

ReSOMA

RESEARCH SOCIAL
PLATFORM ON MIGRATION
AND ASYLUM

NATIONAL
STAKEHOLDER
REPORT

September **2019**

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**Funding a long-term comprehensive approach
to integration at the local level**

INTEGRATION



National Stakeholder Reports aim to inquire the **stakeholders' response to the evolving EU policy agenda** and **assess the unmet needs** in EU Member states. They also offer a key opportunity to bring the recently ReSOMA briefs and outputs on each topic to the attention of the relevant actors at national level. As such, the reports play a key role in linking the current EU policy agenda with the debate and recent developments on migration, asylum and integration within Member states.

In the second year of ReSOMA, the consultations underpinning the reports were conducted via the ReSOMA online platform in order to mobilise the community of experts (the "Expert Database") through thread discussions.

Download this document and learn more about the Research Social Platform on Migration and Asylum at: www.resoma.eu

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National Stakeholder Report

In what ways can the EU foster comprehensive approach to integration at the local level?

By Peter Scholten & Zeynep Kaşlı

Frequently, integration policies suffer from being patchy and incomplete. A comprehensive approach to integration tries to fill the gaps, through mainstreaming integration as a long-term objective across policy fields, emphasizing potentials and including the receiving society. Municipalities are well-placed to innovate and implement such a comprehensive approach. As ReSOMA discussion briefs argue, EU programmes will provide new opportunities to support a comprehensive approach at the local level in the 2021 to 2027 funding period. More clarity, however, is needed about those elements of a holistic approach.

As ReSOMA [ask the expert brief](#) mapping the existing research in this field shows, sustainability of integration process is contingent upon many **structural factors**, such as availability of support related to migration process, involvement of third sector organizations, political composition of the local governments, electoral power of immigrants, resourceful local authorities willing to support place-based community-building and interaction sites. In ReSOMA [expert interview](#), Professor Ricard Zapata Barrero and Associate Professor Tiziana Caponio, highlight that:

- it is necessary to encourage partnership across local actors of governance and civil society organizations for a comprehensive approach.
- diversifying policy interventions would facilitate local interactions in different scales, from neighborhood and community-based organizations to district level.
- it is crucial to map out clearly the complementary roles that actors/stakeholders may play.

Key issues and controversies further highlighted in the ongoing policy debates as well as the ReSOMA Policy Option Briefs on [local level integration](#) and [mainstreaming](#) include:

- lack of an EU-wide shared view of integration in spite of common EU principles
- no direct access to EU funds/programmes for integration action on urban level and transnational partnerships
- reluctance by some governments to invest in long-term integration and to use EU means for this purpose
- insufficient needs assessments in the development phase of country programmes
- monitoring of member states' use of funds and stakeholder involvement in programme implementation.

This report summarizes the online discussions via the ReSOMA web portal and survey conducted via the SurveyMonkey platform. The questions for both the online discussion

and the survey have been developed based on the needs and specifications of the ReSOMA stakeholder partners and were launched over the course of late June and early July. During that time, experts, who are already registered to the ReSOMA Expert Database, received invitation e-mail to take part in both the online discussions and the surveys. Further promotion was carried out from the ReSOMA twitter account. As a privacy measure, survey responses cannot be matched with Expert Database Profiles whereas the comments posted on the platform match with the name and the institution of each commentator. Summary reports include only the names of the organizations as the comments reflect the views of affiliated institutions.

During the online discussions, the respondents were asked to provide input on the following topics: (1) the critical factors to be addressed to facilitate local integration; (2) policy actions to ensure that needs are addressed and (3) the role of the EU and other actors. Although it is hard to make strong inferences due to low response rates, the survey results (N=42) and nine inputs from mainly municipalities and international organizations highlight following points:

- City authorities play key roles in the reception and integration activities in practice.
- Their involvement in the decision-making processes and institutional structures of reception and social inclusion is essential.
- Comprehensive integration is generally understood as integration from day one and improving coordination among authorities and enabling participation & involving *all* migrants in the process.
- Cooperative national legal structure as well as EU level legal and financial support to the local actors are crucial to maintain such a comprehensive perspective.

Needs and challenges to facilitate local integration

On this topic, the experts were asked to comment on the following questions: What are the critical factors to be addressed to facilitate local interactions newcomers and citizens? What do local and national actors need to ensure the sustainability of these activities?

Mainly representatives from two Italian municipalities provided input on this point. They both underline that support for migrants to access services on an equal basis as Italian nationals is one of the biggest challenges especially in hostile national political contexts. Yet, they also acknowledge that it is one of the main responsibilities of local governments as service providers. This requires a shift from emergency approach to longer-term solutions for integration of asylum seekers, which include services such as professional training, volunteering activities, language course, and local interaction between newcomers and citizens. According to municipality of Milan, to achieve this, city government must be able to manage directly the reception and integration activities and part of the decision-making processes and institutional structures of reception and social inclusion. This entails both operational and political communication directly between national government and the municipalities.

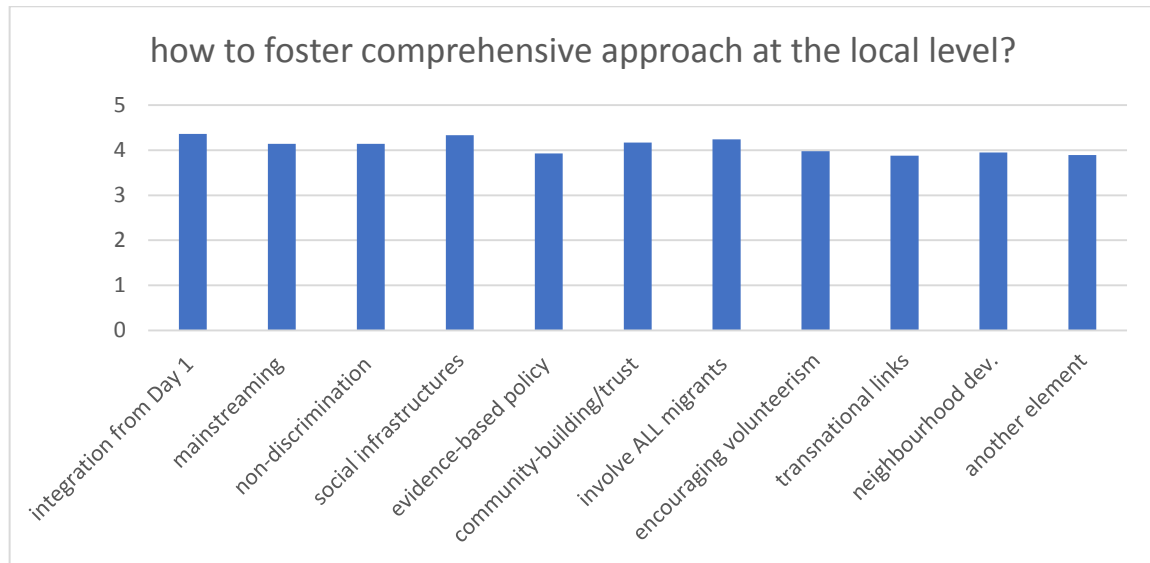
However there seems to be an opposite trend at the national level, at least in Italy. The Italian municipalities underline the new restrictive measures on immigration and international protection such as the adoption of Law No. 132 of 1 December 2018 in Italy. This change weakens the first reception phase, brings the Humanitarian Residence Permit to an end while creating new types of permits of stay, such as health, civic values, natural disasters and special cases, which require a better knowledge of social and political conditions of the migrant's countries of origin. Yet this leads to new challenges. As the Humanitarian Protection and Special Protection holders cannot be hosted under the new SIPROIMI system which replaced previous SPRAR, local authorities remain as the key authority responsible for future assistance to these groups. This applies in other member states, albeit in different ways. As mentioned in the [expert interview](#) on Private Sponsorship Programmes, local authorities in Germany and elsewhere are also resentful for being excluded in decision making related to migration processes while still being responsible for the public order and safety of all residents regardless of legal status.

According to municipalities, other national actors that must certainly be involved are migrants' associations as well as mass media and social media. They are seen as key to ensure the sustainability of the municipalities' activities and for mutual understanding between host society and migrant communities to overcome the distinction between "us" and "them" as well as to promote international cooperation and sustainable development in the countries of origin.

Possible policy actions that can address the needs:

On this topic, the experts were asked to comment on the following questions: What are the measures that have been implemented to fulfil these needs in your national/local context? What other possible measures could be implemented to fulfil these needs? Which are the most important measures to ensure more EU support?

Our survey results (N=42) show that almost all policy actions on comprehensive integration are seen equally importantly. Respondents believe that, for a comprehensive approach to integration on local level, the EU should first and foremost enable comprehensive integration from day one and improving coordination among authorities for newly arrived followed by the need to facilitate social investments (education, health, care etc.) and enable participation & involving migrants with different residence status, host language skills and social capital. 9 respondents also noted some other elements ranging from practical points such as cooperation with labour market representative and developing algorithms to better match newcomers and volunteers in host societies, to structural interventions such as stimulating equality of social services within EU countries and the need for a cultural change based on solidarity and mutual knowledge and respect. The chart below presents the weighted average of answers (N=42) given to each factor on a 5-point scale.



On all top three aspects mentioned above, the city of Milan offers quite innovative programmes that have been implemented at the local level. On integration from day one and social investment, the Centre for Job Orientation and Placement (CELAV) of Milan Municipality works to avoid exploitation in workplace, pays due attention to the complexity and specificity of newcomers' different needs, while the MeNTOR initiative promotes temporary and circular migration schemes that are offered by the Italian Immigration Regulation to deliver professional trainings to non-European citizens living abroad in companies located in Lombardy and Piedmont for youths in Italy, Morocco and Tunisia. On enabling participation, 'Bella Milano' (Beautiful Milan) is initiative through which asylum-seekers living in Milan reception centers volunteer together with Milanese citizens in taking care of public spaces in the city (cleaning of green spaces, emptying the bins, etc). Although the city was not able to pay them for their work, asylum-seekers were offered a coin (Merit Coins) that they can use in certain shops of the neighborhood they work in with their team.

"The 'Bella Milano' experience teaches the importance of the welfare system capacity to transform to adapt to changes, and the importance to communicate this. What the city learnt through 'Bella Milano' becomes a heritage that the city can spend in all the other volunteering activities. The merit coins become a fundamental component of the welfare management. The goal is for enterprises and private sector to invest in merit coins to finance these activities."

On enabling participation and facilitating social investment, there are some inspiring practices that municipalities may put in practice based on an understanding of integration as a multidimensional and two-way process, in the words of a representative from Rome, to "build together an inclusive society". For example, the association of parents in Muzio Primary School in Milan is piloting a peer-parent tutoring program, that is, a help desk operating based on the idea that immigrant families who arrived earlier are knowledgeable both about their culture's values, practices and language, and about the

host country, thus can more effectively help newcomers to understand these systems because of their own recent experience. The “Rifugiato in Famiglia” project offers housing solutions within Milanese families: a person who has a regular permit of stay and is hosted within the SPRAR system can spend 6 months by a family residing in Milan. The “Together Without Walls” initiative, organized under the auspices of the Municipality of Milan, have been first gathered in 2107 and since then have organized marches every year as well as several conferences, cultural events focusing on migration and integration and their positive effects on the society, the economy and culture. Next to these, the City of Milan is committed to implement priority projects between 2019 and 2021 for the promotion of equal opportunities for migrants, asylum-seekers, refugees and unaccompanied migrant minors, ranging from renewed family reunification service, which includes pre-departure support and assistance to newly reunited families in Milan to an international Human Mobility Centre to support the development of Voluntary Assisted Returns and Reintegration opportunities and the creation of one stop shops and multidisciplinary mobile units for identifying and addressing situations of particular vulnerability, in close coordination with local welfare services.

Next to these, municipality of Rome stresses the necessity to facilitate access to finance for migrant associations and support migrants’ participation in public policy making process. According to this view, extending the right to vote to migrants with full legal status can be considered as an important tool for social cohesion as well as a tool of stabilization of migratory flows that is in compliance with the principle of equality of treatment and social security. This necessitates national level intervention as it entails speeding up the citizenship acquiring process and the time needed for acquiring the residence permit.

The role of the EU and other actors

On this topic, the experts were asked to comment on the following questions: What role could the EU play in fostering good practices and empowering local and national stakeholders for comprehensive integration? Who are the other key institutions and actors that are or should be involved in comprehensive approach to integration? How can they help ensure the successful implementation of this approach?

As an EU level intervention, Municipality of Rome stresses the necessity to strengthen relations with third countries, of origin and transit while at the same time implementing an inclusion policy that offers new legal channels and a flexible system governed by clear rules.

Linked to the importance of “starting integration from Day 1”, representatives of EURO CITIES network and the Municipality of Milan stress the role of “first responders” in refugee reception situations which is also stated in the Global Compact on Refugees. Even though cities often struggle to inform or influence national and international debates on this issue, the EU can offer concrete support to guarantee services focused on orientation and inclusion of newcomers, that are considered essential at European level.

They refer to funding mechanisms that are already in place, i.e. the European Union's Urban Innovative Actions (UIA) initiative, which provides cities throughout Europe with resources to test pilot and result-oriented projects in the field of sustainable urban development.

Beyond municipalities, the role of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) is also underlined by RED CROSS EU OFFICE and ECRE. Organizations such as the National Red Cross Societies play a crucial role in the integration of all migrants, as they are anchored at the local level and working directly with communities by providing various services such as language classes, employment support or social counselling. Therefore they have a strong expertise and knowledge of the needs of and challenges faced by migrants at the local level. Nonetheless, as stressed by RED CROSS EU OFFICE representative, during the implementation of the current Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF), their involvement in the preparation, development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of EU funded actions has been limited. In their view, this resulted in programmes that failed to adequately grasp the needs of end users and specificities of certain local territories. Therefore, they suggest a mandatory partnership principle to be included in the future Asylum and Migration Fund.

Regarding the inter-institutional debate between the Commission, the European Parliament and the European Council around the new Asylum and Migration Fund 2021-2027, city of Milan and RED CROSS EU office join ECRE and EUROCITIES's call for securing consistent participation of civil society organisations and local authorities in the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). According to ECRE, this could be achieved in two ways for the allocation of a minimum percentage of thematic facilities to NGOs and local authorities' integration-related activities: (a) minimum allocations of programme funding for these actors on integration could be established in the future AMF and ESF+ or (b) minimum allocations could be set for both funds per Member State in the course of preparing and agreeing national and operational programmes. Another essential measure ECRE suggests being approved by the co-legislators is that, under both funds, integration actions should benefit from high co-financing rates (as suggested by the European Commission) and Member States should provide matching fund. These EU level measures will boost the involvement of civil society and local authorities as "first responders" at the local level.

In sum, the consultations show that the national stakeholders involved are clear on what the incurring needs for better support of the comprehensive approach at the local level are. These are proven by well working innovative local practices such as in Milan. What is essential to take and maintain such a comprehensive perspective is a more cooperative national legal structure as well as EU level legal and financial support to the local actors.

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ReSOMA - Research Social Platform on Migration and Asylum

is a project funded under the Horizon 2020 Programme that aims at creating a platform for regular collaboration and exchange between Europe's well-developed networks of migration researchers, stakeholders and practitioners to foster evidence-based policymaking. Being a Coordination and Support Action (CSA), ReSOMA is meant to communicate directly with policy makers by providing ready-to-use evidence on policy, policy perceptions and policy options on migration, asylum and integration gathered among researchers, stakeholders and practitioners.

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