

Challenges of policy coordination for third-country nationals

Executive summary

Introduction

Migration is a major policy concern for EU Member States and the issue is generally dealt with at both national and European level. While Member States have put in place specific regulations such as entry conditions or programmes for categories of workers, the overall architecture of migration-related policies presents a huge challenge for policymakers. In recent months, the significant inflow of refugees from third countries has profoundly changed the situation in Europe. Most EU countries are facing the arrival of an unprecedented number of refugees and have been grappling with how to respond in a comprehensive and coordinated way to the immediate needs of asylum seekers and the longer-term issues of integration. Furthermore, the challenges of labour shortages and demographic change in Europe call for comprehensive policies that will take into account the effects of immigration on host countries and on the refugees and migrants themselves.

This report examines how policies in the areas of migration, the labour market and integration are coordinated within Member States, with a specific focus on the role of the social partners and local-level initiatives.

Policy context

Immigration by non-EU (third-country) nationals represented two-thirds of the EU population growth in the past decade, and half of the employment growth in the past five years. These numbers are very likely to increase when the recent inflow of refugees is taken into account. Third-country nationals are shown to be at a disadvantage in the labour market: unemployment among this group, for instance, tends to be much higher than for the native populations in most Member States.

Member States are beginning to realise the need for greater coherence between immigrant integration policies and for specific measures to attract migrants, while

endeavouring to address the long-term integration issues in a more coordinated way.

The EU has different instruments to deal with migration and immigration (through legislative measures) and with integration (through non-legislative measures). A number of EU laws are in place to regulate the admission and residency of third-country nationals. The Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy in the EU, published in 2004, created a framework to support Member States in formulating their own integration policies. In May 2015, the European Commission launched the European Agenda on Migration which sets out crucial measures to respond to the refugee crisis as well as longer-term actions to improve the management of migration.

Key findings

Policy coordination

Cooperation between Member States on migration, the labour market and integration policies tends to be uneven. Countries that have the best outcomes are also those which, in terms of policy coordination, focus on integration policy from the outset, taking account of both integration outcomes and economic competitiveness.

It is crucial to aim for policy coherence during the implementation and programme coordination phase – to ensure both internal coherence within policy programmes and among stakeholders and external coherence between the government and municipality. The stability of the institutions involved also plays a role in maintaining good policy coordination. Likewise, strong commitment from the various stakeholders and setting up a coordination centre with sufficient resources are both key. It is also vital to consult migrants themselves and to incorporate their input when drawing up programme goals.

The countries that score well in terms of integration policy have greater transparency between policy discourse and policy outcomes. This is in line with the literature supporting the preservation of values throughout the policy process. Positive policy discourse – or elements of it – seem to be in place in these countries.

Social partner role and involvement

In many countries, there is cooperation between a broad range of stakeholders – including the government, employers and trade unions – to identify and deal with labour shortages and to inform broader migration legislation, especially that relating to the labour market.

The most widespread programmes supporting workplace integration relate to language provision – both general and job-specific. Other measures address general training in labour law and health and safety.

Employer organisations and individual companies are increasingly active in diversity management, particularly in Belgium, Denmark and Germany.

The framework of anti-discrimination has been used, especially by trade unions, to provide migrant-specific programmes. However, the social partners' approach in gathering information about the migrant workforce seems to be sporadic and fragmented (Austria and Croatia), with only a few countries doing this systematically (Malta and Spain).

Few trade unions, with the notable exceptions of Ireland and the UK, have the strategic vision or overall objective of increasing their membership among the migrant workforce. In most countries, activities and initiatives are aimed directly at migrant workers rather than at simplifying the unions' own internal procedures and structures.

Monitoring and evaluation

While individual countries differ in how they collect and use the information about migrant integration, the so-called Zaragoza indicator set, agreed by the Member States in 2010, has slowly become an established instrument, evident from the way statistics are published.

Given the general emphasis on evidence-based policymaking in the EU, the number of countries reportedly using benchmarks is quite low. This may be an indication that their practice of generating evidence, and using it to formulate policies, needs to be reviewed.

While some form of data collection and reporting on policy implementation has taken place in all Member States, the report did not find any systematic linking of policies across the three fields discussed. Instead, a more general challenge was observed – that of capturing the effects of the national integration strategies. Overall, policy evaluations across the EU28 seem to be rather fragmented, lacking any framework or continuity. Nevertheless, studies or evaluation reports that address policy coordination challenges were identified in seven countries.

Policy pointers

For Member States to succeed at coordinating their policies, they need to think beyond the institutional and political status quo and initiate a shift towards understanding the global challenges.

In designing migration-related policies, Member States should think more holistically from the outset about the end outcomes that go beyond the labour market and encompass integration too – this could lead to smoother planning and yield better outcomes.

It is important to maintain policy coherence and stability of the process when implementing policy or programme coordination.

Stakeholders, particularly the social partners, could capitalise on existing, well-defined and tested settings such as tripartite consultations to engage more in the debate on immigration, diversity management and the concepts of equal rights and anti-discrimination.

Trade unions could reflect on strategies for increasing the participation of migrant workers at all levels within their structures, such as reviewing membership costs, the complex language used, intercultural training and the use of multicultural personnel in dealing with a migrant workforce.

The social partners could also reflect on whether their external activities – collective bargaining, consultation and campaigns – could improve the working and living conditions of migrants.

Member States could reassess their practices of generating evidence and using it in policies. There could also be a need to increase understanding of benchmarks and to improve transparency in how available data are used in policy planning and evaluation.

Further information

The report *Challenges of policy coordination for third-country nationals* is available at www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications.

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