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INTEGRATION AS A TWO-WAY PROCESS IN THE EU?

**Assessing the Relationship between the
European Integration Fund and the
Common Basic Principles on Integration**

By Sergio Carrera and Anaïs Faure Atger



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Integration as a two-way process in the EU? Assessing the Relationship between the European Integration Fund and the Common Basic Principles on Integration

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The document provides an Executive Summary of the report entitled “Integration as a two-way process in the EU? Assessing the Relationship between the European Integration Fund and the Common Basic Principles on Integration”. After presenting the background, methodology and structure of the report, it highlights the main findings and puts forward nine policy recommendations.

This report has been carried out in the context of a research project conducted by the Justice and Home Affairs Section of the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) and commissioned by the European Programme for Integration and Migration (EPIM) of the Network of European Foundations (NEF). The final report will be published in July 2011 and will be freely downloadable on the CEPS' website, www.ceps.eu

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Background

Since 2002, the European Union has progressively developed a common policy on the integration of third country nationals, known as the 'EU Framework on integration'. This Framework does not fall under European law but rather constitutes a supranational coordination (soft policy) mechanism which is not legally binding on the EU Member States. Among its main substantive components are the Common Basic Principles on Immigrants' Integration (CBPs), which intend to provide a European guide towards a common understanding of integration at EU level. The first principle, which is intended to underpin and inspire the 11 other CBPs, defines **integration as a "dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States"**. **This concept represents a fundamental feature of the EU's policy approach to integration and can be considered as one of its most defining elements.**

The EU Framework on Integration has been linked with a financial tool of €813 million for the period 2007-2013, the European Integration Fund (EIF). The EIF aims at supporting Member States' actions designed to put the CBPs into practice. The nature and impact of the allocation of the EIF provide evidence of the extent to which the two-way process has been implemented on the ground, or whether other processes have received priority. The EIF has run for a period of four years and the European Commission is currently conducting an evaluation of its implementation. **Now is a timely moment for conducting an independent scrutiny of the EIF allocations and the programmes it supports at national level in order to assess its added value.**

The EU is today at a crossroad for evaluating its input in national migrant integration strategies: it is currently defining the agenda for the second phase of its European Framework on Integration and it is also reviewing the overall EU budget and next post-2013 Multi-Annual Financial Framework in domains related to migration. **This report examines the added value of the EU Framework on Integration by assessing the extent to which the EIF has so far served to support and develop national actions, programmes and projects putting into practice the European understanding of integration as a two-way process (CBP1).**

This report's intention is to provide a tool for evidence-based policy-making in the scope of the EU Framework on Integration. It advocates an improved use and oversight of European funding for the development of integration policies and activities at the national, regional and local levels. The report is informed by an understanding of a two-way approach to integration based on the central role of civil society and migrant organisations, social partners, local and regional authorities (LRAs) as well as foundations in integration processes.

The policy recommendations aim at improving the current configurations and usage of the EIF, and at **ensuring that European funding on integration primarily serves to put into practice a European approach of integration as a two-way process of mutual accommodation** understood as a **multi-dimensional and multi-actor-network process of participation, interaction and understanding** encompassing societies as a whole. This multi-dimensional process calls for the effective **removal of all inequalities, discrimination and racism**. It also focuses on facilitating **equal access to rights, freedoms and opportunities**.



Methodology and Structure

Methodology

The project first examined national EIF implementing strategies and the way in which they have been designed and transposed at national level. Our findings were then contrasted and complemented with the results of a broad consultation engaging key stakeholders active in the field of third country nationals' integration: **the 'integration actors'** (including EU umbrella civil society organisations, social partners, local and regional authorities and foundations). The following organisations have been particularly active in this process: the European Women's Lobby and the European Network of Migrant Women, the European Foundation Centre, Diversity, Migration and Integration Interest Group, Eurocities, the European Council on Refugees and Exiles, the European Network Against Racism and the European Regional and Local Authorities on Asylum and Integration.

The study then analyses the nature and effects of national EIF-supported projects in light of the CBPs, and in particular the two-way process specified in CBP1. This exercise was supported by the mainstreaming of inputs from platform organisations representing civil society and local and regional actors at national level.

Structure

The report is divided into five sections:

Section B puts forward the scope and methodology of the project.

Section C presents some key observations regarding national implementation of the EIF as well as some barriers that have been identified for accessing the EIF.

Section D assesses the ways in which the EIF has been used to support national integration strategies.

Section E is devoted to the two-way process tenet and to the possible ways in which it could be put into practice.

Section F concludes and puts forward a selection of key policy recommendations for funding the two-way process in the EU.

Main Findings

The following research findings can be highlighted:

1. The current allocation of the EIF (mainly benefiting national authorities and operators) is characterised by complex rules and procedures. Several practical and administrative obstacles were identified for accessing the EIF. Administrative requirements, co-financing aspects, absence of publicity and the limitations applicable to the eligible target group are amongst the main barriers for integration actors to have access to the EIF. **There is a lack of adequate information activities in the scope of the EIF which contributes to a lack of transparency in the allocation and evaluation of projects.**
2. On a comparative basis, EU Member State practices as regards the allocation of the EIF vary widely. While some Member States have made use of this source of funding to support the development of a variety of activities, in several cases the bulk of the EIF allocation has benefited only a few projects and has not been distributed among a wide and diverse number of recipients. **National governments appear to receive the largest share of Community contributions at the expense of other 'integration actors', such as NGOs and LRAs.**
3. The involvement of 'integration actors' is crucial for the implementation of the two-way process. Their consultation and active role in the management and implementation of the EIF would allow mainstreaming their experiences on the best ways to implement the two-way process principle, and thereby guarantee the impact and added value intended by the EU Framework on integration. **Few EU Member States have interpreted the partnership principle envisaged by the EIF as an open, multi-stakeholder process of consultation and collaboration for implementing and evaluating the EIF.**
4. Several EU Member States have largely allocated EIF funding to implementing CBP4, which considers basic knowledge of the host society's language, history and institutions as indispensable for integration. This has had negative implications on the materialization of the two-way process. **This has taken place through the development with the support of the EIF of obligatory language and civic courses and programs on knowledge of national culture and 'society' as a condition for having access to rights.**

The pitfalls highlighted in the report should not detract from the positive impulse provided by a fund. Yet it should be emphasised that some of these shortcomings are directly linked to the general and specific objectives of the Fund, which refer to existing national migration legislation, which in some cases considers integration not as a socio-economic process but rather as integration programmes, tests and courses functioning as conditions in immigration law.



Policy Recommendations

The policy recommendations put forward in the report aim to provide concrete steps for enhancing the added value of EU spending on integration. This largely relies on the supranational nature of Europeanization in the field of integration which allows:

- Exchanging, discussing and disseminating throughout Europe experiences, ideas and practices developed in projects that put into practice an understanding of integration as a two-way process;
- Encouraging a longer-term sustainable perspective on integration and rejecting short-term, opportunistic politics carried out by some Member State governments; and
- Challenging populist and nationalist anti-immigration rhetoric (policies and practices) by certain European leaders.

The policy recommendations listed below aim at informing ongoing discussions on the next phase of the EIF and the EU Framework on Integration. They also constitute elements to take into consideration for integration funding beyond 2013. Some of the elements highlighted in this section echo the recommendations formulated in the independent report prepared by Fabrizio Barca, at the request of Danuta Hübner, former Commissioner for Regional Policy, and entitled “An Agenda for a reformed cohesion policy – a place-based approach to meeting European Union challenges and expectations”, April 2009.

They are intended to inform the work carried out by policy-makers both at EU as well as Member State level. At EU level, these recommendations are primarily targeted at the European Commission (in particular DG Home Affairs), the Member States' representatives in the Council and respective Responsible Authorities and the European Parliament as a co-legislator in integration matters since the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty. The findings and recommendations should also be taken into account by EU and national budgetary control authorities such as the Court of Auditors. They are also relevant for the Committee of the Regions, the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Integration Forum. This report is also intended to support advocacy strategies and activities of ‘integration actors’ including civil society, LRAs, foundations and social partners.



The following nine recommendations are put forward on the basis of the findings of the report:

1. Prioritizing the implementation of the two-way approach to integration with the support of the EIF

The implementation of the CBPs, and in particular the first principle on the two-way process of mutual accommodation, should provide the frame for European funding on integration policies. The current general and specific objectives of the EIF should be revised and amended to ensure that only those national projects and programmes with a truly European added value through CBP 1 are supported. The next financial perspectives should not continue to support national actions and integration policies that run against CBP1 or are in direct tension with the principles of diversity, non-discrimination and fundamental rights, such as certain readings of CBP 4 (mandatory civic integration programmes). Ensuring that the actual nature and content of the projects selected at national level sustain this approach should be part of the oversight carried out in particular by the European Commission.

2. Consulting and engaging 'the integration actors'

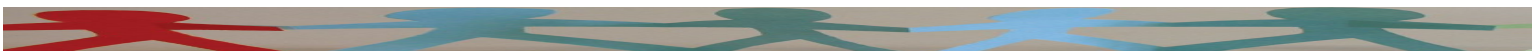
EIF multi-actor review committees should be established by all EU Member States on the basis of the partnership principle. They should be composed of the 'integration actors' considered as the key stakeholders including social partners, migrant organizations, foundations, NGOs and LRAs. Their involvement should take place, at least, in the following phases:

- Consultation (*ex ante*) in the selection of priorities, actions and projects;
- Implementation of the EIF at national level; and
- Evaluation (*ex post*) of the overall impact and added value of national integration policies against the two-way process (CBP1).

3. Widening the EIF personal scope

The beneficiaries of activities supported by the EIF should be interpreted in a less restrictive fashion. Migration status should not be the defining factor for identifying those entitled to take part in EIF-supported activities where all, including undocumented and asylum-seekers, should be able to participate. No sanction for lack of compliance with a strict reading of the EIF's personal scope should be waived.

The EIF should not be used to fund integration policies targeting certain citizens or specific target groups arbitrarily considered not to be integrated on the basis of nationality, religion or ethnic origin. The necessary wider interpretation of the personal scope of the EIF shall comply with the prohibition against discrimination.



4. Preventing double funding and promoting the principle of additionality

Participants in the activities supported by the EIF should not be required to make a financial contribution. A strict reading of the no-profit rule according to which EU contributions may not have the purpose or effect of producing a profit should be guaranteed. Ensuring that double funding does not take place requires evaluating the actual nature and substance of the projects sustained along with their financial soundness. More cooperation among the different services and directorates of the European Commission should take place.

The principle of 'additionality' should be applied according to which EU funds should support additional and innovative spending. This should ensure that Member States do not substitute national with EU expenditure. It should promote and encourage experimentation through a solid strategy focused on mobilising and engaging the 'integration actors'. This is essential to ensure that EU spending on integration truly adds value.

5. Simplifying administrative and financial rules

The application and implementation procedures of EIF projects should be simplified. Greater efficiency in the administration of the Fund should be ensured by simplifying the process and considering, together with the beneficiaries, ways to reduce the administrative burden. A simplification of the rules, however, should not lead to a decrease in accountability (see recommendation 7 below).

6. Adapting the co-financing requirement

The availability of match funding should be taken into account at times of imposing an external co-financing requirement. Co-funding requirements should be reduced for certain organisations, in particular small entities such as NGOs and migrant organisations. This would be the best way to ensure compliance between the EIF and the principles of proportionality and non-discrimination. EU Member States should take responsibility to provide matching funds for EIF-supported activities and systematic pre-financing to successful applicants.

7. Ensuring transparency, accountability and equal opportunities

The effectiveness and impact of the actions supported by the EIF largely depend on their dissemination and evaluation. Access to information and publicity around the EIF is crucial from the perspective of the principles of transparency, accountability and legal certainty.

The responsible authorities should ensure more transparency and equal opportunities throughout the application process. The call for proposals should be widely disseminated and easily accessible. Implementation modalities should be regularly reviewed and strict timeframes imposed for releasing calls for proposals as well as for receiving and reviewing proposals. Calls for proposals should also take into account the constraints of all types of organisations (including small ones).

Each year, the following information should be publicized as regards the selected projects and programmes: name and nature of all projects supported (including those implemented by national authorities), the year of funding, the length/duration of the project, the amount of EU contribution, the priority and CBP to which the project corresponds, the overall number of applicants to the call, the evaluation criteria and the remaining amount of the EU contribution that has not been allocated.



8. Promoting the role of EU institutions as control, information and dissemination platforms

The role of the EU institutions, in particular of the European Commission and the European Parliament, in the management and oversight of the EIF should be further strengthened. The European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions must play a bigger involvement in the implementation and evaluation of the EIF. They should oversee the strict respect by Member States of the provisions set out in the EIF Decision and their compatibility with the CBP1. In particular, the European Commission's powers and procedures for checking the substantive compatibility of national actions and programmes (especially those conducted by national authorities) with the CBPs should be expanded, clarified and consolidated.

9. Enhancing connections and synergies between EU policy tools/actors and the EIF

Links between the EIF and the EU actors and tools on integration such as the European Integration Forum and European Website on Integration, should be better articulated and developed.

The European Integration Forum should be given a decisive role in selecting priorities and actions to be supported via the EIF. Along with the European Commission, it could also scrutinize the compatibility of EIF funded actions with CBP1 and its actual impact on the ground and added value.

The European Website on Integration could be used to systematically provide consistent, relevant information as regards the calls and projects funded at national and EU levels. It could also serve as a database of EIF-funded projects to promote the sharing of experiences, providing detailed information as regards the scope, implementation and results of activities.





INTEGRATION AS A TWO-WAY PROCESS IN THE EU?

Assessing the European Integration Fund and the Common Basic Principles on Integration

This research project examines the nature, the limits and potential of the concept of integration as a two-way process of mutual accommodation between migrants and their host societies. It assesses the extent to which this key principle is implemented in practice by investigating how it informs national integration programmes developed so far with the support of the European Integration Fund (EIF).

It also explores the obstacles encountered by civil society organisations in accessing and implementing EIF projects.

Research project carried out by the **Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS)** and commissioned by the **European Programme for Integration and Migration (EPIM)** of the **Network of European Foundations (NEF)**.

