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1 Focus of the Monograph and Methodology

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1. Focus of the Monograph and Methodology

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The growing attention paid to the migrant integration in the EU has led to an increased number of studies systematically comparing integration models. Initially, these focused on national models of integration (Brubaker 1992; Castles and Miller 2009). Latterly, interest in the local dimension of migrant integration policies has been growing (Dekker et al. 2015). Many studies have indicated that local governments do not merely implement national policies but that they increasingly formulate their own policies as well (Penninx 2009; Scholten 2013). The extent to which local integration policies diverge or converge with national policies varies widely (Scholten 2013) and often depends on the specifics of the given country and the situation in specific cities and regions. In all cases, however, the national integration policy framework and the availability of resources play an important role. Integration policies and models are also significantly influenced by differences in social and political systems, in the organization of social security and in the host countries' historical and cultural characteristics (Gregurović and Župarić-Iljić 2018), as well as by the extent of migration and the ethnic composition of the migrant population. As a result, in order to compare (a) what works for local integration, (b) how it works and (c) where to turn for inspiration when disseminating good practice to other countries we must first gain a deeper understanding of all these above-mentioned factors. However, this need for a deeper understanding of national and local contexts should not hinder the transferability of specific successful measures and activities in the field of local integration.

As mentioned above, this monograph is part of the SMIR project, which focuses on the difficult situations in which local authorities find themselves in the four participating countries: the Czech Republic, Slo-

vakia, Germany and Belgium. Although national and local integration policies and the composition of the migrant flows in these countries differ, the ways that local institutions approach the migrant integration present major challenges in each of these countries. Even though many local authorities are aware of the importance of migrant inclusion into local communities and the need to establish functional integration measures and mechanisms, they often lack the tools, expertise and resources to work effectively with migrants.

The primary objective of this monograph is to build a better understanding of the potential for transferring integration approaches between the four SMIR partner countries. The need for this monograph is based on the project partners' recognition that best practices from one country cannot be systematically developed or transferred to other environments without a deeper understanding of the local context. It is necessary to understand how integration approaches are anchored within legislation and public policy in the given country, by what mechanisms integration policies are financed, which entities are responsible for this agenda at the national level, how the legislation enshrines the competencies and obligations of local and regional authorities (or federal states) and how migrants are represented at the local level.

The information gathered in this monograph is intended not only to educate the project partners, but also to encourage cooperation with the local authorities within the participating countries. It is designed to provide municipalities with guidance and the opportunity to better envisage what they can expect from national authorities when implementing local integration measures, which topics or sectors they should prioritize in their integration policies, how they might shape policy at local level or how to gain a better overview of possible sources of funding.

The books's focus on the various local integration policies and practices in the four selected countries necessitates a number of simplifications. These stem, for example, from the fact that the monograph works with methodological nationalism and the logic of nation states (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002) and does not sufficiently emphasise the processes of inclusion and exclusion that can affect other key variables, such as transnational ties (see Charmillot and Dahinden 2022). Similarly, the authors are aware of the fact that, to achieve successful coexistence of newly arrived migrants and previously settled populations, there is much more at stake than can be captured in national descriptions of local policy settings. Indeed, social cohesion, mutual respect, shared experiences and an overall sense of reciprocity can only be achieved on the basis

of a whole range of mechanisms, some very subtle (such as feelings of acceptance), that cannot easily be incorporated into the description of a country's integration initiatives and policies. These mechanisms can, nevertheless, often be captured within micro studies or very specific accounts of local practices. Thus, while this monograph does not aspire to present any deep insight into these mechanisms, it does not wholly ignore them: many of them are reflected, for example, in the descriptions of inspiring case studies in chapter 7. The most pertinent example among those is the description of Mechelen's transformation, which must, as the description points out, be understood in its broader context and not "merely" through the lens of local policy settings.

Similarly, it is worth bearing in mind that apparently similar measures adopted at local level can yield varied results depending on whether they emphasise aspects that divide or unite society, e.g. social ties or cultural differences (cf. Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2016). These differences arise in the implementation of particular types of policies and measures and are not easily captured when describing local practice.

This publication was compiled shortly before the war broke out in Ukraine and describes developments only up to the beginning of 2022. It does not, therefore, contain any data on the numbers of Ukrainians who have fled to the countries described since the war began, nor any information about how those countries have adapted to the presence of the newly arrived Ukrainians (especially women and children). It does, nevertheless, point out: how prepared the countries described were, in particular as concerns local integration policy; what they might build on; and areas in which they could draw inspiration from one another.

The methodology used includes a comprehensive literature review, especially with regard to the development of integration policies towards migrants at the EU level and in the individual participating countries. The content of the monograph was drawn up on the basis of discussions between the partner organizations and after the partner organizations had been given the opportunity to learn more about the situation and needs of migrants and local institutions in the participating countries. The chapters that present country profiles follow a predetermined structure established by the researchers to ensure comparability and relevance to the project. Each of these chapters presents case studies using available quantitative data, an analysis of legal and strategic documents, interviews with local politicians, and the authors' own practical experience.

1.1 Terminology and definition of key concepts

In the following chapters, we work with many concepts that are specific to the area of migrant integration. As a rule, we explain these directly within the individual texts. However, for a better understanding we also define some key terms at the outset, as their use may differ in the four countries compared. This concerns in particular the terms *migrant* and *integration*. In the chapters that describe the situation in a particular country, we always use that country's terminology. In the other chapters, we highlight terms that might be subject to different perceptions where we consider these relevant.

The four studied countries all make use of similar terminology to describe their migrant populations; however, the term *migrant* is used differently in the national statistics of these four countries. In this respect, there is a significant similarity between the Czech and Slovak Republics, which is not surprising given their shared history, and some similarity exists between the usage in Germany and Belgium.

Czech official documents use the expression *foreigner* (in Czech: *cizinec*). As in English, the term is derived from the word *foreign* (in Czech: *cizí*). Scholars and civil society stakeholders usually prefer to use the term *migrant* rather than *foreigner*. Although the difference between who uses the term *migrant* and who uses the term *foreigner* is usually apparent, there is sometimes an overlap. In general, neither of these terms is perceived as problematic. This monograph uses the term *migrant* when describing migrant integration policies in the Czech Republic, but maintains the more official term *foreigner* when citing official documents or statistics. Czech statistics only contain information about migrants who do not have Czech citizenship. Once migrants acquire Czech citizenship, they are no longer included in statistics on migrants. It is thus impossible to trace Czech citizens of migrant origin in the official statistics. This complicates the evaluation of integration policies from a long-term perspective.

Slovak laws and strategic documents mainly use the term *foreigner* (in Slovak: *cudzinec*). Scholars and civil society stakeholders use the terms *foreigner* and *migrant* interchangeably, but very often also use the term *third country national*, which most accurately expresses the legal status of a foreigner. Slovak statistics primarily contain information about migrants who do not have Slovak citizenship. As in the Czech Republic, once migrants acquire Slovak citizenship they are then dropped from all migration data. In official data, it is then impossible to trace Slovak citizens based on their migratory origin.

In its statistics, **Germany** uses the term *inhabitant with migration background* (in German: *die Bevölkerung mit Migrationshintergrund*), which it defines as follows: “a person has a migration background if he/she or at least one of his/her parents was not born with German citizenship”. As a result, “all those who immigrated to what is now the territory of the Federal Republic of Germany after 1949, as well as all foreigners born in Germany and all Germans born in Germany with at least one parent who immigrated after 1949 or was born as a foreigner in Germany” are also classified as inhabitants with migration background¹. Nevertheless, the attribution of a “migration origin” solely on the basis of the nationality of the individual or of one of his/her parents does not adequately reflect the social reality (e.g. because of so-called patchwork families and single-parent households). Experts suggest avoiding the term *migration background* if possible, in favour of more specific terms. This publication uses the term *people with migration history* in the German chapter.

The Belgian/Flemish statistics distinguish between a *person of foreign origin* (or *of migration background*) (in Flemish: *personen van buitenlandse herkomst*) and a *foreigner* (or *a foreign national*). A *person of foreign origin* is a person lawfully residing in Belgium for a long period of time, who did not possess Belgian citizenship at birth or at least one of whose parents did not possess Belgian citizenship at birth. A *foreigner* (or *a foreign national*) is defined as a person who does not have Belgian citizenship (a non-Belgian citizen).

The data we present in the following chapters is as comparable as possible. However, in some cases, identically defined categories are not available. In these cases, we state which of the above-mentioned definitions is used.

We find it useful to approach the concept of *integration* (or *migrant integration*) and its content in the four countries studied. It nevertheless remains true that the term *integration* is itself ambiguous and takes on a variety of different meanings in different contexts.

The term *integration* (or *migrant integration*) is commonly used in the **Czech Republic**. Although it does not have negative connotations, many Czechs unfortunately perceive it as meaning assimilation. Although Czech integration policies in practice place much greater emphasis on the process of adaptation on the part of migrants, official documents view integration as a two-way process. Some scholars prefer to use the

1 For more, see: Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis) “Migration und Integration”, available at: https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Migration-Integration/_inhalt.html.

term *inclusion*; however, this usually relates to integration in the context of school education.

Similarly, in **Slovakia** state institutions and other key actors broadly use the term *integration* (sometimes *inclusion* or *adaptation* in academic circles) in strategic and research documents. In the past, there were tendencies to incorporate the term *assimilation* into the official Slovak integration strategy, since this would more accurately express the state authorities' attitude towards migration and the lack of willingness to adapt society to migrants' needs as they strive for better participation. Several academic voices also raised views similar to those heard in Germany (see below) regarding the overlap between *integration* and *assimilation*. However, the Integration Policy of the Slovak Republic (2014) currently in force uses only the term *integration* and provides definitions of that term from various perspectives (target group, integration policy goals and principles).

The definition of integration used by the **German** Federal Office for Migration and Refugees² emphasizes migrants' involvement in German society. This is still, however, primarily associated with migrants and their descendants adapting and conforming to a certain "norm". This perception of integration has received significant criticism in the last few years and repeated calls have been made to replace the term *integration* with *inclusion* or other terms that emphasize participation, equal opportunities and equal access.

In Flanders³, Belgium, integration is understood as "a dynamic and interactive process by which individuals, groups, communities and organizations constructively relate to each other and cope with migration and its consequences in society, each in the context of enforcing the rights and obligations of a democratic constitutional state"⁴. The current Flemish integration policy (2021) is an inclusive policy focused on so-

2 The definition is as follows: "Integration is a long-term process. Its aim is to include in society all people who live permanently and legally in Germany. Immigrants should be able to participate fully and equally in all areas of society. It is their duty to learn German and to know, to respect and abide by the constitution and other laws". Source: The Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community. For more, see: <https://www.bmi.bund.de/EN/topics/community-and-integration/integration/integration-node.html>.

3 We use the Flemish (rather than the Belgian national) definition here because integration policy is the responsibility of the individual Belgian regions.

4 The definition is copied from the Flemish Integration Decree (Vlaams Integratiedecreet from 7-6-2016), available at: [_https://codex.vlaanderen.be/Portals/Codex/documenten/1023121.html#H1061524](https://codex.vlaanderen.be/Portals/Codex/documenten/1023121.html#H1061524). For changes since March 2022, see <https://www.agii.be/nieuws/wijziging-vlaams-inburgeringsdecreet-wat-verandert>.

ciety as a whole, paying special attention when necessary to persons of foreign origin or persons legally residing in Belgium (unfortunately, as of 1 January 2022, the Flemish integration policy is no longer intended to apply to foreigners without residence permits). Cities and municipalities implement the integration policy in various areas, mainly through general measures. Specific measures are only implemented when necessary.

Similarly, we must recall that the phrase “migrant integration” has become problematic in many countries because, rather than seeking to achieve maximally beneficial coexistence of those newly arrived with previously settled populations, many so-called “integration measures” have become instruments for immigration control. In the Czech Republic and Slovakia, whose practices are described in this monograph most extensively, this has so far happened only sporadically, but a few such examples are starting to emerge. For example, when the Czech Republic introduced mandatory adaptation and integration courses in 2020 (which are currently the only “integration obligation” for migrants to the country), the measure was cast in a very positive light (both by the state and certain NGOs). This made it very difficult to open up any discussion about the measure’s many possible negative impacts and to draw attention to the fact that those impacts are not only factual (e.g. in the Czech context, the high integration course fees) but also structural, since in introducing this measure the state laid the foundations for a system in which integration measures can also serve as instruments for the exclusion of migrants, if they fail, or are unable, to meet the set criteria.

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