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Policy Recommendations: From Fragmentation to Integration

Towards a “Whole-of-Society” Approach to Receiving and Settling Newcomers in Europe

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Europe’s migration crisis erupted against a backdrop of persistent integration challenges. Over the last few decades, most European countries have grappled with disappointing socioeconomic and civic engagement outcomes for some immigrants and their children, despite huge investments and a fair amount of experimentation. Meanwhile, social cohesion – in many ways the essence of successful integration – has been eroded by anxiety about rapidly changing communities and the perceived effects this change has on national and cultural identities. The most recent flows have fuelled these anxieties further, and have made integration issues even more pertinent.

As a result, the prognosis for efforts that seek to successfully integrate newcomers is uncertain. The diversity and scale of inflows, large numbers of

unaccompanied minors, and significant (mental) health needs of newcomers is putting further pressure on already stretched public services. In addition, many of the newest arrivals face additional difficulties entering and succeeding in local labour markets due to limited education, poor host-country language proficiency (and, in many cases, illiteracy in their own language), and skills and experience that do not meet the needs of local employers.

The stakes for economic, social and cultural integration could not be higher. Countries need to both support people on the pathway to work, especially work that holds opportunities for skills development and upward mobility; they also need to create the conditions for intercultural and intergenerational relationships to flourish. And they need to ensure that newcomers feel a part of the collective 'we', while encouraging existing communities to feel part of the collective project of receiving and settling new arrivals.

Although the paths to pursuing these goals will differ, the following principles should stand most countries – and communities – in good stead not just for this crisis, but also for the next one:

1. Adopt a work-focused approach to integration that also supports social integration.
2. Systematically engage the “whole of society” in integration efforts.
3. Manage social change and regain public trust.

Projekt

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