptions of racism and discrimination as well as racist and discriminatory opinions were most prevalence.

See: [Field Study Reports](#), [Triangulation Report](#), [Summary of Socio-Economic Factors and Integration](#),

Mainstream gender and anti-discrimination practices

The structural nature of barriers faced by refugees in, for example, obtaining employment appropriate to their level of skills or secure and appropriate housing, suggest that racism and gender discrimination should be a concern of all integration practice, and recognised as a barrier to integration. Work in FOCUS's practice stream suggests that this is achievable if given adequate prioritisation.

See: [Triangulation Report](#), [Practice Case Studies](#), [Implementation Guide](#)

Provide support at different stages of process

Frustration at the withdrawal of many integration programmes after the short reception phase is widely felt. The continuance of practical networking, advisory and language programmes for a longer period would potentially have a very positive impact. The logic and benefits from this are accepted by members of receiving communities.

See: [Field Study Reports](#), [Practice Case Studies](#)

Evaluation should be credible and reflect timescale of integration

FOCUS’s research found widespread acceptance of evaluation, but this was accompanied with frustration about unreasonable evaluation expectations. The scale of integration programmes is generally limited in both time and resources, so it is not credible to seek to evaluate the ‘achievement’ of integration. Evaluation needs to be more focused on actions which the research show to be important.

See: [Qualitative Study of the Views of Senior Professionals](#), [Implementation Guide](#)

OVERVIEW OF RELEVANT FOCUS OUTPUTS



Implementation Guide



Field Study Reports



FOCUS Approach to Dynamic Integration



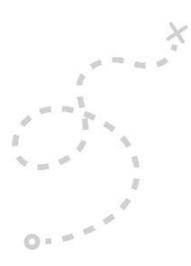
Practice Case Studies



Socio-Economic Factors and Integration



Socio-Psychological Factors and Integration



Triangulation Report



Qualitative Study of the Views of Senior Professionals

THE FOCUS PROJECT (2019-2022)

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