

**INTERACT – RESEARCHING THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS’ INTEGRATION AS A THREE-WAY PROCESS - IMMIGRANTS, COUNTRIES OF EMIGRATION AND COUNTRIES OF IMMIGRATION AS ACTORS OF INTEGRATION**

***Expert Survey Report***

**Cameron Thibos**

INTERACT Research Report 2015/13



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Immigrants, Countries of Emigration and Countries of Immigration as Actors of  
Integration**

**Research Report**

**Expert Survey Report**

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## **INTERACT - Researching Third Country Nationals' Integration as a Three-way Process - Immigrants, Countries of Emigration and Countries of Immigration as Actors of Integration**

In 2013 (Jan. 1st), around 34 million persons born in a third country (TCNs) were currently living in the European Union (EU), representing 7% of its total population. Integrating immigrants, i.e. allowing them to participate in the host society at the same level as natives, is an active, not a passive, process that involves two parties, the host society and the immigrants, working together to build a cohesive society.

Policy-making on integration is commonly regarded as primarily a matter of concern for the receiving state, with general disregard for the role of the sending state. However, migrants belong to two places: first, where they come and second, where they now live. While integration takes place in the latter, migrants maintain a variety of links with the former. New means of communication facilitating contact between migrants and their homes, globalisation bringing greater cultural diversity to host countries, and nation-building in source countries seeing expatriate nationals as a strategic resource have all transformed the way migrants interact with their home country.

INTERACT project looks at the ways governments and non-governmental institutions in origin countries, including the media, make transnational bonds a reality, and have developed tools that operate economically (to boost financial transfers and investments); culturally (to maintain or revive cultural heritage); politically (to expand the constituency); legally (to support their rights).

INTERACT project explores several important questions: To what extent do policies pursued by EU member states to integrate immigrants, and policies pursued by governments and non-state actors in origin countries regarding expatriates, complement or contradict each other? What effective contribution do they make to the successful integration of migrants and what obstacles do they put in their way?

A considerable amount of high-quality research on the integration of migrants has been produced in the EU. Building on existing research to investigate the impact of origin countries on the integration of migrants in the host country remains to be done.

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## **Abstract**

The INTERACT project interviewed 24 migration and integration experts across 19 countries in order to better understand the effects of current diaspora and integration policies. It further sought to determine possible pitfalls, ways forward, and areas of cooperation between countries of origin and destination. Synthesising the results of this survey, the paper argues that the task of integration is to encourage: migrant participation in all areas of society; migrant productivity within the economic sphere; and migrant parity with native citizens. To be successful, efforts must take place across many levels of governance and in a variety of sectors, especially education and labour markets. Both diaspora and integration policies must furthermore put migrants first: strategies that prioritise the perceived needs of countries of destination or origin are unlikely to work. Finally, the onus of integration cannot solely rest on the migrants themselves. Countries of origin must do more to meet migrants halfway by combatting discrimination within their societies and policies.

**Key words:** migrants, integration, diaspora, discrimination, labour

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## 1. Introduction

The INTERACT project studies the integration patterns of migrants from 54 countries of origin into all 28 European Union Member States. Within this very broad topic, INTERACT primarily focuses on three dimensions of integration – citizenship, education, and labour markets – where the available and collected data are of the highest quality.

INTERACT’s core research questions revolve around the countries of origin and not the countries of destination. It seeks to understand the ways in which countries of origin may facilitate the integration of migrants into their new homes for however long they choose to remain there. However, the potential for this to happen is bound and shaped by the particular contexts of the individual destination countries. Integration is thus a three-way conversation between migrants, their countries of origin, and their countries of destination. None of these nodes can be adequately engaged in isolation of the others.

We interviewed 24 academics, policy makers, and advocates based in 19 different countries – all experts in integration, migration or migrant affairs – to better understand the complex dynamics of this triadic relationship. We probed their thoughts on the sources, motivations, and outcomes of current integration and diaspora policies. We asked for areas of mutual interest that would benefit from increased cooperation, as well as for potential points of friction between the different stakeholders. Furthermore we asked them to take us from the conceptual to the concrete, giving us real-world examples of what has and has not worked in the past. Steeped in the subject as they are, our interlocutors not only answered our questions, but problematised their formulations and questioned their underlying premises. This vigorous engagement resulted in strong, nuanced discussions that reached deep into the issues facing everybody involved in migrant integration today. They also did not agree amongst themselves, and thus presented us with a wide range of perspectives on each of the questions we asked. We present the combined findings of this expert survey below.

## 2. The task of integration

While our interlocutors emphasised different aspects of the project of integration, the core themes were the same: participation, productivity, and parity. Without all three of these, the integration of migrants into society is incomplete. It is vital that migrants **participate** in the political, economic, cultural, and social milieus of their countries of residence, not only taking part in processes and events but actively shaping them. They must also **productively** contribute to the development and progress of their countries of destination, which requires full access to meaningful employment opportunities.

Migrants must furthermore be afforded **parity** with ‘native’ citizens. When migrants are treated as an underclass, their presence tolerated *precisely because* their wages, rights, and means of redress are fewer than those of native citizens, then their integration remains not only incomplete but actively hindered. Some interlocutors stressed the contradiction of having policies that tacitly or directly allow for various forms of exploitation and social dumping – the practice of paying migrant workers below local market rates in order to reduce costs and increase profit margins – while at the same time arguing that migrants steal jobs, lower wages, and remain unintegrated. “[The EU] needs to have a policy that prevents social dumping,” said Jin Sook Lee of Building and Wood Worker’s International, a global union federation in the construction sector. “There has to be a policy of recognition for equal pay for equal work.” Lee used the so-called ‘Laval’ case in 2007 as a touchstone of her discussion, in which a Latvian company contracted for work in Sweden refused to sign a collective bargaining agreement

with the Swedish building and public works trade union. It then employed Latvian workers for its projects at lower wages than those demanded by the Swedish union.<sup>1</sup>

The need for parity is not limited to wages and labour protections, or even to those areas covered by formal rights. If the point of integration policy is to “create a functional, diverse society that acknowledges the benefits of migration for cultural, economic and social progress ... [and] provide a path to equality under the law”, as Lana Velimirović Vukalović from the Croatian Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities put it, then it “should also raise awareness of the need for anti-discrimination.”

Many of the experts interviewed stressed the imperative of addressing the racism and xenophobia present in countries of destination as part of any initiative to improve the integration levels of migrants. “You cannot separate the issue of labour migration from the rise of xenophobia, [from] the issues around racism and discrimination,” Lee said. “In terms of integration, in terms of inclusion, in terms of social acceptance, in terms of recognising that migrant workers are an integral part of their economic development: that is the responsibility of the governments of the countries of destination.”

Continued tolerance of discrimination – in all spheres, including the social, economic, cultural and political – against migrants directly obstructs integration efforts and contradicts claims or demands that migrants *should* integrate. In other words, migrants can only ever integrate into countries to the extent that the majority societies are willing to accept them. “There has to be a culture of welcome, and not mutual suspicion. Most of the policies, at the government level, are geared toward creating suspicion of each other, rather than a sense of welcome and comfort,” said Binod Khadira of Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi. “That I think is the major challenge for European countries if they want to have overseas skilled people or unskilled people to come over. ... Mutual trust building is at the core of [integration], whether it is linguistic facilitation, or political participation, or social integration.”

For this reason some experts took issue with our focus on ‘integration’ as a concept. The term does not suggest neutral, mutual accommodation. On the contrary, the idea of integration is heavily loaded with asymmetries of power. It asks *who* is integrating into *what*. The overwhelming perception in popular and political discourse is that, as migrants are the individuals making the journey to a different society, it is primarily *their* job to adjust their behaviour to meet the expectations and norms of their new homes. The receiving society, on the other hand, is being sufficiently accommodating – almost benevolently so – by ‘making room’ for the newcomers. As intuitive as this understanding is to many people, it disregards the real benefits receiving societies reap from the migrants in their midst.

More must be done to meet migrants halfway – the onus and direction of integration cannot be left to migrants alone. Both migrants and receiving societies must change as they adapt to each other, and policymakers must prepare citizens to better deal with the effects of migration. Multi-fold policy responses targeting both migrants and existing citizens are thus needed to: a) adapt the majority society to the needs of migrants; b) protect migrants’ rights and interests; and c) prepare and open up the majority society to greater diversity. Indeed, the University of Sydney’s Stephen Castles suggested that, as the baggage attached to the idea of integration can never be fully removed, use the term itself should be reconsidered.

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<sup>1</sup> See Presse Release no. 98/07 – Judgment of the Court of Justice in Case C-341/05 – Laval un Partneri Ltd v Svenska Byggnadsarbetareförbundet and Others, 18 December 2007, available on: <http://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs/application/pdf/2009-02/cp070098en.pdf> [Accessed 15 May 2015].

### 3. Diaspora engagement

Diaspora engagement has become increasingly fashionable in recent years. Spurred on by skyrocketing levels of global remittances, the appeal of technological and skills transfer, and the allure of migrant political lobbies, more and more countries are taking an interest in the affairs of their citizens or heritage members abroad. Many countries now boast ministries or departments of diaspora affairs that seek to more strongly engage with ‘their diasporas’.

The main objectives of diaspora policy, according to the experts interviewed, are to **strengthen ties, promote origin country culture, and extract resources**. The first two of these three items are pursued in order to ensure that migrants’ relationships with their ‘homelands’ continue. Governments fear that as these ties – sentiments of loyalty and belonging, as well as familial bonds – degrade or become more distant, migrants will have progressively less incentive to actively contribute to the development of their countries of origin. The maintenance of these ties is thus a pre-condition to the pursuit of the third, and primary, objective of most current diaspora engagement policies: ‘tapping’ migrants for their financial and human capital.

Governments try to extract and channel migrant wealth by encouraging remittances and direct investment. They also try to induce intellectual and technical transfer, either through return migration or various types of exchange schemes. Furthermore, they attempt to use migrants’ presence abroad to generate business links or improve political ties between the countries of origin and destination, as well as to lobby for policies favourable to the countries of origin.

Several interlocutors, however, noted that such types of diaspora engagement policies are problematic because they are overly concerned with what can be gained from migrants and not sufficiently sensitive to the well-being and rights of migrants in their new homes. As Lee explains:

The ‘diaspora’ is, in many ways, so much linked to this connotation of development. That also links to looking at labour migration as one of the solutions to forward development. ... If you’re looking at a development frame, then you’re putting a higher value to the issue around remittances, a higher value on saying that it is this supposedly ‘diaspora’ community in the countries of destination that is responsible for helping the development of their home country. It is the responsibility of governments to ensure the development of their countries.

Lee emphasised that migrants are private citizens rather than tools of development, and that ‘success’ in diaspora engagement – and integration for that matter – should not be measured in terms of benefits accrued to states. Instead, policies should forefront the needs and rights of migrants, *as understood by equal and direct engagement with migrants themselves*. Khadira echoed this, strongly criticising the current prioritisation of states over migrants in both attitudes and policies.

One has to ... make immigration policy migrant-friendly, or migrant-centric, and that has not been there. It’s the countries of destination, or countries of origin, that are always the talking points for us. But nobody talks about the migrants: what is the impact of the migration policy on the migrants and the families of the migrants, in the short-run, in the medium-run, and in the long-run. That is not the discourse. The discourse is, what is good for the country of origin, and what is good for the country of destination, without being able to define what these countries need.

Maintaining ties with nationals abroad *by remaining useful and relevant to them* is the path Mexican authorities have successfully pursued in the United States since the mid-1990s, according to Demetrios Papademetriou, the founder and President emeritus of the Migration Policy Institute in Washington, and President of Migration Policy Institute Europe. Through a network of 51 consulates in the United States, he explained, Mexican nationals can receive consular identification documents (useful for opening bank accounts in the absence of legal status and similar documentation activities), accurate and efficiently delivered information on a variety of issues critical to their nationals’ status in the US, certain types of pro-bono legal assistance, health screenings, and modest language assistance – along with a raft of other types of assistance.

It's a mature relationship. None existed until the mid-1990s, because Mexico didn't want much to do with those who had left. And those who had left, had done so partly because they couldn't survive economically there, mostly, but they were also extremely unhappy with Mexican politicians and politics. ... [Starting in the late 1990s, the Mexican government] warmed up to their diaspora in the United States, and the Mexican diaspora in the United States warmed up to them. In the early 2000s, they also got the right to vote in Mexican elections. This has been a gradual, deepening engagement that has translated into day-to-day contacts and collaboration, and into a habit of working *with* your nationals and, more generally, people of Mexican origin rather than either ignoring or working *against* them.

#### 4. The role of the country of origin

Most of the experts interviewed agreed that while there are many areas in which countries of origin could have positive, productive effects on integration, so far their impact has been relatively limited. These can be broken down into three general categories: institutional, pre-departure, and post-departure.

##### 4.1 Institutional role

Institutionally, countries of origin must create and support the foundations necessary for integration to take place. One way to do this is through bilateral agreements that formalise and regularise the treatment of migrants in a wide variety of areas, including: the development of legal migration channels; taxation; labour; access to social welfare and insurance systems; dual citizenship; as well as provision for cultural and educational support. Khadira stressed the importance of such institutionalisation and regularisation, as it allows for predictability.

The stability of immigration policy is very very important. Whether you make it a strict immigration policy or a relaxed immigration policy, if it is consistent over time and its changes are gradual rather than sudden, then that helps in building trust, in long-term planning in skill-formation, in long-term planning in education, and so on. ... I think that is crucial. If there are sudden changes in immigration policy, then that puts the family-level or individual-level planning out of gear, and that does more damage.

The institutional role of countries of origin could also involve bilateral information sharing regarding migration flows, labour market opportunities, job-seeker characteristics, as well as current or potential obstacles in each country. Such information could be used to not only better manage migration, but also to improve integration prospects *if* it were put to that purpose (e.g. by pre-emptively creating orientation and practical resources materials for migrants in their preferred language).

This institutional role also means promoting positive relations between states at both the governmental and 'popular' levels. At a time of economic crisis, war, and virulent extremism, Europe has witnessed increasing xenophobia and suspicion of other cultures in recent years. Politicians of many different stripes have cashed in on this discontent, using their amplified voices to scapegoat or vilify the very countries of origin from which many migrants hail. The politicians of countries of origin tap into similar currents on their own streets, creating two-way streams of animosity that are exponentially magnified by the internet and national medias. As Kemal Kirişçi of the Brookings Institute in Washington DC said, when speaking specifically of the Turkey-European dynamic:

On both sides, there are more and more wise people discussing [cooperation], and may want to be part of larger exercises – in civil society, in governments, in bureaucracies, certainly in academia. But politics, domestic politics, in Europe and in Turkey – I'm afraid is not providing a conducive environment for this. ... Right now ... beating [up] the West and Europe is convenient. And in Europe, beating [up] the Muslims and the Turks is convenient. This is what brings you political brownie points. It looks like this will go on for a while.

This is not helpful with regard to migrant integration. It is not enough for states to dispel the xenophobia apparent on their streets today, a hard enough task as that is. They must actively work create and maintain macro-climates of civility – if not harmony – between countries of origin and countries of destination if they wish to facilitate integration and foster more diverse societies.

#### 4.2 Pre-departure role

Countries of origin could better prepare potential migrants for integration into their countries of destination by offering several important services, including: language training; skills training; legal training on migrants' rights and obligations abroad; and current information regarding labour and housing markets, as well as available support systems, in the countries of destination. Authors elsewhere have also highlighted the need for sending countries to protect potential migrants from the predatory practices of labour recruiters, who often use debt to trap migrants into exploitative labour conditions.<sup>2</sup> Cooperation with countries of destination to end exploitative recruitment and employment practices at both ends of the labour supply chain would immeasurably improve the prospects for migrant integration and, more generally, migrant well-being in the countries of destination.

#### 4.3 Post-departure role

There are furthermore several ways in which countries of origin can contribute to the integration of its nationals abroad, although the extent to which this is possible is less than during the pre-departure stage. Indeed, several experts warned that countries of origin must tread lightly when dealing with migrants abroad, lest they leave themselves open to the charge of meddling in the affairs of countries of destination and migrants alike.

Premising all actions on prior consultation with migrants themselves, however, countries of origin can work to solve problems encountered by their nationals abroad. Many examples of creative problem solving – some of which have drawn the ire of the countries of destination – relate to rights and protection. The Mexican government, for example, issues the *matrícula*, a consular identification card, to nationals abroad regardless of their immigration status. In the years following 2001, the Mexican authorities successfully campaigned for this card to be accepted by many banks, police forces, and other institutions in the United States. By giving nationals – even those with an irregular migration status – a way to identify themselves without revealing their status, the *matrícula* reduces many problems of access and security experienced by Mexicans residing in the United States today.<sup>3</sup>

Other states have created categories of quasi-citizenship or 'origin status', making it easier for migrants to adopt the nationality of their countries of residence while still retaining some rights in their countries of origin. Ethiopia, for example, does not allow for dual citizenship. Instead, it issues the Ethiopian Origin ID (yellow card), which allows bearers to visit, live, and work in Ethiopia without a visa, as well as to retain some rights such as access to pensions. Similarly, the Turkish 'blue card' was created to allow Turks residing in countries that do not allow dual citizenship (primarily Germany) to pursue exclusive citizenship there while retaining some rights back in Turkey.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> K. Strauss The role of labour market intermediaries in driving forced and unfree labour [online], *openDemocracy.net – Beyond Trafficking and Slavery*, 18 February 2015, available on: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/beyondslavery/kendra-strauss/role-of-labour-market-intermediaries-in-driving-forced-and-unfree-labou> [Accessed 15 May 2015].

<sup>3</sup> K. O'Neil, Consular ID Cards: Mexico and Beyond, *Migration Information Source. The online journal of Migration Policy Institute*, 1 April 2015, available on: <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/consular-id-cards-mexico-and-beyond> [Accessed 15 May 2015].

<sup>4</sup> See Republic of Turkey Foreign Ministry, *Mavi kart (eski pembe kart) uygulaması [Blue card (old pink card) application]*, available on: [http://www.mfa.gov.tr/mavi-kart-\\_eski-pembe-kart-\\_uygulamasi-.tr.mfa](http://www.mfa.gov.tr/mavi-kart-_eski-pembe-kart-_uygulamasi-.tr.mfa) [Accessed 28 February 2015].

Countries of origin, through their embassies and online materials, may also facilitate the growth of information and social networks useful to migrants. Finally, several experts did praise origin country efforts to promote their culture and language in countries of destination. This not only helps to the majority society acclimatise to minority cultures and languages, but also provides additional avenues for migrants to express their origin culture while residing abroad. This is an important aspect of normalising the majority to the diversity that surrounds them.

## **5. Dimensions of integration, areas of cooperation**

We gave our interlocutors a list of possible areas in which countries of origin and countries of destination could cooperate regarding integration, asking them to identify the most fruitful avenues to pursue. We furthermore asked them to support their choices with examples of good or bad integration initiatives if possible.

### **5.1 Labour market and education**

Given that the economic value of migrant labour is one of the primary areas of interest for both countries of origin and countries of destination, it is unsurprising that the labour market is one of the most commonly cited areas of possible cooperation. It was, however, flagged as a sensitive site because interests in the area of employment can easily conflict. As both the position of migrants in the labour force and their integration prospects are strongly related to education, we treat these two dimensions together.

As mentioned elsewhere in this report, states can institutionalise migration channels, treatment, safeguards and procedures through bilateral agreements, reducing the uncertainty and risks associated with some types of migration. Experts based in the Democratic Republic of the Congo noted the need for formalising circular and seasonal migration schemes, as well as instituting labour transfer programmes, to decrease the risks and guarantee more protections to labourers. More broadly, our interlocutors repeated the need for more stringent safeguards and regulations regarding ethical recruitment and treatment of migrants, especially those working in vulnerable fields such as domestic and agricultural work.

Migrants should also be better matched to their occupations, and afforded opportunities for vocational training and professional growth. It is common for migrants to be overqualified for the jobs they hold abroad. This problem could be reduced if states found ways to increase the recognition of migrants' educational qualifications, said Iryna Klyuchkovska of the Lviv Polytechnic National University in Ukraine, among many others. Indeed, the need for more widespread recognition of certifications was one of the most cited issues in our survey. Possible avenues for this could include greater harmonisation of curricula across countries, more detailed understanding of origin country curricula, better skills matching programmes and, where appropriate, targeted re-training. Student exchanges should also be facilitated and encouraged, so that migrants have the opportunity to receive an accredited degree in the language of the destination country. All of these measures would help a greater percentage of migrants to work in their chosen fields and at the levels to which they trained, allowing them to improve their skill sets and better contribute to their new places of residence. Indeed, interlocutors stressed that additional training should not be limited to highly-skilled professionals, but that migrants of all vocations should be afforded opportunities to learn new skills. Not just a matter of personal growth, additional training increases the chances that new methods, techniques and ideas will be transferred back to migrants' countries of origin.

Anna Wittenborg of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the German development agency, cited a successful skills matching programme that recruited engineers from Tunisia into a six-month paid internship in Germany. At the end of their internships, 65% signed employment contracts with German firms. This reduction of brain waste is all the more important

since many countries already have difficulty retaining their skilled work force. Aiša Telalović, of the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina, explained:

Bosnia and Herzegovina has a huge brain drain index, particularly in the areas of medicine and technical sciences. We need assistance from developed countries to retain our current cadre and produce more, to the ultimate mutual benefit of both our country and countries of destination.

## 5.2 Language

Language is a crucial aspect of the migration experience, and the facility with which a migrant wields the language of the country of destination is a strong indicator of their integration prospects. Most interlocutors stressed the need for language learning opportunities in both the destination and origin countries, and this should be considered imperative to any integration effort.

At the same time, several experts also stressed the need for the languages of *migrants* to be taught and promoted within the countries of destination. Creating an openness to other languages within the majority society, providing courses for ‘natives’ to learn the languages of their country’s main migrant groups, and facilitating the use of minority languages in public are all important methods of encouraging mutual respect within a diverse society. Fostering not only multilingual societies, but societies that embrace non-European and minor European languages as well as the major *lingua francas*, is an important step to overcoming perceptions that migrants are foreigners, aliens, guests, or ‘others’, which in turn helps counter xenophobia and discrimination.

## 5.3 Nationality

Everybody who flagged this dimension as an important area of cooperation agreed that paths to full citizenship are vital for improving integration levels. The level of openness to naturalisation sends a strong signal to migrants and natives alike regarding a society’s level of acceptance and tolerance. Becoming more open to the full incorporation of migrants into the destination country is thus another way to counter damaging xenophobic and ‘othering’ tendencies. Furthermore, citizenship confers an additional package of political and social rights on the beneficiary. Over time, this will likely result in a step change in migrants’ participation, productivity, and parity – the keys to integration – in all spheres of the receiving country.

Our experts emphasised the sensitivity of cooperation around the issue of nationality, as both countries of origin and destination jealously guard their prerogative to declare who is and who is not a citizen of their country. Nevertheless, they still saw room for cooperation, especially when it comes to the acceptance of **dual nationality**. Many migrants are loth to give up the citizenship of their countries of birth, especially those who face uncertain futures in the countries of destination or are unsure of how long they will remain. This is especially true for forced migrants and refugees, noted Telalović, whose relationship with their countries of origin and reasons for leaving are often extremely complex. “[The] last thing forced migrants wish to do is to denounce their nationality of origin in order to obtain nationality of the country of destination and thus get access to basic rights and freedoms,” she said. Most countries in Europe have accepted the principle of dual nationality, and thus within the context of migration to Europe the onus is primarily on the countries of origin to revise their citizenship laws along these lines. Allowing for dual nationality is not only another step toward fostering an open and diverse society, but it is a way of acknowledging the prerogatives, desires, and lived transnational realities of many migrants today.

## 6. Levels at which cooperation works best

We were not only interested in the most pressing areas of cooperation, but also in the optimal levels at which such cooperation could take place: the intergovernmental, national/bilateral, sub-national, NGO, or informal network levels. The diversity of the answers makes it clear that a multilateral approach is, above all, what is needed when addressing integration.

Intergovernmental and regional organisations are best placed for promoting and instituting common standards and frameworks, as well as for progress monitoring. The European Union, as an intergovernmental and regional organisation that cannot often dictate migration policy to its member states, must predominantly rely on its soft power to achieve better results in integration across the European Union. Experts suggested several initiatives the EU could undertake, including: setting up central information exchanges, conducting comparative studies and monitoring efforts, as well as constructing overall frameworks and best practices to which member states could subscribe. Alja Lulle, of the Latvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, innovatively suggested a programme of centrally funded language centres across the EU that would teach the languages of both countries of destination and countries of origin, in a massive effort to normalise more multi-lingual societies.

Given the non-binding nature of many intergovernmental and regional initiatives, however, experts agreed that the single most powerful level for (formal) progress is the national level. This is where bilateral treaties are forged and real, country-specific concerns over migrant rights and protection can be hammered out. That said, Michele LeVoy, the director of the Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants, warned that many such agreements are pursued with ulterior motives, such as strengthening border controls and keeping potential migrants out. As long as bilateral agreements ostensibly regarding migrants' rights and protection are used, or are perceived to be used, as mere fig leaves for oppressive or exclusionary policies, they reinforce the isolation and non-integration of migrants in society. Instead, "genuine partnerships between countries of origin and countries of destination should be forged, based on mutual respect, interest, benefits and planned strategic (development-related) objectives" Telalović said.

The sub-national/local and NGO levels were both perceived as crucial, as they are at the coalface of integration. This is usually where primary exchanges with natives and migrants take place to improve situations and to overcome the us/them divide, either in concert with national policies or in contradiction to them. Finally, our interview partners stressed the importance of informal networks and migrant organisations. These are crucial for orienting new migrants, providing support and comfort, as well as distributing information on the job opportunities and social services available. While inter-state cooperation at all of these levels is not necessarily possible or even desirable, all must be supported and encouraged if migrant groups and majority societies are to have the best possible chance of integrating into each other.

The INTERACT project would like to thank all the experts who took the time to contribute to this report.

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