Supporting policy development in a multilevel governance setting: Lessons learnt from the Austrian youth sector

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Executive Summary

Supporting policy development and structural reform in the context of federalist, multi-actor settings can be extremely challenging. Based on a project implemented by ICMPD in Austria 2018-2020[1], this policy brief presents the analytical concept of multilevel governance as a first step in understanding the dynamics of such a setting. It then sets out the case of the Austrian youth and migrant integration sectors as case examples for developing methods and tools, as well as opportunities for policy learning in a multilevel governance setting.

Introduction

In Austria, both youth work and migrant integration activities are organised as **cross-cutting policy areas**, which are developed at various decision-making levels (federal, provincial, municipal and town or city level, as well as at the level of the social partners with regard to labour-market aspects). Implementation measures often include local and municipal administrations, humanitarian organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other civil society institutions such as churches, or a multitude of associations. The various decision-making bodies are authorised upon the basis of federal and provincial law, or by the appropriate administrative provisions at the federal, provincial and municipal, town or city level. Corresponding with these **multiple decision-making levels,** there are multiple **levels of funding streams and instruments.** The institutions acting on the ground have an obligation to report to various commissioning bodies, or are subject to the authority of various governmental units, due to the fact that they are assigned to different levels of the administration.

This means that both policy areas demonstrate **key characteristics** of a form of regulation which is referred to in political science as **multilevel governance.** This analytical concept helps

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[1] The project "*Youth Work in the context of Integration" (YRMA)* was implemented by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) in conjunction with the Austrian Federal Ministry of Labour, Family and Youth between December 2018 and November 2020. Focusing on the four federal provinces Salzburg, Upper Austria, Vorarlberg and Vienna, it aimed at improving the cooperation of the youth-work sector and the sector of immigrant integration and at establishing an overarching and sustainable cooperation structure between the sectors and the respective federal and provincial administrations. The project was based on literature analysis and stakeholder interviews as the main source for understanding of the background and challenges, and the development of regional and federal cooperation networks representing main stakeholders and actors in the field, which met in a number of workshops and meetings in order to develop action programmes and recommendations.

to understand highly complex policy processes in a multilevel governance setting as just described, and is discussed in more detail in the following chapter. Based on literature analysis and stakeholder interviews conducted in four Austrian provinces by ICMPD, this policy brief then outlines the governance structures of youth and migrant integration policy fields in Austria and highlights similarities and differences in how multilevel governance works in practice. Relevant beyond the immediate context, the Policy Brief then concludes with lessons learnt for policy development in complex settings characterized by federalism and multilevel governance.

The concept of multilevel-governance

Governance

The term **multilevel governance** has become established in the political sciences as a way to denote the analysis of policy fields that are characterised by the interaction between different institutional actors at different levels of the hierarchy. Unlike the term **government,** which denotes the system by which a state is managed, **governance** is a process-oriented term that describes the interaction between various actors at different political and administrative levels and, unlike traditional forms of government, is characterised by an openness to change and the involvement of a multitude of stakeholders. The concept of governance incorporates the following four elements:

- "The lack of clear hierarchical superiority and subordination and of a clear separation of spheres of control;
- steering and control by means of a mix of unilateral exercise of power and cooperation;
- communication and negotiation; and
- the dominance of processes over structures, as well as an ongoing change in structures."[2]

Central to the development of the concept of **governance** was the observation that in modern societies political administrations are no longer able to manage social processes directly. Instead, politics have to be understood as the management of interactions between stakeholders and actors: *"Steering and control are not unilaterally executed by a competent institution (e.g., the government); instead, they are interactional processes taking place between collective actors, wherein a clear distinction is no longer made between the subject and the object of control."*[3] According to this interpretation, **governance** is no longer seen as

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[2] Translation from the original German: Benz, A. (2004), Einleitung: Governance – Modebegriff oder nützliches sozialwissenschaftliches Konzept? In: Benz, A. (ed.): Governance – Regieren in komplexen Regelsystemen. Eine Einführung. Wiesbaden (VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften), p. 11 – 29; here: p. 16.

[3] Benz A. (2004), loc.cit., p. 17.

a central act of controlling and regulating markets and societies, but instead as a "*self-regulating system of interactions beyond market and state.*"[4]

Put simply, the term **government** places the state and its institutions at the centre, separating them from society and the market, while **governance** understands the three subsystems to represent a network and explores the way they interact. In this view, the state and its institutions are not understood as instances that operate top-down; instead, they are organisers of a network-centric process of negotiation between stakeholders. **Government** has connotations of steering, suggesting a metaphorical captain steering a society as if it were a ship, while **governance** implies a fundamentally different perspective that is centred around structures and institutions and their interaction. The control aspect is replaced by regulatory structures that require public, private, hierarchical and network-like forms of regulation to interact and collaborate.[5]

At the **political structure** *(polity)* level, governance typically involves a mix of traditional administrative bodies, private-sector businesses and broad stakeholder networks that incorporates civil society organisations and experts. **Political decision-making** *(politics)* happens in cooperation with and with the involvement of societal actors, wherein the systems enabling said cooperation are flexible and capable of change. Actual **political measures and programmes** *(policy)* are developed and implemented jointly by policymakers and representatives of administrations and non-governmental organisations.

Two parallel processes characterised this development of governance in Europe in the late 20th century: On the one hand, the shift in decision-making powers to the supranational EU level; and on the other hand the transfer of some decision-making processes to the subnational level6. Based on this observation, political scientists L. Hooghe and G. Marks developed a heuristic model to identify and describe various forms of **multilevel governance** that is recognised as an adequate way to describe polycentric political regulation and control processes.[7]

Federalism and multilevel governance

Hooghe and Marks' analysis differentiates between two types of multilevel governance: type I and type II.[8]

▪ **Type I** forms of multilevel governance involve **nested levels** with their own respective jurisdictions with **clearly defined and stable jurisdictional**

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[4] Benz, A. (2004), loc. cit, p. 18.

[5] Cf. Mayntz, R. (2004), Governance im modernen Staat. In Benz, loc. cit., p. 63–76.

[6] Hooghe, L. & G. Marks (2001), Multi-Level Governance and European Integration. Lanham/Maryland (Rowmann & Littlefield Publishers), p. IX

[7] Schmitter, Ph. C. (2003): Democracy in Europe and Europe's Democratization, Journal of Democracy 14: 4, p. 71-85, here: p. 73.

[8] Hooghe, L. & G. Marks (2002), Types of Multi-Level Governance. Le Cahiers européens de Sciences Po No. 03, Paris (Centre d´études européennes at Science Po), p. 8 ff.

boundaries. The respective levels are intended to be stable over long periods, and their boundaries typically correspond to territorial borders. Each level has its own clearly defined jurisdictional system that is equipped to exercise a multitude of functions, the limits to which are enshrined in law. Within these levels, there is a clear distinction between the legislative, judiciary and executive institutions. Any change in the allocation of competencies is subject to a defined process in line with the rule of law and must comply with higher-level constitutional norms.

- Unlike the clearly structured type I form of governance, **type II forms of multilevel governance** are much more **complex and unstable**. These are not general-purpose jurisdictions that are capable of a multitude of tasks; rather, they are functionally distinct (involving, e.g., regular coordination meetings at the district level, as in Upper Austria's integration governance system). Concrete measures for various policy fields are developed by different actors who themselves are part of decision-making structures at various levels in the hierarchy. This type of multilevel governance is also referred to as *polycentric governance*,[9] as in this setting, several unconnected and independent centres of decision-making are involved in producing collective goods.[10]

These two types of multilevel governance imply different participatory modalities and challenges.[11]

- Type I multilevel governance involves a **hierarchical, nested** structure of different, usually **territorially bounded** decision-making levels that in most cases are legitimised by territorial elections and have their own budgets. Typical examples of type I multilevel governance include the various types of federal statehood. They have extensive political powers across a broad variety of policy fields, with political responsibilities assigned to certain levels. Political participation typically takes place in the form of **elections**; interests are voiced and mobilisation takes place via established channels within a party system. This enables issues to be pursued in the long term, while political careers can be built around specific policy areas.

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[9] McGinnis, M.D. (1999), Polycentricity and Local Public Economies. Ann Arbor (University of Michigan Press), p. 2, quoted in Hooghe, L. & G. Marks (2002), loc. cit., p. 11.

[10] Several European countries (notably Belgium, Northern Ireland and Italy) have responded to the need to resolve ethnic/regional conflicts by developing mechanisms for involving different groups in political decision-making and in regional autonomy, creating settings that may represent a special form of type II multi-level governance. See Carlà, A. & R. Medda-Windischer (2018), Multilevel Governance and Migration: Conflicts Among Levels of Governance in the South Tyrol Case, in: Lacroix, Th. & A. Desille (eds.): International Migration and Local Governance. A Global Perspective. Basingstoke (Palgrave Macmillan), p. 57 – 75; Adam, I. & D. Jacobs (2014), Divided on Immigration, Two Models for Integration. The Multilevel Governance of Immigration and Integration in Belgium. in: Hepburn, E. & R. Zapato-Barrero (eds.): The Politics of Immigration in Multilevel States. Basingstoke (Palgrave Macmillan), p. 65 – 85.

[11] Hooghe, L. & G. Marks (2002), loc. cit., p. 18 ff.

- Type II multilevel governance is predicated on **policy area-specific interests** and connects various actors in these policy areas across type I structures. Type II structures are often linked to the **development of thematic *communities of practice or epistemic communities* that share an interpretation** of major paradigms and principles of practical action. As a network of professionals with recognised expertise and competence in a particular domain,[12] an epistemic community has an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain and can speak to the verity of certain statements. Because they are recognised within the professional community, they can **influence policy action** by defining key concepts and framing the collective debate.[13] In many cases these **professionals represent organisations** that, in line with the principle of *new public management,* implement decisions in certain policy fields (e.g., healthcare providers in the health field, welfare organisations in the social field, etc.).

While Type I multilevel governance is characterised by **party politics** and hence (at least partly) shaped by ideological conflicts, the need to collaborate requires actors to focus on improving existing structures in Type II settings. Type II forms of multilevel governance are on the other hand considerably more dependent on **voluntary engagement in less stable organisations** and on the proactivity of expert bodies than type I forms. Thus Type II settings require the development of communication and cooperation structures supporting the motivation of stakeholders and actors to contribute.

The core characteristics of multilevel governance of Type II can be hence be summarised as follows:[14]

a) The (legal) power to take decisions is distributed across various levels and actors.

b) Challenges can only be resolved together, requiring decision-makers at the various levels to coordinate.

c) Both public- and private-sector actors have a role to play in taking decisions and implementing these at the various levels.

d) Within the individual levels, institutionalised regulatory systems determine actors' scope for action.

e) The fact that negotiations between actors are hampered by excessively rigid rules implicitly requires them to maintain flexibility.

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[12] Haas, P. M. (1992), 'Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination', International Organization, 46, 1, 1992, pp. 1-35, p. 28.

[13] Haas, P.M. (1992), loc. cit., p. 3.

[14] Cf. Benz (2004), loc. cit., p. 126 – 135.

From "hard" to "soft" control

From a control theory perspective, the concept of multilevel governance is closely aligned with the debate around forms of "soft control". Control theory understands political control to represent the exertion of targeted influence on societal action, describing political control methods as lying on a continuum between **"hard" and "soft" control.**[15] **Hierarchical**, or "hard", control seeks to influence the actions of third parties according to the principle of command-and-obey and requires the presence of clearly structured relationships as well as a power imbalance. In practice, **hard control involves formalisation and fixed processes**; participants in this system comply with externally imposed rules and their behaviour is motivated by incentives or penalties. By contrast, horizontal, or "soft", control implies no hierarchical submission, but is applied informally and horizontally to social relationships without following fixed rules. Effective horizontal control requires stakeholders to assume the respective other participants' perspectives, necessitates a shared framework of reference and action, and presupposes a high level of intrinsic motivation.[16]

While **horizontal control** processes are typically found in settings involving **civil society organisations and grassroots democracy**, the **administrative sphere** is dominated by indirect contextual and structural control, which is a mixture of administrative-hierarchical and horizontal control.[17] The idea here is to create a setting that enables various institutional stakeholders to develop horizontal control processes, allows competent authorities to connect with civil society and private-sector stakeholders, and empowers these to **assume the control functions devolved to them by the state**. These **control networks are better equipped to manage complex issues than the authorities themselves**; meanwhile, the authorities can still intervene in horizontal processes to take **corrective action** or to extend or limit their scope. **Indirect control** features elements of horizontal as well as vertical control and brings authorities together with external experts and stakeholders. In this setting, control is not determined by abstract goals that are imposed externally. Instead, the parties are called upon to **draw up shared objectives and goals** in the shape of, e.g., a mission statement or work programme, to establish reporting and monitoring processes, and to engage in continuous communication and public relations work by organising workshops and meetings.[18]

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[15] On this subject, cf. Göhler, G. (2010), Neue Perspektiven politischer Steuerung. In: Politische Führung. Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte 2-3/2010, p. 34-40.

[16] Göhler, G. (2010), loc. cit., p. 36 ff.

[17] Töpfer, A. (2000), Von der Reform zur kontinuierlichen Verbesserung. Anforderungen und Probleme. In. Töpfer, A. (ed.): Die erfolgreiche Steuerung öffentlicher Verwaltungen. Von der Reform zur kontinuierlichen Verbesserung. Wiesbaden (Gabler), p. 353-369, here p. 360 f.

[18] Töpfer, A. (2000), loc. cit., p. 364 f.

Youth and migrant integration policy structures in Austria as cases of multilevel governance

As a **federal state** with well-established **involvement of the social partners in decision-making processes,** in particular in labour market policy and social policy, Austria is an example of a **multilevel system** with a long **tradition of cross-sectoral cooperation** and negotiation. Both **youth and integration policy arenas** have evolved through this multi-dimensional setting from the very beginning of their establishment during the last decades. Decision making competences, financing and control in these policy areas are distributed across the various levels of the political and administrative system (federal, provincial and municipal levels) leading to a high degree of actors´ independence and the development of distinct regulatory procedures in the different provinces. While the **tradition of cooperation with civil society** and NGOs has led to a broad stakeholdership involvement, **coordination between the provinces and the federal state has been a challenge** in both policy arenas from the onset.

Multilevel governance in the youth work sector

Youth policy and out-of-school youth work are cross-cutting issues shared between the nine provinces and the federal level; furthermore, they are also inter-ministerial issues, given that youth-relevant agendas are to be found across all ministries.

Competence for the portfolio for general youth issues and for coordinating youth policy lies with the Family and Youth Directorate-General of the Austrian Federal Chancellery.[19] In order to establish youth policy as a cross-cutting issue, work began on developing a national youth strategy in 2012. The objectives of the **Austrian Youth Strategy** include to position out-of-school youth work as an important pillar for action in youth policy; to achieve visibility for the existing work being carried out for young people across all policy areas and action areas; and, to use this as a springboard for improving the coordination of measures between youth policy stakeholders.

In accordance with the **Federal Youth Promotion Act,** the work of youth organisations which are active across Austria shall receive funding from the Austrian Federal Chancellery. National networks such as the federal **Network for Open Youth Work (bOJA),** the Federal **Network of Austrian Youth Information Services** (*Jugendinfos*) and the **Austrian National Youth Council** (BJV) also receive funding.

The **Austrian National Youth Council** is defined by law as the Austrian advocacy organisation for all children and young people. Where the interests of young people are affected, the BJV enjoys equal status with the conventional social partners (such as the Austrian Federal Chamber of Labour, the Austrian Federation of Trade Unions, the Federal Chamber of Economy, the Conference of Presidents of the Austrian Chambers of Agriculture) and the

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[19] Since the research for this report was carried out, the competent federal ministries in Austria have changed.

Austrian Council for Senior Citizens. In these cases, the legislator has an obligation to consult the BJV. Open youth work associations have been represented by the network bOJA (the Federal Network for Open Youth Work);[20] BÖJI (the Federal Network of Austrian Youth Information Services) is the national association for all youth information service centres in Austria.

While it is the federal level which is tasked with coordination and management tasks, **responsibility** for implementing and shaping out-of-school youth work lies with the **provincial and municipal levels.** Even though the specific form varies from province to province, political responsibility is usually assigned to one or more members of the provincial government who have a department or unit assigned to them at the administrative level. The members of the provincial government responsible for the youth policy area and their staff meet with the competent federal ministry at the annual Provincial Youth Officers Conference, which is the most important coordinating body between the federal and provincial levels.

At the provincial level, there is a (Child and) **Youth Advisory Panel** to be found in most of the provinces, acting as an advisory body and involving the most important organisations which implement youth projects and support youth organisations. There are also umbrella organisations and province-wide networks for open youth work. The board of the federal Network for Open Youth Work is made up of representatives from these provincial networks. In the youth policy area, **networking structures** have also been long-established between the provinces. Particularly noteworthy are the annual meetings of the members of the provincial governments (Provincial Youth Officers Conference) and of high level civil servants with responsibility for youth issues.

At a **municipal** level, there are a large number of youth institutions which are either funded by the municipality alone or – in most cases – in conjunction with the province. It is often the case that the municipalities are also the contracting authority or funding body for institutions and projects maintained or run by civil society organisations, for open youth work or for projects organised by young people themselves.

In Austria, there are non-profit organisations, independent youth clubs and social organisations which provide services in the youth work field. Religious and party political institutions may also fulfil these roles. There are many Austrian sport and cultural associations, associations with a social welfare background and emergency services, which run their own children and youth sections or similar departments, and are in this way active in youth work. The activities and other youth work services provided are paid for through these organisations' own resources (labour by volunteers, contributions in cash or in kind), self-funded (income from events and activities, membership fees, donations and sponsorship) and financed through third parties (grants from the public sector or from non-profit organisations

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[20] See https://www.boja.at/ (November 2019)

such as the church and political parties). However, the **most important funding bodies** for out-of-school youth work are by far the municipalities, the provinces and the federal government.

Multilevel governance in the migrant integration sector

Based on federal governance frameworks in Austria and the way that integration policy has developed over time – which has been strongly influenced by the provinces – the **integration** policy area presents itself as a **complex multilevel organisational structure**. In this structure, the arenas in which policy can be shaped interconnect at federal, provincial and municipal levels, with the involvement of social partners and civil society actors. At the **federal level**, integration **policy measures** such as integration courses or integration monitoring are **clearly provided for in law,** and their implementation is outsourced to a large number of service providers. By contrast, **integration policy measures at province and municipal levels are** *soft policies* to a greater extent: they deal with integration issues in existing institutions, such as schools, in youth work, or in the Public Employment Service Austria; alternatively, they concern the implementation of individual measures and projects in cooperation with civil society organisations.

At the federal level, the **Austrian Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs (BMEIA) – Directorate-General for Integration**[21] is mainly responsible for integration policy. This Directorate-General funds children and youth-related projects, under a children and youth package. In the year 2019, it provided funds to over 30 projects for children and youth across Austria.[22]

The Directorate-General for Integration is also the main funding body for the *Österreichischer Integrationsfonds* (ÖIF – **Austrian Integration Fund)**, which drafts and implements integration policy measures on behalf of the Austrian Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs and carries out public relations work on the issue of integration. The Austrian Integration Fund has a local office in all provinces, which in addition to running mandatory integration courses and implementing other integration measures for various target groups, is also responsible for day-to-day coordination with activities carried out by the provinces. The Austrian **Federal Ministry for the Interior** is the competent ministry for legal aspects of integration – in particular for issuing residency permits and for asylum procedures. The competent authority is the Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum, which reports to the Federal Ministry for the Interior.

An **Independent Expert Panel for Integration** has been set up to advise the federal government on integration issues and act as a competence centre and central driving force for integration processes; this panel is enshrined in the Austrian Integration Act. It is made up

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[21] Since the research for this report was carried out, the competent federal ministries in Austria have changed.
[22] See https://www.bmeia.gv.at/integration/projektfoerderung/foerderschwerpunkte/ (November 2019)

of acknowledged and experienced public figures, with experts from the youth policy area also taking part.[23]

Also notable is the **Integration Advisory Council,** which meets twice a year and has been a key body for networking and exchange of information at a federal and provincial level since 2010. This council has been enshrined in the Austrian Integration Act since 2017 and it facilitates cross-competence networking and coordination, as well as reciprocal reporting between the members of the council on the status of the implementation of the **National Action Plan for Integration** (NAP.I.). The following are represented on the council: the federal level (all ministries), provinces, the Austrian Association of Municipalities, the Austrian Association of Cities and Towns, the social partners and the Federation of Austrian Industries (IV), as well as the five largest NGOs.[24] This makes the Integration Advisory Council an important forum for exchanging information among the provinces and with the federal level, as well as with other institutions active across Austria.

The **Federal Ministry for Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection** (BMASGK)[25] is competent for all aspects of integration on the labour market. While the Austrian Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs and the Austrian Integration Fund integration measures are targeted specifically at immigrants support for migrants provided by Labour Market Services – with the exception of language courses – adheres to the principle of mainstreaming, meaning that this support is integrated into all measures targeted for the unemployed. In 2016, arrangements were laid down for recognizing foreign educational and professional qualifications in the Recognition and Evaluation Act drafted in conjunction with the Directorate-General for Integration.[26]

In Austria, **responsibility for education** is shared between the **federal, province and municipal levels**. The **municipalities** are responsible for **pre-schools and primary schools**; the provincial governments are responsible **for lower secondary education** (with the exception of the lower selective secondary schools, competence for which lies with the federal level). Competence for those schools which do **not** lead to the Austrian secondary education certificate and for vocational schools lies with the provinces as well, while the **federal level** is responsible for a number of defined secondary schools and **vocational upper/post secondary schools**. The federal level is also responsible for **tertiary education**.

Integration is not specifically laid down as a task of the province in any of the nine provinces. However, the provincial parliaments are generally granted leeway to act upon any agenda for which competence has not been ceded to the federal level; this also includes activities in the field of integration, which are not covered by the federal government.

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[23] See https://www.bmeia.gv.at/integration/expertenrat/ (November 2019)
[24] See https://www.bmeia.gv.at/integration/integrationsbeirat/ (November 2019)
[25] Since the research for this report was carried out, the competent federal ministries in Austria have changed.
[26] Federal Act on the Simplification of Procedures for the Recognition and Evaluation of Foreign Educational and Professional Qualifications (Recognition and Evaluation Act – AuBG). BG BGBl. I Nr. 55/2016.

In all provinces, there is a minister of the provincial government to whom political responsibility for integration is assigned. At the administrative level in all provinces, there is an office or department responsible for integration; this is either an independent department in itself or a sub-division, e.g. (a sub-division of) the department for social affairs and integration or the department for citizenship.[27] **Five of the nine provinces** have published a **detailed integration strategy** specifying objectives and measures for the policy area of migration and integration (Carinthia[28], Upper Austria[29], Styria[30], Vienna[31], Vorarlberg[32]). The Integration Strategy for the Province of Lower Austria approved in 2012[33] is no longer available on the province's official website.

Similarly as in the youth policy area, there are **networking structures** in place among the provinces. One example is the annual meetings of the members of the provincial governments and high level civil servants responsible for integration issues, with a focus on a specific aspect of integration each year. These meetings are also attended by delegates from the respective Federal Ministries.

A large number of **cities, towns and municipalities** are providing specific integration support services and have set up their own functions and bodies for the integration policy area. However, the most recent study available on this topic dates back to 2009.[34] There is a lack of

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[27] In Vienna, the competent municipal department is Municipal Department 17 Integration and Diversity.

[28] Amt der Kärntner Landesregierung (2017), Gemeinsam in Kärnten. Integrationsleitbild des Landes Kärnten. Klagenfurt (Amt der Kärntner Landesregierung) *(Office of the Government of Carinthia [2017], Integration Strategy of the Province of Carinthia)*, https://www.ktn.gv.at/312432_DE-Integration-Gemeinsam_in_Kaernten_-_Integrationsleitbild_des_Landes_Kaernten (November 2019)

[29] Land Oberösterreich (2018), Integration verbindlich gestalten – Zusammenhalt stärken. Integrationsleitbild des Landes Oberösterreich. Linz (Amt der oberösterreichischen Landesregierung), *(Province of Upper Austria [2018], Making Integration Mandatory – Strengthening Solidarity: Integration Strategy for the Province of Upper Austria)*, https://www.land-oberoesterreich.gv.at/202568.htm (November 2019)

[30] Land Steiermark (2011), Charta des Zusammenlebens in Vielfalt in der Steiermark *(Province of Styria [2011], Charter for Living Together in Diversity in Styria)*, Graz (Amt der Steiermärkischen Landesregierung), http://www.soziales.steiermark.at/cms/dokumente/11562700_108305469/4cfa1aba/Charta.pdf (November 2019); Land Steiermark (2016), Arbeitsprogramm Integration *(Province of Styria [2016], Work Programme for Integration)*. Graz (Amt der Steiermärkischen Landesregierung), http://www.soziales.steiermark.at/cms/dokumente/12547347_135784632/1036aba9/Arbeitsprogramm%20Integration.pdf (November 2019)

[31] Stadt Wien (2019), Das Wiener Integrationskonzept *(City of Vienna [2019], The Vienna Integration Concept)*, https://www.wien.gv.at/menschen/integration/daten-fakten/konzept-integration.html (November 2019)

[32] Amt der Vorarlberger Landesregierung (2015 – 2. Auflage), Gemeinsam Zukunft gestalten. Integrationsleitbild des Landes Vorarlberg. Bregenz (Amt der Vorarlberger Landesregierung), *(Office of the Government of Vorarlberg [2015 – 2nd Edition] Shaping our Future Together: Integration Strategy for the Province of Vorarlberg)*, https://vorarlberg.at/web/land-vorarlberg/contentdetailseite/-/asset_publisher/qA6AJ38txu0k/content/integrationsleitbild?article_id=94622 (November 2019)

[33] Land Niederösterreich: Integrationsleitfaden für die Vielfalt. St. Pölten (Amt der Nö. Landesregierung) *(Province of Lower Austria: Integration Strategy for Diversity)*. There is a description and discussion of this strategy in: Borenich, M. (2014), Integrationsleitbilder der österreichischen Bundesländer im Vergleich – zwischen Assimilation und Multikulturalismus. Masterarbeit, Universität Wien (Borenich, M. (2014), *(A Comparison of the Integration Strategies of the Austrian Provinces – between Assimilation and Multi-Culturalism, master thesis)*.

[34] Antalosky, E.; S. Herzog; A. Wolffhardt (2009), Integrationsleitbilder und Integrationsbeiräte österreichischer Städte. Dossier zur Online-Befragung, Wien (europaforum Wien),

up-to-date sources providing exact information on the number of such cities, towns and municipalities. At that time, 20 cities and towns had their own integration officer and/or integration strategy.

There are a large number of **civil society organisations** involved in implementing integration projects. The central actors are the regional offices of the big five social charities in Austria: Caritas, Diakonie Österreich, Hilfswerk, the Austrian Red Cross and Volkshilfe; on various scales, these charities provide support and training, extra tuition for school education and integration advisory services, on behalf of and with funding from the provincial governments. The provincial offices of the *ARGE MigrantInnenberatung* migrant advisory service[35] provide advice on labour and social issues; these offices are funded by the Ministry for Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection[36], together with the province in which each office is based.

Additionally, in each province there are a number of local **associations** which have either been active in the field of integration for some time, or were set up in response to the movement of refugees in 2015.[37] Among these, the project bureau *okay.zusammenleben* in Vorarlberg represents a special case.[38] This organisation has been set up by well-respected individuals; it carries out work on behalf of the Province of Vorarlberg – which provides the majority of its funding – and, in cooperation with the province's Coordinating Body for Integration Affairs in the Department for Social Affairs and Integration, it develops guidelines and projects relating to integration policy for the Province of Vorarlberg.

Main characteristics of multilevel governance in the two sectors

Both the youth work and the migrant integration sector have developed **both within federal** (multilevel policy I) **and cross-sectoral** (multilevel policy II) structures. Federalism anchors youth work with the respective provincial governments, while the federal government mainly has a coordinative function. In the field of migrant integration, the overall responsibility is located at the level of the federal government, but as core areas of intervention, like e.g. social work, housing or health are competencies of the provinces, also here the provincial governments have a decisive say. Further to these aspects, in both areas thick cooperation networks with civil society organisations and urban and municipal governments have developed, often linked historically to the Catholic and Protestant Church (Caritas,

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https://www.staedtebund.gv.at/fileadmin/USERDATA/themenfelder/integration/Dossier_Integrationsleitbilder.pdf
(November 2019)

[35] www.migrare.at (November 2019)

[36] Since the research for this report was carried out, the competent federal ministries in Austria have changed.

[37] A number of interviewees indicated that in Vorarlberg, the integration of refugees was made easier by the fact that there were a large number of small associations and projects active in integration in the municipalities, who welcomed the refugees and were able to apply their experience in the integration policy area. In the Province of Salzburg in 2015, some 20 municipal-level associations for integrating refugees were set up, which were called *Municipality XYZ Helps Out* and implemented integration projects on the ground.

[38] https://www.okay-line.at/ (November 2019)

Evangelische Diakonie) or the Conservative or the Social Democratic Parties, which until the 1990s gained a joined voters´ share of more than 90%.

The governance structure for both policy areas is based on Austria's federal constitution and the fact that **key decision-making competences** for both youth and integration are assigned to the provinces, **along with the political and financial responsibility** for these areas, has led to **peculiar path-dependent developments in each province**. In all four of the provinces involved in the project, there are actors and administrative structures which have evolved organically in the policy areas of youth and integration, and whose frame of reference is mostly restricted to their own province; there is no history of cross-provincial policy making. Cooperation between provincial institutions and regional offices of the relevant federal authorities and organisations (e.g. police, the Austrian Public Employment Service (AMS), the Ombudsman for Children and Young People, the Austrian Integration Fund) is well-established in all of the federal provinces involved in the project; however, there is **no cooperation across provincial borders** in this respect either.

With regard to regional governance, specific governance configurations demonstrating clear differences can be found in the four provinces. These differences prove that the development of governance frameworks at a provincial level is path dependent on the provincial and not the federal policy history. Therefore it can be assumed that comparable province-specific approaches to youth and integration policies have also arisen in those provinces not involved in this project.

- As early as the 1980s, **Vorarlberg** was a pioneer in developing public private partnerships and integration policy was one policy area in which it made recourse to this model. With the project bureau *okay.zusammenleben*, an outsourced competence and development platform was set up, along with a model for indirect control through the involvement of municipalities and NGOs in the integration policy area. Civil society actors and platforms also assumed a key role in the youth policy area. Following the influx of large numbers of refugees 2015 ff., the existing model for cooperation between government and civil society was formalised and thereafter extended further. This involved the inclusion of experts and professional stakeholders in the decision-making process, which is a good example of a well-established model for indirect contextual control. This approach brings together the competent government units with actors from civil society and industry, enabling the latter to assume governance tasks delegated to them by the government.

- In **Salzburg** – an equally small province in terms of population – there are some similarities to Vorarlberg. In Salzburg's case, youth work was particularly characterised by dedicated involvement from civil society and cultivated a dense regional network of youth institutions. However, one specific feature is that both

policy areas have been assigned to a single department of the provincial government, so guaranteeing cross-cutting cooperation at the provincial level. Unlike in Vorarlberg, where the integration policy area can be said to drive development, in Salzburg it is the youth policy area which is the driving force for innovative integration support services. Similarly to Vorarlberg, it is typical for cooperation between the two policy areas to be based upon actors knowing each other well; the fact that the province is of manageable size means that lines of communication are short and cooperation is mostly organised informally.

▪ **Upper Austria** is a province with a large number of district authorities and the third largest population, after Vienna and Lower Austria. Due to its size, it is not possible to have the same kind of close-knit, informal cooperation between actors who know each other personally as is typical of youth and integration governance in Salzburg and Vorarlberg. Here the integration policy area is highly structured at the provincial and regional levels; the involvement of actors has been highly formalised by setting up integration bodies at the provincial, district and municipal levels; the political approach is in keeping with a management-oriented and top-down approach, with a detailed reporting system. In contrast to the integration policy area for which one individual member of the provincial government is responsible, political responsibility for youth policy is shared between three members of the provincial government. On one hand, this makes it possible to involve a broad range of authorities; on the other, it means that there is a considerable burden in terms of coordination. Cooperation between the two policy areas is provided in particular through steering groups made up of administrative bodies and NGOs at provincial, district and municipal levels.

▪ As the capital of Austria, **Vienna** cannot be compared with the other provinces. In Vienna's case, both youth and integration support services are embedded within the city administration – with its extensive staff resources – and are managed by the city's administrative authorities. While in Vienna as in other provinces, NGOs and charities play a key role in implementing youth and integration policy, their involvement in developing such policies is patchy. However, there is a close-knit regional network involving the various Vienna Municipal Departments, which reinforces information sharing. Coordination between the two areas does not take place across extensive networks, but rather within the framework of top-down city government. The large number of civil society organisations which implement city integration and youth policy on behalf of the city demonstrates the importance of linking the NGOs with the city government: partly because this allows the city to ensure the free flow of information, and partly because in doing so it has established a quasi-market,

preventing dependency on one or more, large providers. All the same, a pronounced dominance of administrative bodies can be observed: a broad range of stakeholders and experts mostly provide these institutions with expertise and develop preferences for action, yet decision making remains in the hand of the competent Vienna Municipal Departments.

In all provinces involved in the project **close-knit networks** between politics, administration at the federal, provincial and municipal levels, and NGOs can be found for each of the two sectors. Cross-sectoral **networking between** the two policy areas **far less** deeply embedded in organisational structures than that found between the various actors within the sectors. Networking with the **education sector is not well-developed** in any of the provinces; schools have not been cited as a prominent networking partner in any province. On the contrary, a number of interviewees have reported that there is (latent) tension in the relationship between open youth work and (a few) schools.

Since in all provinces, youth work and integration support services are coordinated and funded by the provincial government, there are **hardly any forms of inter-provincial networking** or projects across provinces. This is partly **due to funding flows** focused on provincial administrations and the fact that institutions report to specific provincial government departments, and professional careers in administration hardly involve movement to another province. However, given the scope for networking via tele-communications, IT and road and rail networks, this is still surprising and indicates that there is a lack of such inter-province networking strategies and platforms which could particularly facilitate exchange of know-how and joint project development.

Private companies and enterprises are involved to only a modest extent in any of the provinces. While there is labour market-related cooperation in some provinces, this is mostly concerned with access to the labour market for young migrants and not with enterprises as actors in integration support services and youth work. The potential of the private sector in the field of youth work and migrant integration has not been tackled yet.

Overall, a **sustainable cooperation platform** receiving long-term funding and allowing for a regular exchange between stakeholders was seen as missing. A cooperation platform would be needed not only for exchange **between the provinces**, but also **between the sectors** and the development of an overarching, long term cooperation strategy.

Policy development counselling in a multilevel governance setting: Lessons learnt

Policy process counselling, as implemented in this project, is a challenge going beyond policy analysis and desk-research. Further to strategic aspects, it involves an organized communication process addressing a variety of stakeholders and their needs. Despite background research and planning, such a process always entails unforeseen challenges,

which have to be met by project management. The following aspects have been the main lessons which should be considered for policy counselling in a multilevel governance setting.

Take federalism seriously

Other than in centralized government systems, where ministries or state secretariats formulate policies and have them implemented locally, federal constitutions foresee a large degree of **autonomy of policy making and implementation** for provincial governments. In this way, peculiar and different policy arenas and actor settings may develop in each province, with little exchange of practice over provincial borders. As in any polity, actors tend to protect their area of influence and power, thus they will guard their competencies in case of cooperation projects and will scrutinize them also from this angle.

Sometimes the **relationship** between actors at different levels of government may not only be cooperative, but also include a history of turf-wars, which may lead to tensions impeding the progress of projects. Overcoming these **tensions** is a main element of project development. Clear rules of cooperation, trustful and transparent communication and the provision of neutral meeting moderators may be helpful to solve these issues.

Policy development counselling in a federal polity has to be aware of the **relative strength of provincial governments,** the tendency of actors to guard their area of influence, and potential apprehensions with regard to cooperation projects. Sufficient time and resources need to be provided, and discussions and exchange of views have to be arranged on a level playing field. Policy counselling in federal polities will be more **time-consuming** and need more investment into "soft" steering and control than policy counselling in a centralized state.

Stakeholder identification is key

In settings involving a broad range of actors from different government levels, administration and civil society, the **identification of all relevant stakeholders** and their involvement is key. Stakeholders are best defined as persons or institutions not only linked to an organisation or policy field, but also those "able to make a claim on an organization's attention, resources or output or who may be affected by the organization"[39] (Lewis 2001, 202). In any case, there has to be a differentiation between stakeholders, who are already organised or representing and institution and have already articulated their claims in the field, and **dormant stakeholders,** which are not yet visible, but nevertheless are either targeted by certain politics or may have to power to influence policy making in a certain field. These "dormant stakeholders" are often overlooked in stakeholder involvement. Broad stakeholder does not only help to mobilise resources, but also helps decision makers to develop a realistic

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[39] Lewis, D. 2001: The Management of Non-Governmental Development Organisations. An Introduction. London (Routledge). S. 202

understanding of the policy arena and the options and limits for reform, and increases the support for a project.

Based on these considerations, the YRMA project started with **research on stakeholders in both fields** with experts, in the internet and the literature, which was extremely important for the identification of key actors and their relations with each other. Due to the existence of well organised "communities of practice" in each province, stakeholders could be identified both via institutional contacts and snowballing, the latter helpful to identify local actors. As the project has shown, stakeholder research in federal polities need more resources and can be more time-consuming than in a centralised state due to the existence of peculiar "communities of practice" in each province.

The involvement of practitioners is key to define core areas of action

The broad array of stakeholders and the implementation of concrete measures by civil society organisations, municipal administrations and administrative bodies of the provincial governments needed a **pro-active approach balancing both administrations and practitioners.** As the project workshops and meetings highlighted, the involvement of practitioners was key to define core areas of concern and action in the respective provinces. Giving sufficient time and space for discussions between practitioners and representatives of provincial and federal administrations allowed developing a shared understanding of local needs and the relevance of local factors for the analysis of challenges specific for the region. It was highly relevant that practitioners became convinced to gain from participation. As the development of criteria for successful measures was a part of the project and actors were invited to present their activities for a collection of good practices, they could see an **immediate gain** from participation. Stakeholder involvement has to continuously reflect on gains practitioners and actors on the ground will have in order to motivate them and secure sustainable participation.

Regular and transparent communication at eye-sight level is key to uphold motivation

In a multilevel governance setting, cooperation projects involve a broad a variety of actors from different institutions and different levels of administration. As any institution acting in a complex environment will be more familiar with some partners and have limited knowledge about others, it **cannot be assumed that all partners will have the same motivation** for participation.

In this project, the **regular meetings** of all stakeholders in the four provinces were highly appreciated by the stakeholders and became an important venue for project development. **Holding meetings not only in Vienna, but in all provinces** active in the project was seen as a

clear sign of respect for local needs and for having an equitable voice in project development. These local meetings also became the central venue for **participation for local practitioners**, which gave important insights on the challenges faced on the ground. Finally, the practice of project management to regularly share issues brought up by partners with all participants was highly appreciated and allowed for the development of a **trustful and productive atmosphere** in the meetings.

Stakeholder need resources for cooperation and exchange of experiences

Stakeholders in cooperative projects represent organisations and institutions following their own course of action and often are dependent on external funding. Spending time and energy for a cooperative project has to be legitimated internally, in particular in project-funded NGOs, and vis-à-vis donors. While one or two meetings with external actors may be more or less easily accepted, **limited internal resources** planning may well **prevent repeated participation** if no resources are provided for.

This challenge can (to some extent) be met by an overall project management taking care of limited resources of partners and well-prepared and moderated meeting, but will come up against limits if no additional resources can be organized. **Resourcing partners for the time spent** to exchange experiences and participate in joint project development has to be a main area of concern for all cooperative projects in order to secure sustainability.

Sustainable cooperation needs a stable organization and funding

For every project aiming at a reform of existing structures the transition from the project phase to institutionalization is a main challenge. In order to have a sustainable impact, project development has to include a **robust transition management** leading to the institutionalization of cooperation procedures and platforms. In this project, transition management focused on the **institutionalization of a cooperation platform** involving the federal government, provincial governments and civil society organisations already early after the starting phase. This move was successful as it was agreed early by all participants, which were successful in mobilizing political support both at the level of the provincial and the federal government.

As this experience has shown, the transition from the project phase to a more regular and stable structure has to be put on the table early and should become a **main task** already during the early project phase. Safeguarding the implementation of project results into a regular governance framework will need both the mobilization of support of the partners involved as lobbying of decision makers, which both will need time and thus should be started early in the project.

Lobbying decision makers will need **concrete and sensible suggestions** which can be implemented into existing structures and procedures. The more concrete suggestions and recommendations are, the more likely they will find support. Given the reality of restrictive

budgets, the implementation of coordination structures will have to make use of already existing institutions to be successful.