

PROSINT-Conference Austria:
*Shaping immigration for integration? Reflecting on the links
between immigration and integration policy*
Summary of Key Points

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Key Facts on PROSINT – Promoting Sustainable Policies for Integration

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SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS OF RESULTS SESSIONS & PANEL DISCUSSION

The PROSINT final conference, organized by the International Center for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), aimed at sharing the results of the PROSINT project and discussing the link between integration and immigration with a broad audience. Among the 45 participants were representatives of local, regional and national administrations, civil society representatives, academics and experts from Austria, Switzerland, Sweden, and Germany. The conference was divided into two parts: 1) a results session followed by inputs of discussants and a panel discussion, and 2) two workshops to discuss in depth experiences with pre-entry tests and the relationship between local and national integration policies and stakeholders.

After a welcome speech by the event's host Dirk Fassbender, Deputy Head of the Information Office of the European Parliament, Albert Kraler, the project coordinator at ICMPD, lined out some of the key questions to be addressed by this event: What does it mean if one tries to link immigration policy to integration policy? Is immigration law the proper instrument to address integration issues? How can immigration law be shaped to promote integration?

In the **Results Session I**, Bernhard Perchinig and Christina Hollomey (ICMPD) presented main trends, similarities and differences regarding **national policy frames for the integration of newly immigrating third country nationals before and after arrival**. Both presentations highlighted the focus of current integration measures on language and/or civic education, the desire to measure the integration 'capability' of (future) immigrants on the basis of these two factors, a link to security, a link to the empowerment of migrant women to argue for the compulsory nature of tests, as well as a very functional and individualistic understanding of integration emphasizing self-responsibility and self-sufficiency. There is little evidence available on the effects of the tests, in particular regarding effects of the tests on the socioeconomic and legal position of immigrants. However, available data indicates that pre-entry tests have an effect on the number and composition of immigrants coming to a country (e.g. with respect to gender, origin, age, education), while the effects on language proficiency are modest at best.

Verena Plutzar, a linguist and former language teacher, was invited to comment on the results session I. She highlighted that language tests allow states to measure integration in a very simple and cheap way. Although the benefits of speaking the majority language are uncontroversial, Ms. Plutzar questioned the efficiency of current policies with regard to the official policy goal (=integration). In order to effectively promote language proficiency, the design of courses and tests would need to take into account existing knowledge on the language learning process, as well as the diversity of language learners regarding their backgrounds and stage in the migratory process. Ms. Plutzar also questioned the recurring reference to the Common European Reference Framework for Languages in the respective legislation, as the compulsory and standardized nature of introduction courses would betray the original intention of the framework, namely to promote multilingualism by respecting the diversity of language learners.

In the **Results Session II**, Madalina Rogoz of ICMPD presented selected findings on **local policy frames for the integration of newcomers**, which constitute an under-researched area. Even in countries with a national integration policy, local policies tend to have a more inclusive approach to integration regarding target groups and areas of integration. The coordination

between the different levels of local stakeholders, and in particular between civil society stakeholders, still deserves more attention by research.

Karin König of the Viennese city department for integration and diversity commented on this issue by adding experiences of the at times difficult relationship between the city of Vienna, a forerunner regarding integration activities in Austria, and the federal level. She pointed out that amendments to federal regulations may distort the existing local integration landscape and structures, and require cities to fit their local approaches into the overarching national framework, even if their integration approach differs.

Carolus Grütters of the Radboud University in the Netherlands presented some reflections on the link between immigration and integration from the perspective of the findings of the project *INTEC – Integration and Naturalisation Tests, the New Way to European Citizenship*. The project faced some difficulties regarding the various differences in relation to the integration definition, the form of tests and points of time of the testing. This all, together with a lack of longitudinal data, limits the possibility to evaluate the effects of the tests. Moreover, Mr. Grütters was concerned that in practice (e.g. due to various practicalities, such as non-availability of courses in some countries, high costs), such tests would not promote integration but rather prevent immigration.

The following **panel discussion** was facilitated by Mr. Perchinig and joined by Ms. Plutzar, Mr. Grütters, Ms. König, and Mr. Gstir from the Tyrolean regional integration department. The discussion was very lively and at times controversial and touched upon the following main issues:

Regarding the **relations between federal and local/regional level integration policy-making**, positions were very diverse. Several panelists observed a more pragmatic approach towards integration at the local compared to the federal level, a stronger focus on potentials instead of deficits, and also more efforts to involve relevant stakeholders in decision-making processes. Diversity-oriented approaches that focus on the entire population are still rare, Mr. Gstir remarked. With regard to the cooperation between local and regional governments in Austria, representatives of the local/regional levels identified a need for joining forces and developing more harmonized guidelines on integration in order to become more influential at national level. A representative of the Austrian Ministry of Interior (MoI) stressed that the Ministry has been very much concerned to involve experts and stakeholders into the process of designing integration measures. Other speakers confirmed that there is also positive cooperation between local/regional and federal actors, but establishing permanent exchange mechanisms would still be required.

Another issue discussed was the strong **link of integration with security issues** that is a result of the Austrian institutional structure. In Austria, integration has been placed mainly under the competences of the Ministry of the Interior. A representative of the MoI stressed that since the establishment of a separate integration department (the State Secretary on Integration) the integration debate is framed in a more positive way and is increasingly separated from security issues. However, several participants in the audience demanded that the institutional links to the MoI should be completely dissolved in order to do justice to dealing with integration as a truly cross-cutting issue.

Regarding the **compliance of pre-entry language tests with EU law**, Mr. Grütters emphasized that a clear ruling by a European Court is still missing that would generally clarify whether pre-entry tests obstruct the right to family reunification (there is a Dutch ruling, according to which

Turkish nationals cannot be subjected to the obligation to pass an integration test as a result of the obligations under the EEC-Turkey Association Agreement and Association Council Decision 1/80, see <http://media.leidenuniv.nl/legacy/nat-case-law-nl-ankara2010.pdf> and <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-15261242>). In particular the situation of own nationals who desire to reunite with a family member coming from a third country is problematic and still needs to be ruled out (see e.g. 'Imran' case, CJEU). Apart from the legal compliance aspect, Mr. Perchinig pointed to a possible unintended effect of pre-entry tests, namely, increasing return migration by highly skilled persons with migrant background who are married to a person from a third country.

As a last point, the **relations between research, experts and politics** were discussed. Ms. König emphasized that the respective relations generally have been strong in Vienna. As the most recent example, she cited the city's integration and diversity monitoring, which was developed together with a broad network of scientists and experts. Also a representative of the MoI emphasized that the Ministry closely cooperates with expert networks (e.g. Advisory Board on Integration). On the other hand, Ms. Plutzar referred to the situation in Vienna after the establishment of a city department for integration and diversity in 2003 and the simultaneous assignment of integration tasks to the Austrian Integration Fund at the national level, which both lead to more centralization and had a destructive effect on the hitherto viable local integration scene and its rich expertise and innovative methods for language teaching developed from bottom-up. She also noted that national institutions responsible for implementing language tests do not sufficiently take into account linguistic expertise. Moreover, participants stressed that the **translation of complex research findings** into easily digestible messages for politicians still needs to be improved. A representative of the MoI pointed to the key role administrations have in translating research findings to higher political levels. However, Mr. Grüters remarked that cooperation between research and politics is generally limited, because research thinks in a long-term perspective, but politics thinks in election periods.

WORKSHOP 1: Pre-entry tests: Integration before immigration?

Moderation: Bernhard Perchinig (ICMPD)

The workshop focused on questions related to pre-entry integration measures: On the one hand pre-entry measures should serve the means to promote integration; on the other hand there is only little knowledge of their actual impact and effectiveness in promoting integration. The workshop stimulated an informal discussion between experts from the Goethe institute, civil society, academia and governmental institutions.

The workshop started with a small **presentation by the German Goethe-Institute**. In 2007, when Germany decided to introduce pre-entry language tests the Goethe Institute was charged with the implementation of the tests. The Goethe Institute has managed to set up a global network of language institutions that offer tests and preparatory language courses at more than 150 places. In these partnerships the Goethe Institute is responsible for methodological adjustments as well as for technical and didactical adaptations to the needs of the target group. In the kick-off year of the German pre-entry language tests more than 60,000 candidates were tested, since then the number of participants has settled at about 42,000-45,000 candidates per year. Participation and success in the language courses are determined by multiple factors, such

as accessibility, time, participants' socioeconomic and family situation, security issues, and costs. The fees of the preparatory courses may vary between different countries, but may also be partly subsidized through financial contributions of the Goethe Institute and of Germany).

Some workshop participants critically remarked that the pre-entry language tests despite the official policy goal were intended to **undermine the right to family reunification**. Promoting language learning was considered to be a positive development, but if coupled with immigration can have unintended or even negative effects. In regard to the compliance of pre-entry tests with the Family Reunification Directive, current rulings by the European court of Justice (ECJ) were discussed, focusing on the applicability of the ECJ-sentence Metock (C127/09), 25.07.2008 and the ECJ-sentence Ruiz-Zambrano (C34/09), 08.03.2011. Most of the participants agreed that the pre-entry language tests could be used as a means of selecting new immigrants on the basis of financial/economic and social considerations. Rising return migration or migration to other European countries may be unintended effects.

Some participants highlighted that it is important to **differentiate between language acquisition and 'successful' integration** in broader terms. From a government's perspective, pre-entry language tests should be considered as **one measure within a larger bundle of measures** targeting integration; only if put together, singular measures would become effective. The Austrian legislator for example defines the pre-entry tests as a logical first step to integration after arrival. On the other hand some experts displayed their concerns that measures like pre-entry language tests weren't convincing instruments for benefiting integration if they were at the same time obstacles to family unification/reunification. They highlighted that the **legislator has to provide for timely migration** and prevent extensive waiting periods in the migration process. Other statements focused on the **efficiency of the tests** abroad and called for more consistent transitional arrangements for the period between application and actual immigration. In this phase, most of the language skills acquired before would get lost again. Finally, participants suggested offering pre-entry orientation courses to provide information on the country of destination in addition to, or instead of language courses.

WORKSHOP 2: The integration–migration policy nexus from the local perspective

Moderation: Christina Hollomey (ICMPD), Brigitte Suter (MIM/Malmö)

The workshop focused on the link of integration and immigration at the local level. The topic was discussed with special attention to the following 3 contexts:

1. The (perceived) impact of the nexus migration-integration on cities/municipalities,
2. The role cities/municipalities may play when it comes to the establishment of integration measures at the national level,
3. The potential of cities/municipalities to take on alternative approaches of integration. It was especially discussed what role concepts like racism and/or xenophobia do have on the integration work done at the local level.

Among the workshop participants were representatives of national, regional and city's administrations, implementing organizations, as well as labour market organizations, research, and civil society.

The statements regarding the **impact of national integration measures on cities and municipalities** were very diverse. It turned out that the introduction of national integration policies can have a negative impact on local integration landscapes, if there already existed well-established structures and programmes at the local level. The example of the city of Vienna was mentioned, where the introduction of the integration agreement (national introduction policy) resulted in massive changes at the local level. On the other hand, in the case of the province of Tyrol the federal changes resulted in the allocation of additional regional and national funds devoted to language courses, which was considered positive.

Participants from **Switzerland** explained that communities and cantons in Switzerland have large powers to decide on integration and immigration issues. Currently, the introduction of (compulsory) federal measures is discussed on the basis of some pilot projects. Generally, compared to other EU countries, integration in Switzerland would be rather regarded as an issue of labour market integration than language.

Regarding **cooperation between national and local administrations** in the field of integration the positions were controversial: The general tenor on the part of local and civil society representatives was that it was difficult to give input and be heard by the national authorities, whereas other participants and a representative of the national level stressed positive examples of cooperation (e.g. expert panel on integration). According to representatives of a local government and a labour market organization, cooperation so far has been dissatisfactory, because it is largely symbolic and actual decision-making takes place at other levels. Also participants from Switzerland stressed that exchange and cooperation between local and regional levels and the federal level needs to be improved.

Regarding the **understanding of integration at local level**, it became visible that cities often do follow a more potential-centred understanding of integration than the national level. Furthermore some dilemmas of integration policy making at national level were discussed, as national integration and immigration policies would often be contradictory and both strongly follow specific party lines.

Participants demanded a **stronger involvement of the majority society** into integration measures (e.g. awareness raising campaigns, projects to reflect on national identity, etc.), as well as a **stronger involvement of migrants** in decision-making processes and design of these programmes following common democratic principles. It turned out however, that there are **only few concrete anti-discrimination measures** targeting the majority society by the authorities at the national as well as the regional/local level. Reported examples of good practices were the initiative 'Cities against racism' initiated in Switzerland, as well as a touring exhibition in Tyrol to reflect on conceptualisation of 'us' versus 'the others' (*Vielfalt daheim in Tirol*).