

Role of Regional Authorities in the Integration and Inclusion of Migrants

Response of the CPMR Migration Task Force to the Public Consultation on the integration and inclusion of migrants and people with a migrant background

Claire Street, Project and Policy Officer, claire.street@crpm.org

Background

The European Commission is due to publish by end of 2020 the **new Action Plan on integration and inclusion for 2021-2024** based on the lessons learned and evaluation of the [2016 Action Plan on the integration of third-country nationals](#).

On 21 July, it launched a [public consultation](#) open until 21 October on the integration and inclusion of migrants and people with a migrant background - as well as a call for applications for members of an expert group on the views on migrants to participate in the development and implementation of migration, asylum and integration policies.

As part of the European Commission's reflection on future initiatives, the CPMR Secretariat was invited with several other European regional and local networks to take part in an informal discussion with DG HOME on 15 September 2020 focusing on the role of local and regional authorities in integration and cooperation with the European Commission in this field.

As a follow-up to this dialogue with the European Commission, this paper set out the messages put forward by the [CPMR Task Force on Migration Management](#) in response to the consultation.



1. Understanding the regional role

There has been much focus recently on local authorities and municipalities in integration and inclusion. There are many examples at EU level promoting the role of cities and municipalities, notably through the [Partnership of the Urban Agenda for the EU on the inclusion of migrants and refugees](#).

However there seems to be **less visibility and understanding of the regional role**.

The CPMR has undertaken work through [two issue papers](#)¹, a [mapping exercise](#) based on a members' survey, and since February 2020 through the AMIF funded [REGIN project](#), to highlight the impact of policies and practices at regional level to better understand the role and needs of regional authorities.

Regions like local authorities of course have **formal and soft competences** to deliver a range of public services linked to migrant integration and inclusion. They should therefore be considered as fully-fledged stakeholders in the design and implementation on policies and measures taken at EU and national level.

In addition, one other clear finding is that regions have a **key pivotal role in vertical coordination** between EU and state level and local level, and **horizontal coordination** as catalyst of a wide range of territorial stakeholders building real interactive ecosystems with common challenges and goals.

- **They implement EU and national policies at territorial level**
- **They develop territorial strategies and policy guidelines.** Most regions see the social and economic inclusion of migrants as an integral part of their regional development strategy and have integration plans, programmes and instruments either specifically targeted at migrants or where migrants are included in wider inclusion policies, to address the multi-dimensional aspects of integration.
- **They have an overall vision of the specificities and needs of their territory.** Migrant populations are generally concentrated in bigger towns and cities which have more experience and resources for dealing with integration issues, but smaller towns and rural areas often need extra support. Regional authorities can adapt their policy actions accordingly.
- **They federate, coordinate and support relevant stakeholders** within their territory to provide effective action (local authorities, NGOs, CSOs, faith-based organisations, diaspora associations, private sector) to pool resources, avoid duplicating efforts and ensure a coherent cross-cutting and whole-of-community approach..

¹ Cf. CPMR Issue Papers: [Migration and Asylum in EU Regions: Towards a multilevel governance approach](#) (February 2018) and [The external dimension of EU migration policy. Working together: the regional strategy](#) (March 2019)



Current challenges and needs highlighted by the CPMR Migration Task Force

- Regions need better funding. Many cities and regions can access EU-funding through the national authorities or calls on different topics. Nonetheless, the inclusion of migrants needs a **long-term strategy** that cannot depend mainly on the funding received through various calls. **More structural funds** are needed to tackle the many challenges that come with the inclusion of migrants.
- There is **lacking an effective governance instrument** to put EU measures into practice at different levels
- There is a **lack of monitoring and evaluation procedures and standards** / benchmark of integration at local level.
- The general situation regarding asylum management in the EU, the **lack of solidarity to ease the burden on frontline states and regions and protracted asylum procedures** are not conducive to the integration and social inclusion process of migrants and refugees. The services of **regions at the EU's external borders are under particular strain** and lack necessary resources.
- The **excessive focus on border control, fighting irregular migration and actions in countries of origin is damaging to perceptions.**
- The **COVID situation** is having an adverse effect on already vulnerable people whom regional authorities often have a duty to support. It is increasing isolation and hampering inclusion processes (work, education, social life).
- Regions are providing support and protection to **migrants in an irregular situation** residing in their territory. In particular it is important to **combat the exploitation on the black market** faced by many irregular migrants into the EU. Measures such as Employers Sanctions Directive² are necessary but need to be combined with legal pathways, which would be beneficial to some regions' economies in which certain sectors depend heavily on migrant labour (e.g. agricultural sector) while ensuring adequate protection and rights for migrant workers
- Many Regions have the obligation to provide legal guardianship of **unaccompanied minors** and face the issue of how to deal with the **transition period for those reaching majority** under their formal guardianship.
- One of the biggest challenges remains **tackling persisting inequalities**. Figures show that migrants or persons with a migrant background are more subject to unemployment, low educational attainment, poverty. Active equality policies need to be undertaken.
- The provision of **adequate housing** is still a big issue

² Directive 2009/52/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009



2. Proposed Objectives and Priorities for the 2021-2027 period

All policy areas addressed in the 2016 Plan remain relevant to regional authorities.

Although the current Action Plan has been useful in identifying and targeting areas of action, there have been some shortcomings in practice.

The regions of the CPMR Migration Task Force give their views on what should be objectives of the new Action Plan, highlight those policy areas that should be the focus of special attention and also point to challenges and needs that should be considered in the overall approach to migration management at EU level.

Priority Policy Objectives

- 1) **Promote wellbeing and a sense of belonging among migrants**
- 2) **Foster positive interaction among people of diverse background that are part of our society to enhance social cohesion**
- 3) **Increase education and labour opportunities for migrants and their families**
- 4) **Fight racism and all forms of discrimination based on the origin or cultural aspects**
- 5) **Extend scope not only to third-country nationals but also to target all foreign-born nationals including EU citizens who face similar challenges and those in an irregular administrative situation requiring access to basic public services**

When developing initiatives to work towards these aims, the Commission should consider the ultimate goal of achieving equality in rights, duties, and opportunities that are linked to full citizenship of everyone, regardless of their origin.

The guiding principles should be the construction of a more solidarity-based, fair and cohesive society.



Key areas of action

More and better funding

- Ensure more and better funding for regional authorities. They are tackling many issues with their own resources, often without support from the State Government or the EU.

Improving multi-level governance and communication

- Facilitate **policy dialogue** between Member States and regional and local authorities in programming and targeting resources on the ground
- Build on regions' existing practice and experience to develop **institutionalised multi-stakeholder platforms** bringing together local authorities, NGOs, migrants' organisations, among others, to guarantee accessible, inclusive and relevant services to migrants, regardless of their status
- Consider how better to **communicate** down to the regional and local level and territorial stakeholders. The [European Website on Integration - EWSI](#) is excellent resource. More should be done to promote and develop it and encourage regions to contribute to improve the EU knowledge base

Early integration measures

- Develop the important role of regional authorities in **pre-departure/pre-arrival**, by organising territorial capacity in structured reception plans
- Keep promoting and developing the **“one-stop-shop”** concept to improve access and delivery of services to migrants
- Actions to develop **individual tailored pathways**
- Specific actions and targeted funds focusing on **vulnerable groups**: refugees, women, unaccompanied minors, victims of trafficking and violence.
- Regarding **unaccompanied minors** in particular: boosting of the [European guardianship network](#), proposal for a clear binding framework at EU level and funding for regions dealing with high numbers
- Stressing the **link between physical/mental health and wellbeing and successful inclusion**.
- Improve and speed up **procedures for recognising qualifications**
- **Language training** as a first step to inclusion in host societies and the transition from language training to other training and studies, working life and entrepreneurship
- Providing adequate **housing**

Medium and long-term integration

- Actions to tackle **inequalities in education (school dropout), employment, poverty**
- Keep emphasising the **two-way process** between migrants and host societies with focus on the notion of “inclusion” to promote sense of belonging.
- Facilitate **accession to the labour market**. Regions can help identify skills gaps and develop matchmaking schemes with their businesses at regional/local level and encourage companies to work with corporate social responsibility



Diversity Management and Antidiscrimination

- Programmes to **assist regional staff** dealing with social inclusion to **build capacity in diversity management** linked to the delivery of services
- Continue efforts to **foster positive facts-based language** and narrative around migration to counter disinformation, discrimination, xenophobia and promote interculturality
- Create bridges between migrant and host communities by developing **spaces of interaction** to foster a feeling of belonging of migrant persons and cohesion in host communities.

All actions should be in line with the newly launched [EU anti-racism action plan 2020-2025](#) of 18 September 2020, advocating for national action plans involving regional and local authorities in the design, implementation and evaluation.

Flexibility and preparedness

- Support regions in developing strategies, capacities and facilities in place to **cope with a surge in arrivals of new migrants/refugees** to effectively ensure first reception and early integration actions.
- Learn lessons from the **COVID-19 health crisis on adapting regional and local outreach activities** and implications for the longer term, e.g. mainstreaming innovative digital solutions

3. Strengthening dialogue with the European Commission

The CPMR welcomed the opportunity to engage in dialogue with the services of DG HOME and applauds the European Commission's clearly stated will to take on board the views of all relevant stakeholders, not least representatives of the migrant communities themselves.

Proposals for future collaboration

As a regional network, the CPMR and its Migration Task Force can:

- **Help the EC to better understand and take into account the specific role of regions in migrant and refugee inclusion policies:**
 - [CPMR mapping](#) to better understand regions' competences, actions, needs
 - [REGIN project](#) developing comparative regional data (MIPEX-R index) as a tool for evidence-based policy-making and setting a common framework and standards for effective monitoring and evaluation of regional actions on integration and inclusion.
- **Contribute to boosting cooperation, dialogue and mutual learning** on integration and social inclusion of migrants and refugees among its member regions
- **Communicate to its network on EU action and initiatives**, e.g. encouraging member regions to use and contribute to the resources on the [European Website on Integration - EWSI](#), CoR initiative, etc.



The CPMR calls for support from the European Commission to:

- Promote **multi-level governance** in the implementation of migrant integration and inclusion policies
- **Facilitate policy dialogue** between Member States and regional and local authorities in programming and targeting resources on the ground according to territorial needs.
- Plan programmes and support for initiatives to **boost cooperation, knowledge sharing and transfer and develop the EU evidence base at regional level**
- **Strengthen in-service capacities** for regional authorities (e.g. cultural and linguistic mediation, cross-services training for all staff dealing with integration and inclusion issues not only those dealing directly with migration management)
- Ensure **more sustainable funding** for regional authorities in the framework of the full range of new and complementary financial instruments dedicated to migrant integration and inclusion, including resources to develop and enhance coordination mechanisms



The Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) represents more than 150 regional authorities from 24 countries across Europe and beyond. Organised in geographical commissions, the CPMR works to ensure that a balanced territorial development is at the heart of the European Union and its policies.



Rond-Point Schuman | 1040 Brussels, BELGIUM
info@crpm.org | +32 (0)2 612 17 00

6, Rue Saint-Martin | 35700 Rennes, FRANCE (siège)
info@crpm.org | +33 (0)2 99 35 40 50