SPRING

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1 LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS

Abbreviation	Definition
EU	European Union
MPI Europe	Migration Policy Institute Europe
SPRING	Sustainable Practices of Integration

2 INTRODUCTION

With more than 6 million people displaced from war-torn Ukraine in the first 2.5 months since the onset of the conflict and more expected to follow, a growing migrant integration challenge lies around the corner. Integration policy has often been forged in the heat of crisis and led by political priorities, with limited resources or attention devoted to gleaning lessons and improving policymaking going forward. The growing Ukrainian displacement crisis paired with rising inflation and soaring energy costs, once again highlight the importance of implementing integration policies that work and efficiently use limited resources.

Knowing what works, under which conditions, and how to use this knowledge to design effective migrant integration policies is crucial to improve integration outcomes, cost-effectiveness, social cohesion, and migrants' well-being. Foregoing on evidence-informed policymaking may come at a grave human, financial, and societal cost for all actors involved. Taking a closer look at labour market integration, for example, ineffective policies may impact income, living conditions, and ultimately the health and well-being of migrants and their families. From a financial perspective, foregoing on evidence-informed policymaking may result in lower tax revenues and higher social welfare dependence, while continued use of limited government funding on ineffective programmes causes unproductive use of government resources. From a societal perspective, the labour market may miss out on the talent and skills of potential employees while limited labour market integration may negatively impact perceptions of migrants and social cohesion. Cost-effective policies rooted in evidence are crucial for everyone in society.

But while an evidence-based policymaking revolution has taken place in many policy areas and ample tools and techniques exist to evaluate what works, this revolution has not yet fully reached migrant integration policy. Throughout the policymaking process – from agenda-setting to design, and from implementation to evaluation – crucial opportunities to learn from what works are still missed. Gaps in evidence are only one piece of the puzzle. While most efforts to promote evidence-informed policymaking focus on the methodological requirements of conducting high-quality evaluations, without the political buy-in or resources to implement recommendations, without proper dissemination or access to resulting evidence, and without involving relevant stakeholders throughout the process to ensure recommendations fit with the reality of practice, the results of these often resource-intensive evaluations fail to either be implemented or shared with relevant stakeholders.

The obstacles to evidence-informed policymaking in migrant integration are many and diverse. Integration is a complex and highly politicised policy area which engages a complex set of actors, requires multilevel governance, and cuts across policy areas, further complicating the progress towards evidence-informed policymaking. Whereas work on promoting evidence-informed policymaking tends to predominantly focus on tackling methodological challenges at the micro-level, crucial preconditions at the macro level, such as political willingness, funding, resources for capacity-building, and effective partnerships and infrastructures for evidence-sharing, are often overlooked.

This policy brief examines to what extent progress has been made in the past years and explores why migrant integration is lagging behind other policy areas by mapping the obstacles complicating the use of evidence in migrant integration. Drawing from the wider academic and grey literature on evidence-informed (migrant integration) policymaking, as well as from interviews and an expert roundtable, this policy brief will specifically focus on recommendations and strategies policymakers at the EU and national

level may adopt to promote the macro-level conditions in which evidence-informed migrant integration policymaking can thrive.

3 PROCESS & METHODOLOGY

This policy brief is written by the Migration Policy Institute Europe (MPI Europe) under the Sustainable Practices of Integration (SPRING) HORIZON project. It follows from Task 4.2 of the SPRING project (an expert roundtable to identify mechanisms that help policymakers and practitioners in integration to understand the impact and effectiveness of their interventions and to use this knowledge to adapt policy and service design) and serves as a bridge to Task 4.3, the development of a toolkit to address identified challenges in evidence-based integration policymaking. In accordance with the proposal, the focus of the roundtable held under Task 4.2 was particularly on how to improve the evidence culture in the long term, focusing on barriers that must be overcome and promising initiatives that provide concrete examples of a way forward. The roundtable and bilateral discussions with experts revealed that challenges in creating an evidence culture extend beyond evaluation. It became clear that in order to move the needle on evidence-informed migrant integration policymaking, a focus solely on evaluation is insufficient, and that it is essential to address the full policy cycle. This means that the current policy brief extends beyond the intended scope of launching the prototype toolkit and summarising the state of the field and gaps in robust evidence, to address larger obstacles standing in the way of an evidence culture in migrant integration and suggesting the way forward on how these might be overcome. The aim is for this brief to provide a map, not only of where we are with evidence-based policymaking in migrant integration and why, but also to provide different routes forward to more cost-effective migrant integration policies. It hereby not only prefaces but complements the forthcoming toolkit. While the toolkit will provide concrete steps for policymakers and practitioners to design, implement, and evaluate evidence-based integration policies and programmes, this policy brief addresses systemic challenges and provides overarching recommendations that can create an environment in which such policies and programmes can be effectively developed.

The preliminary findings and plans for the policy brief were discussed on an ongoing basis during the SPRING coordinators meetings and in bilateral meetings with specific partners to align findings and deliverables across WPs. Participants in these meetings included SPRING partners ISMU, ICMC, YM, MPG, ICMPD and EUR.

The policy brief draws on a literature review of academic and grey literature on evidence-based policymaking in general and in the policy field of migrant integration specifically, policy documents related to policy frameworks that promote evidence-informed policymaking, and project reports from innovative examples of evidence-informed policymaking. The policy brief also draws from seven interviews with leading experts in the field (see a list of interviews below) conducted by the authors and the expert roundtable (D4.2). Members of the evidence network further provided input about challenges and innovations in evidence-based policymaking in migrant integration through a survey.

List of interviews

- **Helen Baillot**, Research Fellow Queen Margaret University, online, 23 March 2022.

- **Jeanine Klaver,** Senior Advisor in Research & Evaluation at Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, the Netherlands, evaluated "Stichting Nieuw Thuis Rotterdam" under the BRIDGE-project, online, 7 March 2022.
- **Jenny Phillimore,** Professor of Migration and Superdiversity at University of Birmingham, online, 21 February 2022.
- **Jürgen Wander,** Programme Manager Further Integration in the Labour Market (VIA) at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, online, 1 March 2022.
- **Meta van der Linden**, Assistant Professor at the Department of Interdisciplinary Social Science and Member of the European Research Centre on Migration and Ethnic Relations at Utrecht University, the Netherlands, evaluated "Stichting Nieuw Thuis Rotterdam" under the BRIDGE-project, online, 7 March 2022.
- **Peter Scholten**, Full professor of Public Administration at Erasmus School of Social and Behavioural Sciences, online, 21 January 2022.
- **Reneé Frissen**, Founder and CEO of Open Embassy, online, 15 March 2022.

4 KEY FINDINGS

With millions are fleeing war-torn Ukraine, questions about how to effectively promote migrant integration are again front and centre of policymakers' minds. Integration policy has often been forged in the heat of crisis and led by political priorities, with limited resources devoted to gleaning lessons and improving policymaking going forward. As a result, lessons from some of the most promising innovation, that especially tend to spring up during crisis, may get lost.

Knowing what works, under which conditions, and how to use this knowledge to design effective migrant integration policies is crucial to improve integration outcomes, migrants' well-being, and cost-effectiveness. Foregoing on evidence-informed policymaking may come at a grave human, financial, and societal cost for not only migrants, but also governments and host societies. Evidence-informed policymaking would not only benefit state budgets, labour markets, and economic growth, but may also promote social cohesion and take the political sting out of the highly politicized discourse ridden with inaccuracies about migrant integration.

There are increased efforts to promote an evidence culture in migrant integration policymaking, with EU institutions encouraging the use of integration indicators and some Member States launching unique fully fledged evidence-informed integration pilot projects. Yet, despite promising progress, the overall picture that emerges is one of migrant integration lagging far behind other policy areas. While an evidence-based policymaking revolution has taken place in many policy areas and many tools and techniques exist to evaluate what works, this revolution has not yet fully reached migrant integration policy. Throughout the policymaking process – from agenda-setting to design, and from implementation to evaluation – crucial opportunities to learn from what works are still missed.

This lag can for a large part be explained by challenges unique to the field of migrant integration. At the macro level, fluid definitions and policy goals, limited political buy-in and resources, poor accessibility of evidence, and a complex and politicized playing field create an incredibly challenging context. At the micro level, methodological and ethical obstacles to measuring impact in a context of limited skills and capacity further complicate the path to evidence-informed policymaking.

Previous efforts to promote evidence-informed policymaking often focused on one particular stage of the policy cycle (evaluation), on micro level factors (skills), and did not focus on the specific challenges of

migrant integration. Even when evaluations are conducted according to the highest methodological standards, without the political buy-in or resources to implement recommendations, without proper dissemination or access to resulting evidence, and without involving relevant stakeholders throughout the process such that recommendations fit with the reality of practice, the results of these often resource-intensive evaluations just end up collecting dust on a shelf.

This policy brief maps out obstacles to evidence-informed policymaking throughout the entire policy cycle and identifies five promising steps policymakers at the EU and national level could take to promote the macro conditions to create a landscape/playing field/context that facilitates evidence-informed migrant integration policymaking.

- **Using pilot projects as a cost-effective way to test out programmes and get political buy-in before scaling up.** Pilot projects have long been a way to promote innovation and learning in other policy fields. Such projects can help reduce the risks and costs involved with launching large-scale programmes and are less costly to discontinue when they are unsuccessful.

- **Increasing targeted investment in evidence-based policymaking.** Evidence-informed policymaking is costly, yet funding evidence-based policymaking is likely to reduce wasteful spending and increase cost-effectiveness. Funding models such as tiered-evidence funding, where larger funds are allocated to policies and practices most strongly supported by evidence, with smaller development grants reserved promising policies could be an effective way to foster both innovation and learning.

- **Promoting stakeholder involvement throughout the policy cycle.** Involving practitioners and beneficiaries in the design and development of integration policies, as well as during evaluation, promotes ownership of results and can ensure that resulting recommendations match the reality on the ground in terms of capacity and resources, ultimately increasing their effectiveness.

- **Improving access to evidence by leveraging online databases.** To remedy evidence gathering dust on bookshelves or remaining trapped at the local level, (multilingual) online repositories of countries' evidence, best practices, and evaluations could improve access and dissemination and facilitate peer learning. To truly leverage their impact, databases should go beyond identifying projects, to share key lessons learned and tools with practical value.

- **Building capacity through securing access to training and training materials.** Skill and competence building efforts tend to be aimed at evaluators, rather than policymakers, who must equally be trained to implement evidence into practice. Facilitating access to required knowledge and training targeted to the needs of migrant integration policymakers and practitioners can also increase motivation to use evidence-based techniques.

An evidence culture in migrant integration policymaking would benefit governments, host societies, and migrant communities alike. Great progress has been made so far but structural obstacles cause migrant integration to be lagging behind other policy areas. EU and national policymakers should create the structural conditions to effectively create, disseminate, find, and use evidence for more effective migrant integration policies, so migrants and the communities they live in can thrive.

5 ANNEX – EVALUATION POLICY BRIEF

A Map to Catching Up

Promoting Evidence-Informed Policymaking in Migrant Integration

Acknowledgments

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Executive Summary

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1. Introduction

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But while an evidence-based policymaking revolution has taken place in many policy areas and ample tools and techniques exist to evaluate what works, this revolution has not yet fully reached migrant integration policy. Throughout the policymaking process – from agenda-setting to design, and from implementation to evaluation – crucial opportunities to learn from what works are still missed. Gaps in evidence are only one piece of the puzzle. While most efforts to promote evidence-informed policymaking focus on the methodological requirements of conducting high-quality evaluations, without the political buy-in or resources to implement recommendations, without proper dissemination or access to resulting evidence, and without involving relevant stakeholders throughout the process to ensure recommendations fit with the reality of practice, the results of these often resource-intensive evaluations fail to either be implemented or shared with relevant stakeholders.

The obstacles to evidence-informed policymaking in migrant integration are many and diverse. Integration is a complex and highly politicised policy area which engages a complex set of actors, requires multilevel governance, and cuts across policy areas, further complicating the progress towards evidence-informed policymaking. Whereas work on promoting evidence-informed policymaking tends to predominantly focus on tackling methodological challenges at the micro-level,
crucial preconditions at the macro level, such as political willingness, funding, resources for capacity-building, and effective partnerships and infrastructures for evidence-sharing, are often overlooked.

This policy brief examines to what extent progress has been made in the past years and explores why migrant integration is lagging behind other policy areas by mapping the obstacles complicating the use of evidence in migrant integration. Drawing from the wider academic and grey literature on evidence-

informed (migrant integration) policymaking, as well as from interviews and an expert roundtable, this policy brief will specifically focus on recommendations and strategies policymakers at the EU and national level may adopt to promote the macro-level conditions in which evidence-informed migrant integration policymaking can thrive.

2. Evidence-informed migrant integration policymaking – Where are we now and why?

2.1 State of play

Despite increased efforts, especially at the EU-level (see Box 1), migrant integration lags far behind other policy areas in evidence-informed policymaking and according to one study still lacks an evidence base.[1] Existing academic research often focuses on the philosophy and politics of integration policies rather than policy impact, while most international compilations of integration policies offer no evidence for causality (in other words, these tools do not provide evidence of whether the policy or programme is changing specific integration outcomes and to what extent, or whether maybe other factors caused these changes).[2]

The few evidence-informed policymaking initiatives often had a limited focus. First, most efforts focus on the evaluation stage of the policy cycle, yet an evidence culture needs to permeate each stage of the policymaking cycle, from policy design to implementation, for evidence to truly inform policies (see Figure 1). Second, projects often only focus on very specific aspects of integration, such as employment or education, without studying migrant integration outcomes more holistically.[3] Third, most efforts were only in a handful of countries that often have more resources available and already have a strong national commitment to evidence-informed policymaking.[4] Besides being limited in scope, the few rare evidence-informed projects have rarely been compiled and synthesized, and resources are typically only available in the local language, which limits cross-country comparisons and mutual learning.[5]

The 2021 EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion of Migrants therefore aptly observes that "a number of knowledge gaps remain that prevent effective evidence-informed integration policies from being developed". Member States also barely use common indicators and frameworks developed by the EU and often do not leverage opportunities for peer-learning.

[1] Garibay Montserrat González, and Peter De Cuyper. 'Is There an Evidence Basis for Immigrant Integration Policies?: A Methodological Enquiry', *Nordic Journal of Migration Research* 8, no. 1 (2018): 15.

[2] In many cases, efforts were limited to assigning a score to integration policies but without really explaining anything about the effectiveness of such policies. When best practices were shared, they often lacked an explanation of methodological standards under which these practices were selected. See Garibay, Montserrat González, and Peter De Cuyper, 'Is There an Evidence Basis for Immigrant Integration Policies?: A Methodological Enquiry,' *Nordic Journal of Migration Research* 8, no. 1 (2018): 15.

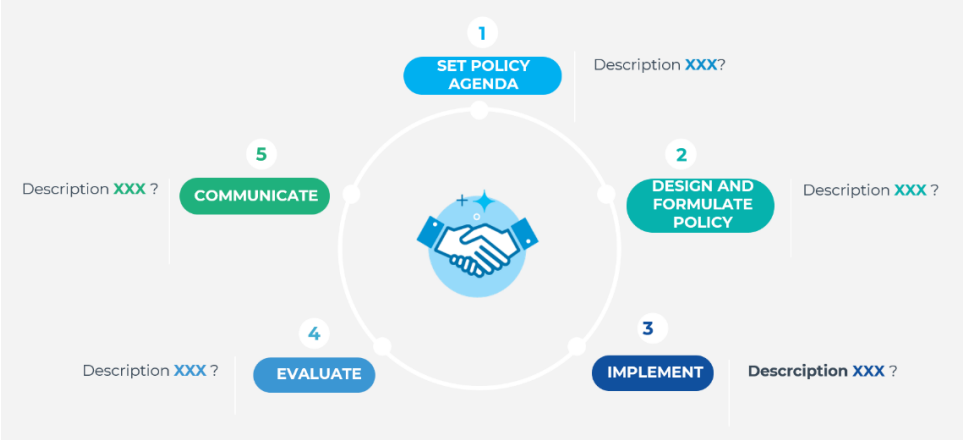
[3] Only a few countries have made such efforts to improve integration policymaking, limited to only a few areas on integration (namely labour market mobility, education, social inclusion and political participation) while leaving many gaps in others (e.g. nationality and long-term residence, family reunification and antidiscrimination). See: Bilgili, Ozge & Huddleston, Thomas & Joki, Anne-Linde, The Dynamics between Integration Policies and Outcomes: a Synthesis of the Literature (Migrant Integration Policy Index [MIPEX], March 2015).

[4] Only a few countries have made such efforts to improve integration policymaking, limited to only a few areas on integration (namely labour market mobility, education, social inclusion and political participation) while leaving many gaps in others (e.g. nationality and long-term residence, family reunification and antidiscrimination). See: Ozge Bilgili, Thomas Huddleston, and Anne-Linde Joki, The Dynamics between Integration Policies and Outcomes: a Synthesis of the Literature (Migrant Integration Policy Index [MIPEX], March 2015).

[5] Garibay, Montserrat González, and Peter De Cuyper, 'Is There an Evidence Basis for Immigrant Integration Policies?: A Methodological Enquiry,' *Nordic Journal of Migration Research* 8, no. 1 (2018): 15.

The limited use of common indicators and cross-country learning have been noticed by the EU for at least a decade now. For example, in July 2011, the European Commission (through the European Agenda for the Integration of Non-EU Migrants) had already noticed this and reinforced the need to use common indicators for monitoring purposes as well as Member States' need to work together.

Figure 1 - The Policy Cycle



Note: *To move towards evidence-informed policymaking in migrant integration, an evidence culture must permeate each stage of the policymaking cycle, from agenda-setting to policy design, and from implementation to evaluation.*

Box 1. EU promotion of evidence-informed policymaking: what's been done and what is missing

The EU institutions have played an important role in seeking to improve evidence-informed policymaking in migrant integration. The European Commission is officially committed to a "knowledge-based approach" to migrant integration and has taken several steps to advance an evidence culture in the field despite the long way that remains ahead.[6] This push towards evidence-informed policymaking at the EU level took off in two waves. The first surge took place in 2004 in a broader effort to promote an evidence culture across policy areas formalised with the launch of the *Hague Programme* (2005-2009) that called for an evidence-informed approach to immigrant integration.[7] A second surge of initiatives took place in 2015-2016 following large numbers of migrants and asylum seekers entering the EU and Member States' pressing need to integrate them and learn from what works and when.

Throughout these two waves, the EU has tried to stimulate an evidence culture in several ways. A first set of efforts focused on advancing the development and use of common indicators. For example, the *Hague Programme* recommended that states develop "indicators and evaluation mechanisms to adjust policy, evaluate progress on integration and make the exchange of information more effective",[8] and the *Stockholm Programme* (2010-2014) promoted the development of common integration indicators in employment, education, social inclusion, and active citizenship.[9] A set of common integration indicators were developed under the *Zaragoza Declaration* in 2010 to improve the monitoring of migrants' integration and to enhance comparability between EU Member States.[10] More recently, further efforts have been made to advance the use of these indicators and the monitoring of

[6] European Commission, 'Migration and migrant integration: Enabling knowledge-based approaches to migration policy', CORDIS: EU Research Results, accessed on 29 April 2022.

[7] Katharina Bürkin and Alin Chindea, Refugee Integration and the Use of Indicators: Evidence from Central Europe (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, December 2013); Alexander Wolffhardt, Anne-Linde Joki, and Giacomo Solano, Facilitating Evidence-Based Integration Policies in Cities (Migration Policy Group, January 2019).

[8] Katharina Bürkin and Alin Chindea, Refugee Integration and the Use of Indicators: Evidence from Central Europe (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, December 2013); Alexander Wolffhardt, Anne-Linde Joki, and Giacomo Solano, Facilitating Evidence-Based Integration Policies in Cities (Migration Policy Group, January 2019).

[9] Katharina Bürkin and Alin Chindea, Refugee Integration and the Use of Indicators: Evidence from Central Europe (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, December 2013); Alexander Wolffhardt, Anne-Linde Joki, and Giacomo Solano, Facilitating Evidence-Based Integration Policies in Cities (Migration Policy Group, January 2019).

[10] Alexander Wolffhardt, Anne-Linde Joki, and Giacomo Solano, Facilitating Evidence-Based Integration Policies in Cities (Migration Policy Group, January 2019). After the Zaragoza indicators were developed, statistics capturing national integration indicators have been made available on the Eurostat portal. Similarly, the Urban Agenda has advanced efforts to make statistics available at the local level.

integration policies, for example in the 2021 Action Plan.[11] Yet the existence of repeated efforts to promote the use common indicators seem to indicate the limited success of such efforts. This could be due to obstacles on the ground (see section 2.2) but also linked to the fact that Member States may see limited value added in the use of common indicators that are not context specific (and hence might not contemplate the most relevant aspects they seek to monitor and assess) and do not inform about the context in which such initiatives operate (this is, the causality link is still missing).

A second set of EU efforts to advance an evidence culture in migrant integration policymaking have focused on supporting peer learning.[12] This has been done, for example, through establishing networks to supportstakeholder coordination.[13] Peer learning was also supported through collecting and identifying successful practices in a series of handbooks and modules on integration.[14] Yet again, the impact of such efforts has been limited not only because knowledge and resources from one country are typically only available in the local language, but once again, due to the lack of an evidence base as available resources often fail to clarify under which circumstances a policy may or may not work, limiting transferability and learning between countries.

Finally, the European Commission has also pushed to advance evaluation and evidence-based policymaking at the national and local level in migrant integration through its Action Plans on Integration and Inclusion,[15] and through improving the availability of funding. In 2011, the Asylum and Migration Fund (AMIF) was introduced with the aim to "support the development of an evaluation-based culture in the area of home affairs" […] through the design of a common framework for evaluation and monitoring as well as a system of indicators".[16] Yet some Member States have mentioned that monitoring and reporting requirements under the general funding programme were overly complex and resource intensive and indicators were mostly focused on expenditure and quantitative issues rather than on the qualitative measurement of impact.[17] On the other hand, the AMIF lump sum model for resettled and relocated refugees (which provides funding without complex reporting requirements) seems to have helped

[11] European Commission, Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027 (Publication Office of the European Commission, 24 November 2020): 23-24.

[12] OECD, Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2015: Settling In (Paris, France: *OECD Publishing*, 2015).

[13] Examples of these networks include, among others: the European Integration Network (a network of national contact points focusing on advancing evaluation); the European Migration Forum of civil society and EU institutions; and the Partnerships under the Urban Agenda for the EU. See: Vlasta Jalušič, Veronika Bajt, and Rachel Lebowitz, EU Policy Framework for Integration of Migrant Children: Migrant children and communities in a transforming Europe (Koper, Slovenia: *Znanstveno-raziskovalno središče*, 2019).

[14] For example, in 2015, the EU and the OECD launched a joint international comparison of integration outcomes that provided policymakers with benchmarks to measure their own outcomes and facilitated the identification of good practices. In addition, collections of policy measures adopted by the EU member states have been collected in a website (European Commission 2017). Similarly, DG HOME has worked on European modules on migrant integration that attempt to build an evidence base for integration policies through best practices and classified them along a fourfold scheme: "strong evidence, medium evidence, low evidence and best practices on how to do monitoring and evaluation". Finally, the New Action Plan (2021) suggests publishing regular reports analysing progress and highlighting common challenges (based on common statistical indicators) and recent inspiring policy developments, supporting the exchange of good practices and the identification of areas where progress is needed. See: Garibay, Montserrat González, and Peter De Cuyper, Is There an Evidence Basis for Immigrant Integration Policies?: A Methodological Enquiry, *Nordic Journal of Migration Research* 8, no. 1 (March 1, 2018): 15 ; OECD, Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2015: Settling In (Paris, France: OECD Publishing, 2015); European Commission, Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027 (Publication Office of the European Commission, 24 November 2020): 23-24.

[15] In 2016, the EU Commission Action Plan on the Integration of Third Country Nationals underlined the need to develop evaluation mechanisms at national and local level to monitor and improve policy-making outcomes. Moreover, the 2021 Action Plan promotes the use of reliable evidence on integration outcomes and the impact of integration policies and seeks to enhance cross-country comparison, specifically by focusing on understanding the impact on outcomes across time and territories, supporting monitoring of outcomes, promoting an evidence-based debate, and improving availability of data and knowledge on integration at EU, national and sub-national level. See also: Alexander Wolffhardt, Anne-Linde Joki, and Giacomo Solano, Facilitating Evidence-Based Integration Policies in Cities (Migration Policy Group, January 2019); European Commission, Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027 (Publication Office of the European Commission, 24 November 2020): 23-24.

[16] European Commission, 'Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Asylum and Migration Fund' (COM[011]0751 final, 15 November 2011).

[17] Rachel Westerby, Follow The Money II – Assessing the Use of EU Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) Funding at the National Level 2014-2018 (UNHCR and ECRE, February 2019).

promote the quality in programme monitoring and evaluation concerning integration activities for refugees.[18] In an attempt to further advance evaluation efforts, the 2021 AMIF call started to require that key performance indicators (baselines and targets) that will be used to monitor implementation and evaluate the outcomes of migrants' integration initiatives are already included in the project proposal as a pre-requisite to access funding.[19] Various other European funds (including Horizon 2020) have been used to improve international datasets relevant for linking policies to integration outcomes,[20] helping move the needle towards building an evidence base in migrant integration policymaking and seeking to enhance an evidence culture from the implementation stage although the impact of these is yet to be seen.

2.2 Why is migrant integration lagging behind?

Despite efforts to promote evidence-informed policymaking, migrant integration is still far behind other policy areas. This section analyses the barriers on the path to evidence-informed policymaking in migrant integration by mapping obstacles both at the decision-making and the implementation level throughout the policymaking cycle. While most work on evidence-informed policymaking focuses on methodological challenges to conducting high-quality evaluations, this policy brief aims to take a broader perspective and analyse obstacles throughout the policy cycle, allowing a broader perspective on the macro-level conditions for evidence-informed policymaking.

The politicized nature of migrant integration policymaking dampens political buy-in. Political buy-in is a crucial precondition at each stage of the evidence-informed policymaking cycle to initiate evaluations, to implement recommendations, and to allocate the necessary resources.[21] In any policy area there may be reluctance to evaluate policies when this could show policies are ineffective and could give rise to criticism and questions about who is responsible for setting it right.[22] Similarly, in line with the sunk cost fallacy,[23] policymakers may be especially reluctant to evaluate whether costly policies achieved the desired effect, afraid for the fall out of wasted spending.[24] For policymakers working on migrant integration it is especially challenging to commit to evidence-informed policymaking. Rising nativism and populism make migrant integration a highly politicized and contentious issue and reduced public support

[18] Rachel Westerby, Follow The Money III" - Solidarity: The Use of AMIF Funds to Incentivise Resettlement and Relocation in the EU (UNHCR and ECRE, February 2020); ECRE, AMIF: Incentivising resettlement, relocation and integration, not Dublin returns (ECRE Policy Note, October 2020).

[19] The regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council, 7 July 2021 says that the AMIF should support the efforts of the Union and the Member States to enhance the Member States' capacity to develop, monitor and evaluate their asylum policies in the light of their obligations under Union law; and it should support Member States in enhancing their capacity to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate immigration and integration strategies, policies and measures for legally staying third-country nationals, in particular Union legal instruments for legal migration. See: European Commission, 'Call for proposal on assistance, support and integration of third country national victims of trafficking in human beings', (AMIF-[2022]-TF1-AG-THB); European Commission, Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council of Europe Establishing the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), (No. 514/2014, 7 July, 2021, 3).

[20] Ozge Bilgili, Thomas Huddleston, and Anne-Linde Joki, The Dynamics between Integration Policies and Outcomes: a Synthesis of the Literature (Migrant Integration Policy Index [MIPEX], March 2015).

[21] Ross C. Brownson, Jonathan E. Fielding, and Lawrence W. Green, 'Building Capacity for Evidence-Based Public Health: Reconciling the Pulls of Practice and the Push of Research,' *Annual Review of Public Health* 39, no. 1, 27-53, 1 April (2018): 42.

[22] Mark Bovens, Paul 't Hart, and Sanneke Kuipers,'The Politics of Policy Evaluation', *Oxford University Press,* (2008): 323.

[23] Charles A. Miller, 'Sunk Costs and Political Decision Making,' *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics,* Oxford University Press, June 2019.

[24]Author interview with Jürgen Wander, Programme Manager Further Integration in the Labour Market (VIA) at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, online, 1 March 2022.

for investments in integration policies, let alone the evaluation of these policies.[25] Migrant integration policymakers are already under a lot of scrutiny. Fear for public backlash about ineffective policies or reluctance to draw even more attention to an already highly politicized policy area both dampen the enthusiasm for evaluations. Evidence and recommendations from evaluations may also not be in line with existing political strategies or public attitudes, complicating the translation of evidence into policy design. The politicized and sensitive nature of migrant integration also trickles down to the relation between policymakers and evaluators. Limited trust and conflicts of interest between policymakers and evaluators, for example around politically loaded language or fundamental tensions regarding definitions and indicators, can restrict cooperation.[26]

Beneficiaries' and practitioners' unique insights are not leveraged in the evidence-informed policy cycle. Throughout the policy cycle, opportunities are missed to involve practitioners, different governance levels, private companies/employers, citizens, migrant consultative bodies, and civil society organizations despite usually being impacted by and responsible for integration policies.[27] Especially practitioners and beneficiaries of policies (migrants and refugees), are often overlooked in evidence-informed policymaking.[28] Beneficiaries' involvement in evaluations is generally limited to their participation in studies as a subject and they are rarely asked for feedback.[29] This lack of consultation with end users may be the result of flawed assumptions by researchers or policymakers that all migrants and refugees might have the same needs, but also due to limited time, resources and commitment to engage them.[30] Practitioners' involvement tends to be limited to the implementation stage, which can lead to a lack of ownership for the programmes they are implementing or lack of alignment between recommendations and the practitioners' reality.

Limited resources and capacity prevent evidence-informed policymaking, especially among local level and civil society actors: At the heart of many of the above-mentioned obstacles is a lack of resources, not only in terms of funding, but also in terms of capacity and capability. Funding and capacity (including skills and expertise) are essential throughout the evidence-informed policymaking cycle. First, policymakers often lack the capacity and capability to access and identify relevant evidence,[31] and there are rarely resources dedicated to increasing capacity on this front. Skill and competence building efforts tend to be aimed at evaluators, rather than policymakers, who must equally be trained to implement evidence into practice.[32] Second, high-quality evaluations are costly, particularly considering the methodological challenges to measuring integration outcomes.[33] Many integration subsidies are project-

[25] Meghan Benton and Alexandra Embiricos, Doing More with Less: A New Toolkit for Integration Policy (Migration Policy Institute Europe: Integration Futures Working Groups, January 2019): 2.
[26] Paul J. Stephenson, Jonas J. Schoenefeld, and Frans L. Leeuw, 'The Politicisation of Evaluation: Constructing and Contesting EU Policy Performance,' *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* 60, no. 4, (2019): 673.
[27] Expert comment at SPRING roundtable, online, 23 March 2022.
[28] OECD, Improving Governance with Policy Evaluation: Lessons From Country Experience (Paris, France: OECD Public Governance Reviews 2020), 124.
[29] Anne Singleton, 'Speaking Truth to Power? Why Civil Society, Beyond Academia, Remains Marginal in EU Migration Policy' in Integrating Immigrants in Europe: Research-Policy Dialogues (Springer, January 2015): 131-40.
[30] Author interview with Jürgen Wander, Programme Manager Further Integration in the Labour Market (VIA) at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, online, 1 March 2022.
[31] OECD, Improving Governance with Policy Evaluation: Lessons From Country Experience (Paris, France: OECD Public Governance Reviews, 2020), 121
[32] OECD, Improving Governance with Policy Evaluation: Lessons From Country Experience (Paris, France: OECD Public Governance Reviews, 2020), 11
[33] Expert comment at SPRING roundtable, online, 23 March 2022.

based, which risks reducing the incentive for conducting evaluations, and even if they are, to carry evidence forward because short-running projects have limited time and resources to implement lessons learned.[34] For example, the BRIDGE project was a 5-year project that aimed to examine and compare the effectiveness of two integration policy programmes designed for Syrian refugees arriving in Rotterdam in 2016: the municipal integration programme and the Stichting Nieuw Thuis Rotterdam (SNTR, a privately funded programme that aimed to increase availability of housing opportunities for refugees with a residence permit in Rotterdam and provide them with integration guidance and social inclusion support).[35] The evaluations resulted in important recommendations to improve the SNTR project, yet they were often not implemented because SNTR was only a 5-year project and the recommendations only came out when the project was about to end.

Similarly, budgetary cycles are short and evaluations from previous cycles may not be completed before the next begins. The recommendations coming out of evaluations often come too late to inform the upcoming budget or policy cycle, leaving evaluations disregarded.[36] Moreover, without the necessary resources to fully implement evaluation results, policies that might look good on paper will not have the desired effect. Scotland's New Scots integration policy, for example, may be founded on research and co-developed with refugees, yet, with limited funding many of its ambitions on paper are not implemented in practice.[37]

Financial resources and capacity are especially lacking among actors on the frontline of migrant integration. European cities are increasingly responsible for migrant integration,[38] but the increase in responsibility is not matched with an increase in funding, resulting in an acute gap between ambitions for evidence-informed policymaking and available resources.[39] Civil society organisations that step in to supplement government policies rely heavily on volunteers who often lack training and skills, and tight budgets leave little room for evaluation.[40] This is a vicious cycle, as organisations that can conduct evaluations and prove programmes' effectiveness are more likely to continue receiving funding for their interventions.[41] The resource-gap is particularly acute in countries receiving the bulk of migrants, where there are limited resources for even direct service delivery, let alone evidence-informed policymaking. Considering the example of Greece, the state was already buckling under multiplying social problems as a result of the economic crisis and accompanying austerity measures during the large influx of migrants in 2015. The limited state resources spent on those arriving went to emergency responses, and funding for integration actions was almost non-existent. Civil society organisations took on the role of providing

[34] Author interview with Reneé Frissen, Founder and CEO of Open Embassy, online, 15 March 2022.

[35] The main difference between the two integration policy programmes was the fact that the SNTR programme had greater resources: private stakeholders had bought over 200 houses to facilitate housing for Syrian refugee, and had a big budget that allowed them to work with professionals (not just volunteers) and to provide refugee participants with intensive personal coaching services and access to accelerated language courses.

[36] OECD, Improving Governance with Policy Evaluation: Lessons From Country Experience (Paris, France: OECD Public Governance Reviews,2020), 145.

[37] Expert comment at SPRING roundtable, online, 23 March 2022.

[38] Peter Scholten and Rinus Penninx, 'The Multilevel Governance of Migration and Integration', In *Integration Processes and Policies in Europe*, ed. Blanca Garcés-Mascareñas and Rinus Penninx, (IMISCOE Research Series. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2016), 91–108.

[39] Author interview with Jenny Phillimore, Professor of Migration and Superdiversity at University of Birmingham, online, 21 February, 2022

[40] Author interview with Reneé Frissen, Founder and CEO of Open Embassy, online, 15 March, 2022.

[41] Author interview with Jenny Phillimore, Professor of Migration and Superdiversity at University of Birmingham, online 21 February, 2022

integration services, however in this fragmented and underfunded landscape, there is little to no room for evaluation and evidence sharing.[42]

Shifting goals, target groups, and responsibilities obstruct institutional learning and measuring long-term effects. Evidence-informed policymaking is more likely in "settled" policy areas such as healthcare or education, where stability and continuity allow for evaluation.[43] Migrant integration is a fluid policy field with shifting responsibilities and frequent changes in strategic direction. Target populations, goals, and indicators of success of integration policies are in constant flux, differing across countries and regions and changing over time. This fluid nature prevents mutual learning and complicates evaluating what works. Dutch integration policy and its shifting goals is a case in point. While the 1980s Minorities Policy rooted in multiculturalism promoted the preservation of cultural identities and the 1990s Integration Policy shifted its focus to disregarding culture and promoting structural integration, the more assimilationist 2000s Integration Policy New Style ultimately made cultural adaptation a priority, resulting in a complete shift in strategy in just two decades.[44] In this case, some migrants have been exposed to policies that tried to achieve opposite goals, making it difficult to assess whether and which policy was effective and why. Migrant integration is a long-term process and policy impact may only become clear after time, while constant reframing of immigrant integration makes it difficult to qualify policies as successful or not.[45]

Furthermore, integration policies and programmes are often forged in the heat of crisis, limiting time to decision-making, policy design, and implementation.[46] The current plethora of initiatives that have sprung up to support displaced people arriving from Ukraine, illustrate how responding to an emergency may leave little time and resources to reflect on existing evidence and plan evaluations of emergency initiatives.[47] The response to the influx of displaced people from Ukraine illustrates this point vividly, with 34.500 refugees finding housing through the German platform #UnterkunftUkraine as of May 2022.[48] Yet, these platforms were launched in a matter of days or weeks, so scouring through existing evidence on best practices and planning an evaluation strategy may not be the top priority for such ad-hoc initiatives providing immediate emergency response. As a result, lessons for the future may get lost, preventing stakeholders to learn from some of the most promising innovations that especially tend to emerge in times of crisis.

Methodological hurdles challenge the quality of evidence: It is difficult to establish direct causality between integration and participation in integration programmes.[49] To establish causality, evaluators would ideally like to compare similar groups that are randomly selected for a specific programme and compare them with those who are not. Yet, in real life policies and programmes apply universally, leaving

[42] Bagavos Christos, and Nikos Kourachanis, 'Civil Society Organizations and Labour Market Integration for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Greece,' *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* (2021).

[43] Brian W. Head, 'Toward More "Evidence-Informed" Policy Making?,' *Public Administration Review 76*, no. 3 (May 2016): 476.

[44] Peter Scholten, P. W. A., and F. K. M. Van Nispen, 'Building Bridges Across Frames?,' *Journal of Public Policy 28*, no. 02, (August 2008): 189.

[45] Peter Scholten, P. W. A., and F. K. M. Van Nispen, 'Building Bridges Across Frames?,' *Journal of Public Policy* 28, no. 02, (August 2008): 189.

[46] Kari Lancaster, Tim Rhodes and Marsh Rosengarten, 'Making evidence and policy in public health emergencies: Lessons from COVID-19 for adaptive evidence-making and intervention', *Evidence and Policy* 16, no.3, (2020): 477-490.

[47] The European Website on Integration tracks some of the early integration measures. See European Website on Integration 'The early integration of those fleeing war in Ukraine: an overview from across the EU', accessed 25 May 2022.

[48] See #UnterkunftUkraine,'The platform for solidarity in action and direct human connections', accessed 25 May 2022.

[49] Daria Huss and Justyna Segeš Frelak. 'The Migration Policy Cycle: Making The Case for Coherent, Inclusive and Evidence-Informed Policy-Making' (policy brief, International Center for Migration Policy Development, October 2019): 8.

evaluators without a control group to compare.[50] Migrants are also often part of multiple programmes, which makes it difficult to measure whether one specific element of a programme is effective or not.[51] Randomized controlled trials are the golden standard to establish causality, but ethical considerations about depriving a group of people access to a programme that is expected to be beneficial often results in reluctance (see for example Box 2).[52] Many evaluations therefore measure output rather than outcomes, looking at indicators such as the number of beneficiaries or participants, or the number of activities conducted,[53] providing no information on whether a programme is effective. For policies and programmes to be properly evaluated, they must be implemented consistently, yet variation in the implementation phase result in differences in how policies are translated from paper to practice, preventing evaluation of the policy as it was intended (see for example Box 2). Even when effective policies can be teased out, it may be difficult to assess how transferrable they are when institutional contexts and target groups vary both nationally and regionally.[54] Generating evidence in migrant integration is particularly challenging. Cultural measurement invariance[55] and low survey response rates blunt some of the tools in the evaluators' and researchers' toolbox to measure integration outcomes.[56] Moreover, migrant and refugee groups are characterized by stark within-group diversity, with variation in legal status, country of origin, duration of stay, age at arrival, socioeconomic status, etc. resulting in variations in the composition of migrant and refugee groups across regions and states. Policies and programmes may be effective for some, but not for all.

The complex migrant integration playing field limits mutual learning: Even when high-quality evidence exists, hurdles to dissemination and mutual learning prevent evidence from effectively informing policies on a broader scale. Migrant integration cuts across policy areas—from housing to labour market— and levels of governance—from local to international, creating a complex playing field.[57] Besides involving a complex set of government actors, integration services are increasingly contracted out to third parties in the private sector, while NGOs and non-profits often play an important role in promoting integration alongside government initiatives.[58] This fragmented playing field scatters evidence and responsibilities across actors, and can make mutual learning difficult. Evidence is created by different actors, from

[50] Expert comment, SPRING roundtable, online, 23 March, 2022.

[51] Iván Martín, Albert Arcarons, Jutta Aumüller, Pieter Bevelander, Henrik Emilsson, Sona Kalantaryan, Alastair MacIver, et al., From Refugees to Workers: Mapping Labour-Market Integration Support Measures for Asylum Seekers and Refugees in EU Member States (Bertelsmann Stiftung and Migration Policy Centre, 2016), 17.

[52] Highlighted in the report of the VIA project: Gregor Walz, Auke Witkamp, Noortje Hipper, and Lennart de Ruig, 'Evaluatie Programma Verdere Integratie Op de Arbeidsmarkt: Derde Rapport Uitvoering, Opbregsten En Impact van Het Programma', (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, November 2021), 43.

[53] European Migration Network (EMN), Labour Market Integration of Third Country Nationals in EU Member States (Synthesis Report for the EMN study , February 2019), 7.

[54] Transferability: Garibay, Montserrat González, and Peter De Cuyper, 'Is There an Evidence Basis for Immigrant Integration Policies?: A Methodological Enquiry,' *Nordic Journal of Migration Research*, no. 8, (11 March, 2018): 18 ; Variation in evidence: Martin Rhus, Kristof Tamas, and Joakim Palme, Bridging the Gaps: Linking Research to Public Debates and Policy Making on Migration and Integration (Oxford University Press, 1st ed., 2019), 245.

[55] Studies often use surveys to evaluate the impact of policies. Yet, when collecting survey data among different cultural groups, such as different migrant groups, the same set of questions may not measure the same underlying construct (e.g. sense of belonging) because of cultural differences between the groups. This issue is referred to as cultural measurement invariance and results in over- and underestimations of for example the sense of belonging, preventing meaningful comparisons across cultural groups. See Jeong S, Lee Y. 'Consequences of Not Conducting Measurement Invariance Tests in Cross-Cultural Studies: A Review of Current Research Practices and Recommendations,' *Advances in Developing Human Resources* 21, no. 4 (2018): 466-483.

[56] Tibubos, Ana Nanette, Manfred E. Beutel, Andreas Schulz, Eva M. Klein, Elmar Brähler, Matthias Michal, Thomas Münzel et al. ,'Is assessment of depression equivalent for migrants of different cultural backgrounds? Results from the German population-based Gutenberg Health Study (GHS).', Depression and Anxiety 35, no. 12 (2018): 1178-1189.

[57] Peter Scholten, and Rinus Penninx, 'The Multilevel Governance of Migration and Integration,' in *Integration Processes and Policies in Europe*, (IMISCOE, Research Series. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2016): 91–108.

[58] Peter Scholten, and Rinus Penninx. 'The Multilevel Governance of Migration and Integration,' in *Integration Processes and Policies in Europe*, (IMISCOE, Research Series. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2016):91–108.

academics to consultants, and evidence is shared and disseminated in different ways. Most government-led evaluation efforts are only available in the local language, are often not available online or difficult to find on governments' websites, obstructing mutual learning (see Box 2).[59] Academic evidence, on the other hand, is usually available in English and easier to find, yet academic articles are often written in very technical language difficult to grasp for practitioners and policymakers, provide recommendations that may not align with policymakers' realities,[60] and are often hidden behind the hefty paywalls of academic journals.[61] Without resources and initiatives to translate findings to English (or other languages) or to ensure the evidence is searchable or easy to find by other actors (both inside and outside their own national country), the opportunity to transfer and share knowledge is lost.[62]

Box 2. Innovation and obstacles in evidence-informed policymaking case study – The VIA project

The 'Verdere Integratie op de Arbreidsmarkt' (VIA) project commissioned by the Dutch Minister of Social Affairs and Employment, provides an innovative example of both promoting evidence-informed policymaking and promoting labour market integration of people with a non-Western migration background. This project provides examples of unique innovations and key lessons to promote an evidence-culture throughout the migrant integration policymaking cycle (see Graph 1), yet also highlights the obstacles on the road leading there.

From the beginning, the key to the VIA programme's success was the strong political back-up it had from the Dutch Minister of Social Affairs and Employment, who made the programme one of his agenda's top priorities and ensured access to the necessary resources (10M). Moreover, the unique multistakeholder structure of the project – involving for example municipalities, educational institutions, and employers – allows to keep key stakeholders on board and benefit from their on-the-ground knowledge and experience, while amplifying the impact from the pilot projects by encouraging the adoption of recommendations in their own respective activities beyond the project itself. The VIA-project used a unique multifaceted pilot project model tackling different aspects of labour market integration both at the demand (e.g. education and skills) and supply-side (e.g. discrimination during the hiring process) of labour market integration in 8 pilot projects. The multi-pilot and staggered nature of the project facilitated learning lessons from earlier pilots to improve later pilots especially for the overarching project team, for example about how to set up partnerships or contracting out research. Moreover, the pilot-project design made sure that effective pilots could be scaled up right away. The VIA-project is also linked up with and embedded in other broader initiatives, such as the *Taskforce for Work and Integration* that brings together 21 relevant stakeholders and *The Working Agenda for Further Integration on the Labour Market*, amplifying its impact beyond the scale-ups of its pilot projects. Moreover, the team's embrace of a policy entrepreneur strategy helped capitalize on 'what works' and effectively promote the project's rationale through actively embracing opportunities such as videos, campaigns, and presentations about 'what works'.

Despite being an exemplary model of innovation in evidence-informed policymaking, the VIA project still faced significant challenges. In the early stages, municipalities were reluctant to welcome the project as they didn't want to jeopardize or question policies already in place. The high initial investment to run the new programmes, while results or financial paybacks would only emerge in the long-term, also held back many municipalities. The VIA team

[59] Author interview with Jürgen Wander, Programme Manager Further Integration in the Labour Market (VIA) at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, online, 1 March 2022.

[60] Brian W. Head, 'Reconsidering Evidence-Based Policy: Key Issues and Challenges,' *Policy and Society* 29, no. 2, (May 1, 2010): 87.

[61] Ross C. Brownson, Jonathan E. Fielding, and Lawrence W. Green, 'Building Capacity for Evidence-Based Public Health: Reconciling the Pulls of Practice and the Push of Research,' *Annual Review of Public Health* 39, no. 1, 27-53, 1 April (2018): 31.

[62] Expert comment, SPRING roundtable, online, 23 March 2022.

used existing evidence to highlight the existing gaps in socioeconomic position between migrants and natives to convince local governments to join the project. Some employers and municipalities were reluctant to participate in Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs) because it raised ethical concerns among employers and municipalities as it meant depriving some people of access to potentially effective services.

In the scale-up phase, VIA struggled with municipalities and employers' inconsistent, and, at times, non-existent implementation of suggested interventions and recommendations. The team tried to mitigate this through consistent coordination and communication with the partners. The scale up phase also faced 'resource challenges', even though the project was well-financed, there was often simply a lack of high-quality client managers to coach migrants on their path to labour market integration to further scale up the effective VIA-model.

When reflecting on broader impact beyond the scale up of effective pilot projects, the unique link up between the pilot projects and the Taskforce on Work and Integration provided a unique springboard for amplifying broader impact of the project. Yet, translating lessons learned at the micro level into macro level policy recommendations often resulted in more abstract recommendations that were difficult to subsequently implement in practice by different stakeholders. Lastly, the project's focus on dissemination, not only of good practices but also promoting its model for evidence-informed policymaking, were unique, yet only focused on national dissemination. The accessibility of the wealth of information produced by this project is only available in Dutch and 'tucked away' on the Dutch government's website. Moreover, another common obstacle to broader dissemination and impact is the potential lack of transferability of interventions that worked well in the unique Dutch context but may not work elsewhere.

Sources:

Gregor Walz, Auke Witkamp, Noortje Hipper, and Lennart de Ruig, *Evaluatie Programma Verdere Integratie Op de Arbeidsmarkt: Derde Rapport Uitvoering, Opbregsten En Impact van Het Programma* (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, November 2021).

Interview with Jürgen Wander, Programme Manager Further Integration in the Labour Market (VIA) at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, online, 1 March 2022.

3. A Winding Path Forward - Five Ways to Promote the (Macro) Conditions for Evidence-Informed Migrant Integration Policymaking

To overcome these obstacles to evidence-informed migrant integration policymaking and leverage recent innovations, this section illuminates the most promising steps policymakers at the EU and national level could take towards advancing evidence-informed migrant integration policymaking, focusing specifically on promoting the required macro level preconditions that create a context that facilitates evidence-informed policymaking at each stage of the policy cycle.[63]

Political buy-in from policymakers and decisionmakers runs through these recommendations like a common thread. Political willingness ultimately determines whether evaluations are conducted, resources are allocated, and evidence is implemented.[64] While the highly politicized nature of migration is a key obstacle to moving to more evidence-informed policymaking, it may also be one of the solutions to escape from a discourse often ridden with inaccuracies, assumptions, and perceptions. Effective integration policies would not only promote better integration of migrants in host societies but may also take the political sting out of the broader migrant integration debate.

Each recommendation weighs the importance and relevance of taking action, while providing promising examples as inspiration and specific recommendations on how to ensure success.

[63] The authors will release a dedicated toolkit focusing more specifically on promoting capacity and skills at the micro level.

[64] Brian W. Head, 'Relationships between Policy Academics and Public Servants: Learning at a Distance?: Policy Academics and Public Servants', *Australian Journal of Public Administration* 74, no. 1 (2015): 5–12.

I. Promoting political buy-in through pilot projects

Pilot projects may help build political buy-in by reducing the risks and costs involved with launching new large-scale programmes and making it less costly to discontinue when they are unsuccessful. Pilot projects have long been a way to promote innovation and learning in other policy fields[65] and have recently gained traction in the field of integration. Two example showcasing the effective use of pilot projects are the Dutch VIA-project (see Box 2) and Inclu-EU, a European Commission DG HOME-funded project. The latter initiative used pilot projects to enhance transnational mutual learning by promoting cooperation between local and regional authorities at the European level. Under Inclu-EU, each co-applicant introduces a pilot project that promotes the integration of third-country nationals at regional and local levels. A pilot project led by The Association of Municipalities of Tuscany (ANCI Toscana) for example tackled temporary housing needs of migrants not entitled to first and second-level reception services.[66] Each pilot project under Inclu-EU is required to develop a monitoring framework to distill lessons learned and assess implementation, as well as the actions' potential for replication or scaling up into regional measures.[67] Despite the promise of pilot projects, it is important to not fall into the trap of 'pilotitis', the overuse of pilot projects while failing to implement recommendations or scaling up effective pilots.[68]

Policymakers can help promote the conditions to leverage the full potential of pilot projects. Policymakers could make funding for pilot projects conditional on factors such as being based on existing evidence, incorporating monitoring and evaluation throughout the project, ensuring effective dissemination of evidence, and involving stakeholders throughout the project. The VIA-project shows that political backing is key for the success of pilot projects. Policymakers should provide clear public backing and ensure access to resources and support for the implementation of recommendations, and more importantly, the scale up of pilot projects.

II. Incentivizing funding through tiered evidence funding model

Evidence-informed policymaking is costly, yet funding evidence-informed policymaking is likely to reduce wasteful spending and increase cost-effectiveness.[69] Evaluations can prevent wasteful spending on ineffective policies[70] and help identify policies with the highest return on investment.[71] Evaluations may provide a map for policy improvement, but if there are no resources allocated to implement recommendations, reports will collect dust on a shelf without being implemented to achieve impact. To incentivize evidence-informed policymaking, governments and other funding bodies (such as foundations and philanthropies as in the case of the BRIDGE project) can embed evaluation and the use of evidence within grant and funding structures.[72] One way to do so is through tiered-evidence grants. These operate by distributing funding in tiers, with large scale-up grants that fund expansion or replication of practices with existing strong evidence, moderate validation grants funding promising practices with moderate

[65] Ian Sanderson, 'Evaluation, policy learning and evidence-based policy making,' *Public administration 80*, no. 1 (2002): 1-22.
[66] Inclu-EU, Pilot Projects, Social Inclusion, accessed 11 May 2022
[67] Includ-EU, Pilot Projects, accessed 11 May 2022
[68] Kuipers, Pim, John S Humphreys, John Wakerman, Robert Wells, Judith Jones, and Philip Entwistle, 'Collaborative Review of Pilot Projects to Inform Policy: A Methodological Remedy for Pilotitis?,' *Australia and New Zealand Health Policy* 5, no. 1 (December 2008): 17.
[69] The PEW Charity Trust, Evidence-Based Policymaking A guide for effective government (November 2014).
[70] OECD, Monitoring and Evaluating Social Protection Systems: Lessons from the EU-SPS Programme (Paris, France: EU Social Protection System Program, 2019), 56.
[71] Andrew Feldman and Rebecca Maynard, 'The Evidence-Based Policy Revolution Waiting to Happen,' Government Executive, accessed 30 May 2022.
[72] OECD, Improving Governance with Policy Evaluation: Lessons from Country Experience (Paris, France: OECD Public Governance Reviews, 2020), 145.

evidence, and smaller development grants funding high-potential but relatively untested practices.[73] Such an approach has been used successfully in policymaking in international development, fostering both innovation and the creation of an evidence base.[74] EU funding calls, such as those under AMIF, have started to require the provision of key performance indicators with baselines and targets to monitor implementation and assess results of projects, allowing for lessons learnt and good practices for future actions.[75] However, making funding dependent on evidence carries the risk of excluding smaller organisations that do not have the capacity to conduct evaluations.[76] It will be important to strike a balance between requiring evaluation and reporting, and equipping recipients with the necessary tools to reduce the administrative burden that weighs particularly heavy on smaller organisations.[77]

III. Facilitating stakeholder involvement throughout the policy cycle to better translate recommendations from paper to practice

Involving key stakeholders, especially beneficiaries and practitioners, throughout the entire policy cycle is crucial for effective evidence-informed policymaking. Early involvement of beneficiaries can ensure that programmes meet migrants' and refugees' needs and address existing obstacles.[78] Involving practitioners in the design and development of integration policies, as well as during evaluation, promotes ownership of results and can ensure that resulting recommendations match the reality on the ground in terms of capacity and resources, ultimately increasing their effectiveness.[79] Furthermore, engaging civil society actors in the decision-making process can generate a broader consensus, and serve to increase the legitimacy of initiatives.[80] An example of effective cooperation process is the re-design of the Home Office Indicators of Integration in the UK (which sought to build on the strengths and limitations of the previous framework). A consultative model created space for refugees and local residents to co-develop the project and bring their knowledge to the fore in evaluation and evidence gathering as well as service delivery.[81] The initiative also facilitated discussions and workshops with NGOs working with refugees, refugee advocates, policy makers and practitioners were organised to encourage them to comment on the utility of the existing evaluation framework.[82]

Policymakers should introduce formal requirements for effective involvement of stakeholders throughout policy cycle.[83] This involvement should start early in the process to clarify the role and responsibilities of each stakeholder[84] and engage a range of stakeholders (especially beneficiaries and practitioners). Policymakers should also facilitate a strong commitment and effort from all actors involved, through communicating clearly about the relevance of involvement and supporting beneficiary

[73] Center for Results Focused Leadership,'Tiered-Evidence Grantmaking', accessed 13 May 2022.
[74] US Aid,'About Development Innovation Ventures', accessed 13 May 2022.
[75] See: European Commission, 'Call for proposal on assistance, support and integration of third country national victims of trafficking in human beings', (AMIF-[2022]-TF1-AG-THB).
[76] Author Interview with Reneé Frissen, Founder and CEO of Open Embassy, online, 15 March 2022.
[77] Hanne Beirens and Aliyyah Ahad, 'Money Wise: Improving How EU Funds Support Migration and Integration Policy Objectives,' (policy brief, Migration Policy Institute Europe, March 2019).
[78] OECD, Improving Governance with Policy Evaluation: Lessons From Country Experience (Paris, France: OECD Public Governance Reviews, 2020), 66.
[79] Experts comments at SPRING Roundtable, online, 23 March 2022.
[80] OECD, Improving Governance with Policy Evaluation: Lessons From Country Experience (Paris, France: OECD Public Governance Reviews, 2020).
[81] Expert comment at SPRING roundtable, online, 23 March 2022.
[82] Expert comment at SPRING ROUNDTABLE, online, 23 March 2022.
[83] OECD, Improving Governance with Policy Evaluation: Lessons From Country Experience (Paris, France: OECD Public Governance Reviews, 2020).
[84] Martin Ruhs, Kristof Tamas, and Joakim Palme, eds., Bridging the Gaps: Linking Research to Public Debates and Policy Making on Migration and Integration (1st ed. Oxford University Press, 2019). Brian W. Head, 'Relationships between Policy Academics and Public Servants: Learning at a Distance?: Policy Academics and Public Servants,' *Australian Journal of Public Administration 74*, no. 1 (2015): 5–12.

involvement through providing renumeration fort their time.[85] Formal communication channels and permanent dialogue structures, such as forums and facilitated information exchanges, should be leveraged to facilitate ongoing stakeholder involvement.

IV. Building capacity through securing access to training resources

Building capacity and creating training tools targeted to the specific needs of migrant integration policymakers and practitioners will improve the use of evidence and quality of evaluations. Increased skill levels may in turn increase motivation to use evidence-informed techniques[86] while consolidating networks that facilitate peer learning.[87] Toolkits and training sessions have been successfully used in other policy areas to increase capacity. The UK Alliance for Useful Evidence, for example, provides tailored masterclasses for policymakers, training them to understand research evidence and increase their ability to apply evidence through simulations, yet it did not target the specific challenges that integration policymakers face.[88] A training programme and tailored guide for practitioners launched by IOM on the Indicators of Integration framework in the UK did specifically target migrant integration policymakers and focused on how integration indicators could be applied at the local level.[89] To date many efforts have focused on training evaluators,[90] yet local actors still often lack skills and time to self-evaluate their practices,[91] and might not be able to afford employing teams of evaluators for integration projects. While many resources and tools exist that train policymakers in evaluating policies, these tools often do not focus on the full policymaking cycle and do not consider the specific macro challenges to evidence-informed policymaking in migrant integration.

EU and national policymakers could play a crucial role by initiating and funding targeted toolkits and training sessions. These resources should adapt toolkits and training materials to tackle the specific methodological challenges in evidence-informed migrant integration policymaking and take a more holistic focus on the full-policy cycle. Resources on paper are helpful, but without training on how to actually use and apply these tools, impact may be minimal. Training sessions can be costly, policymakers could learn from 'train-the-trainer' approach in public health that provide a promising model to increase impact and reduce costs.[92] Different stakeholders have a different departure point, especially those working for local governments and civil society organizations often lack capacity and skills to use more evidence-informed techniques. Training materials should ideally be accessible and is possible targeted to different target audiences.

[85] Brian W. Head, 'Reconsidering Evidence-Based Policy: Key Issues and Challenges', *Policy and Society* 29, no. 2 (May 1, 2010): 77–94.

[86] OECD, Improving Governance with Policy Evaluation: Lessons From Country Experience (Paris, France: OECD Public Governance Reviews, 2020), 137.

[87] Ross C. Brownson, Jonathan E. Fielding, and Lawrence W. Green, 'Building Capacity for Evidence-Based Public Health: Reconciling the Pulls of Practice and the Push of Research,' *Annual Review of Public Health* 39, no. 1 (1 April 2018): 41.

[88] See: NESTA, Alliance for Useful Evidence, accessed 30 May 2022.

[89] See: IOM, 2019 Indicators Integration Framework, accessed 30 May 2022.

[90] OECD, Improving Governance with Policy Evaluation: Lessons From Country Experience (Paris, France: OECD Public Governance Reviews, 2020).

[91] Author interview with Jenny Phillimore, Professor of Migration and Superdiversity at University of Birmingham, online, 21 February 2022.

[92] Laura Yarber, Carol A. Brownson, Rebekah R. Jacob, Elizabeth A. Baker, Ellen Jones, Carsten Baumann, Anjali D. Deshpande, Kathleen N. Gillespie, Darcell P. Scharff, and Ross C. Brownson, 'Evaluating a train-the-trainer approach for improving capacity for evidence-based decision making in public health,' *BMC Health Services Research* 15, n.547, (2015): 547

V. Improving access to evidence by leveraging online databases

To make most of costly evaluations, policymakers should promote and facilitate the dissemination of evaluation results and evidence through using online databases.[93] However, the solution to making evidence accessible and digestible is not a proliferation of databases, leveraging and improving existing databases is key. One promising example is the Migration Research Hub, a well-known online database that gathers academic literature, topical indexes, and multidisciplinary experts on migration, covering more than 120,000 publications.[94] Yet, despite covering a wide range of types of content, from data sets to journal articles, this database does not yet include evaluation reports in its taxonomy of types of resources making it difficult to find them. Another database, the European Website on Integration (EWSI), does allow users to search for evaluations specifically and gathers information about the goals, activities, results, beneficiaries, funding, and evaluation of good practices.[95] Yet, even though the evaluation sections describe the evaluation process, the actual results of the evaluation and more importantly the lessons coming out of these evaluations are oftentimes not shared by users, limiting the opportunity to amplify impact. The utility of these databases stands or falls with users' willingness and ability to submit updates and content, yet with limited resources evidence-dissemination is often not prioritized. Lastly, platforms gathering 'good practices' tend to promote a dichotomous view of integration practices as either good or bad, mostly focusing on the positive aspects of policies but thereby limiting the opportunity to learn from what did not work.

Policymakers could promote access to evidence through improving existing databases by making them searchable, adding detailed categorization systems that allow users to specifically search for evaluation results, and including key recommendations and evaluations results. These databases should also be expanded to not only include best practices for migrant integration, but also evaluation reports and tools for evidence-informed policymaking such as validated surveys and evaluation toolkits. Policymakers should promote evidence dissemination using key databases by making it a requirement for those receiving funding (e.g. from AMIF) and allocating portions of funding to evidence dissemination activities. Policymakers could also help reduce linguistic barriers to evidence-sharing by allocating funding to translate at least key findings/recommendations/abstracts in English on the EWSI website and other databases, or by funding database managers to provide minimal translation to make evidence searchable. Lastly, it is important to encourage a culture shift from only focusing on what did work to maximising learning from what did not work.

There is clearly not one single path towards an evidence culture in migrant integration. This policy brief both maps out existing obstacles *and* potential routes to circumvent these obstacles on the journey towards an evidence culture. Yet this is not enough. Besides policymakers promoting macro conditions such as political buy-in, funding, stakeholder involvement, and access to evidence, all stakeholders in the migrant integration policy field have a role to play to create an evidence culture in migrant integration. Stakeholders have different departure points when it comes to financial resources, capacity, and political buy-in, and consequently next steps to move towards evidence-informed policymaking may look different for different stakeholders depending on where they are coming from. This policy brief provides important suggestions to create the broader conditions in which different stakeholders can move more easily in the direction of an evidence culture in migrant integration. Great progress has been made so far, now it is time to create the structural conditions to effectively create, disseminate, find, and use evidence for more effective migrant integration policies, so migrants and the communities they live in, can thrive.

[93] European Commission, Communicating Research for Evidence-Based Policymaking, Publication Office of the European Union, (June 2010), 27.

[94] See IMISCOE, 'Migration Research Hub', accessed 26 May 2022.

[95] See European Commission, 'European Website on Integration,' accessed 29 May 2022.

The SPRING Project

This policy brief was written as part of the Horizon 2020 Sustainable Practices of Integration (SPRING) project which aims to make integration practices more effective and sustainable. This project will launch a suite of tools and resources that will facilitate communities of practice, from policymakers to practitioners, to adopt more evidence-informed effective and sustainable integration practices. These tools will tackle each step of the policymaking cycle - from improving access to evidence through the SPRING database,[96] to a toolkit aimed at building capacity and gathering resources to promote evidence-informed policymaking.

[96] SPRING, 'Sustainable practices of integration,' accessed 26 May 2022.