



Building migrants' belonging through positive interactions

Andrew Orton



COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Building Migrants' Belonging Through Positive Interactions

A Guide for Policy-Makers and Practitioners

*Connecting Recognition, Participation and Empowerment
To Improve Social Cohesion*

Council of Europe Policy Document

Andrew Orton

French edition:

Développement d'un sentiment d'appartenance chez les migrants par des interactions positives

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Foreword

Europe today is a continent of diversity.

Today, few topics attract more public attention than the struggle to accommodate this diversity and draw enrichment from it. Whether or not governments decide to replace their shrinking populations of working age by large-scale immigration, this diversity is likely to increase in the years to come.

Governments are responding by developing integration policies and the Council of Europe has been very active in providing support. The Council of Europe has itself been an important actor in accompanying and generalising this process. In 2002, the Ministers of the Council of Europe member States responsible for migration affairs undertook to develop and implement integration policies founded on the principles of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

But, whilst much has been achieved, two alarming trends appear to have taken root. On the one hand, many people consider that the core objectives of integration policies have failed, leaving in their place unfulfilled promises of equal treatment and polarised or fragmented societies. On the other hand, the failures of these policies have strengthened the voice of those who only see in migrants and their different traditions and customs a threat to public order, national identity and their own security.

Indeed, the simple recognition of diversity cannot be sufficient in itself. Whilst diversity acknowledges difference within our societies and our own multiple and complex identities it does not provide a guarantee for social justice or harmony. This can only be achieved through the processes of social cohesion.

Giving migrants a voice, recognising their true value and building their sense of belonging to receiving societies, in short empowering migrants, is the only appropriate policy choice in a democratic society. It is this choice that will enable us to ensure fair and just societies for all, and allow migrants to both be integrated and feel integrated.

The key is interaction, enabling migrants to engage with people in the receiving society as well as with each other, whether it be in the workplace, in their neighbourhood, at school, in the hospital or doctor's surgery or in the offices of the local administration.

Migrants have an essential role to play in our societies and economies and we cannot afford to allow the advocates of racism and intolerance undermine our democratic values and negate the human dignity we owe to everyone whatever their nationality, origin or race. Promoting interaction between migrants and host societies will, through greater mutual understanding, help break down barriers and dispel xenophobic sentiments.

This is the thinking behind this publication. I hope you will find it helpful in your efforts to ensure diversity becomes an asset for everyone.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized, cursive name followed by a horizontal line.

Thorbjørn Jagland
Secretary General of the Council of Europe

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Introduction

Strengthening Integration Policy: From Tolerance to Belonging through Positive Interactions

This policy document provides a practical resource to help policy-makers and practitioners develop significantly improved integration between migrants and other residents in local communities. It draws together evidence from research, theory and practice using creative connections that highlight practical ways for achieving this aim.

The basis of the proposed approach is a simple premise, yet one which has far-reaching implications; namely that:

“Enabling diverse positive interactions builds belonging and cohesion”

‘Interaction’ in this context refers to the everyday processes by which migrants engage with each other and with receiving communities. *‘Positive interactions’* refers to those processes which help these people to effectively build networks of mutually supportive relationships with each other in ways that contribute to a more cohesive society. This type of interaction provides a foundation for improved relationships involving more than just a toleration of each others’ co-existence. Instead, deeper relationships can emerge from an interactive process of relationship-building that incorporates a developing empathy, mutual respect and dialogue between diverse individuals and groups. This policy document proposes ways in which these interactions can be encouraged as a means for building a greater sense of belonging for the individuals concerned, whilst also building improved social cohesion and wider solidarity so that people work together towards a shared future.

Focusing on interactions is a helpful strategy for policy-makers and practitioners, as both policy-makers and practitioners can have a significant impact on:

- (i) Increasing the likelihood that interactions will take place; *and*
- (ii) Helping to ensure that when they do, they will be positive in nature.

Three Essential Building Blocks That Can Make This Happen

This policy document explores three essential building blocks for enabling increased positive interactions which build belonging. It begins in Section 1 by exploring the idea of interaction further, including the various components that enable interaction to take place at a local level. It continues in Section 2 by exploring the policy framework that is necessary to set a context in which these interactions can happen and in which they can be successful for promoting integration. It also explores how rights and opportunities in a wide range of spheres of life (including economic, cultural, political, educational, housing, etc.) depend on positive social interactions to be realised. Section 3 explores how these processes of interaction can be used to build a common sense of belonging and shared identity. Particular attention is paid to ways of understanding and enabling the interaction process to take place in ways that decrease barriers to relationship building, such as prejudice and stereotypes. For this process to make a positive contribution to integration and cohesion policy, it is crucial to ask “What sort of belonging do we want to generate in order to support a cohesive society?”. Addressing this question involves thinking more about identity and the networks of relationships that people have (and don’t have), and how these relate to their sense of belonging. It also involves a clear value base that values a democratic diversity in which everyone can learn from each other, whilst balancing the rights and responsibilities of all involved.

How This Policy Document Can Help You

This policy document deals with these issues in a practical way, providing an introduction to key concepts in each of these areas, together with some introductory questions designed to help you to apply these ideas in your context. It is designed for policymakers at local, national and international levels, as well as practitioners who can enable these interactions to take place in local communities. The questions can be used by individual policymakers and practitioners to reflect on their own practice. They have been designed on the basis that policy-makers and practitioners working in this field frequently work on similar issues, albeit often from different directions. The questions can also be used when bringing groups of policymakers and practitioners together to consider these issues; this could provide a particularly effective way of considering different perspectives within your local context in order to develop a shared strategy to take the

recommendations forward. The resulting plans can then be implemented in a planned and co-ordinated way with actions over both the short and longer term, supported by an appropriate evaluation strategy to explore their impact and effectiveness.

The approach of asking questions (rather than attempting to provide comprehensive answers) has been taken deliberately. In the process of developing this policy document, it was clear that policymakers and practitioners had many issues, dilemmas and questions arising from current integration practice. Listening to these perspectives was crucially important, as this helped to highlight limitations in current policy which prevent integration from being fully realised, whilst also providing the seeds for a new approach. This approach was used to develop this document, with the aim of finding a way to ask questions in a particularly generative way, building on existing theory whilst pushing its boundaries.

A range of free sources of resources and examples are available that may help you find inspiration when thinking through the questions in your own context – links to these sources have been provided at the end of this document. A more detailed companion volume (Orton, 2010) provides further discussion of the evidence base that led to this approach being developed. The companion document critically connects together a wide range of related theory, research and practice expertise from diverse sources, with a more detailed discussion of the methodology and full references. The companion volume also includes additional examples of how some of these ideas are already being successfully applied in particular local contexts. The aim of this policy document is to provide a shorter summary of the ideas developed through this work, and the key findings and recommendations arising from it.

Together, these documents introduce an interaction-focused approach as a potential foundation framework for action that combines a range of insights. However, the full potential of this approach can only be explored by policymakers and practitioners asking themselves “What if we took this approach?” and then testing it in their own contexts. There is certainly scope to further explore how this approach might (or might not) apply to particular groups and situations, for example refugees or those re-integrating after returning to their countries of origin. There is also scope to explore further how particular issues

(e.g. the relationship between integration and countries of origin) and aspects of identity (e.g. gender) may impact on this process. The process of reflection on the ideas in this paper will certainly raise additional questions to those outlined, and considering all these questions may prove useful to the process of planning focused actions in response.

Evidence from work so far with a diverse range of policymakers has shown that this approach can provide a helpful way of thinking about the issues and building on existing good practice. It is offered to you in the hope that it will prove similarly useful in your local context, and may provide a significant way forward in addressing these vital issues.

Section 1: Interaction

What is interaction?

As highlighted in the introduction, interaction (in this context) refers to the process by which migrants engage with each other and with receiving communities. This interaction may take various forms, such as initial encounters, shared experiences, sustained dialogues, working together on issues of common concern, etc. Interaction may take place between different individuals and between different groups. Personal interactions also provide an important medium for the engagement between migrants and formal organisations, such as companies, civil society organisations or the state.

Why is interaction crucial?

Without interaction, migrants can end up living ‘parallel lives’ where they have only very limited relationships with others in the wider community. In the absence of actual engagement with each other, prejudice and inaccurate stereotypes are more likely to shape attitudes about others. As well as undermining social cohesion, this can undermine migrants’ opportunities to turn any rights of social and economic equality into realities. Because different dimensions of equality (e.g. getting a job, gaining citizenship, developing social relationships and networks) are often inter-related, this can seriously undermine migrants’ empowerment and potential for greater integration. Receiving societies also lose out as a result through failing to recognise the potential benefits which can arise from welcoming migrants and the contributions that they bring.

Why “positive interaction”?

If interaction is to contribute to addressing these concerns, the character of the interaction matters. Many of the existing interactions that migrants have with others may be negative, in the sense that they may encounter hostile attitudes, discrimination, and various forms of oppression and exploitation, etc. Clearly, not all such interactions will necessarily build belonging – in fact, many may contribute towards social conflict as well as migrants’ isolation and alienation. Positive interactions in this context are those which:

- Empower migrants; e.g. by building migrants' confidence, skills, access to opportunities, etc. and developing their relationships/networks with others.
- Enable others in the wider community to recognise the contributions which migrants bring.
- Help provide a relational basis for resolving any difficulties and conflicts that may arise in the process of integration.
- Help to build a cohesive society that benefits everybody.

As this definition recognises, these 'positive interactions' may sometimes involve dialogue which includes some disagreement and conflict. This can be an important part of the interaction process. What makes an interaction 'positive' is not the absence of disagreement or conflict, but whether this process is working towards resolving any issues in a way that recognises everyone's value and that works to build understanding based on mutual respect. Interactions with these characteristics can also provide an effective means of building relationships that support the development of a sense of belonging, as this policy document will explore further in Section 3.

The components that enable interaction

Building more opportunities for positive interactions requires attention to components such as:

- (i) The *context* for the interaction, including the policy environment in which it takes place, and the extent to which this promotes different dimensions of integration (e.g. in terms of citizenship, rights, labour market participation, etc.). (This is discussed further in Section 2).
- (ii) the *spaces and times* for interaction (that is, the physical environment where and occasions when interpersonal and inter-group interaction can actually take place).
- (iii) the *skills* that help people to interact positively.
- (iv) the *processes* for supporting positive interaction within these spaces, including what (if anything) is done and in which order to encourage interaction.
- (v) the *people and organisations* that are going to encourage positive interaction to happen, and help to overcome any difficulties.

Initiatives by policy-makers need to address the context, as discussed in Section 2, as an important foundation for interaction to take place. However, policy-makers and practitioners could frequently do much more to consider their potential influence on the remaining components as well. In each of these components, policy-makers' actions (or lack of action) at a local, regional, national or international level may contribute to supporting or undermining this fragile activity. This is especially important where interaction is not necessarily happening of its own accord, where there are barriers or a lack of motivation to the interaction taking place. The recommendations below highlight three particularly-promising opportunities that are available to policy-makers and practitioners for strategically promoting positive interactions, together with questions which may help them to start applying these ideas in their own context.

Key Recommendation 1.1: Create diverse, improved opportunities for public interaction

A wide range of spaces, places, services and occasions can provide opportunities for interaction to take place, both in terms of initial encounters and ongoing opportunities to build relationships. Opportunities for developing improved interaction can arise, for example, through everyday activities (such as going to work, the park, or a public building), special events (such as community festivals), or longer-term projects (such as developing an inter-faith network). They can also arise as a result of shared interests and concerns, which can be as diverse as, for example, the common experience of being a parent, a shared interest in a particular sport, a mutual concern for improving their neighbourhood or preventing a factory closure, or even just a shared love of eating good food.

However, many spaces, places, services and occasions are currently designed in ways that limit the potential for encounters to take place; for example, neighbourhoods may tend to be segregated between different groups, support services and public buildings may provide different services on different days/times to different groups, etc. In many places, existing spaces/activities/services can be redesigned and new spaces/opportunities created in order to improve their ability to facilitate positive encounters. For example, local festivals can choose themes which encourage wider participation and celebrate diversity in the local area; community centres may organise shared activities at times which suit different groups (and avoid religious holidays);

libraries may encourage diverse groups to use them by stocking a wider range of books relevant to different cultures; charities offering support with clothing or food can provide inclusive services that include both migrants and existing residents experiencing poverty. (One important related dilemma for practitioners concerns providing specialised services for particular migrant groups based on their specific needs; see Recommendation 2.3 for further discussion about this).

A lack of motivation for participation in interaction is one of a number of barriers facing those who try to develop these improved opportunities for interaction. In these situations, particular attention may need to be paid to how to promote the personal benefits of interaction as well as helping people to recognise common objectives which are also beneficial to the wider community.

Whilst some particular opportunities (such as involvement in the labour market) may be particularly important for forming broad-based connections, it is important for there to be a diverse range of opportunities and not rely on any one route in particular. This helps prevent particular groups from being excluded from interaction (and hence isolated and marginalised) if they are unable to participate on one particular basis. For example, both migrants and those from receiving communities who are full time parents and/or unemployed may be excluded from interacting if all interaction opportunities focus on the workplace. This may also exacerbate other forms of disadvantage; e.g. if a migrant who is a female carer or young Muslim man is frequently discriminated against by employers when applying for work, then this may also mean that they have reduced opportunities for wider social interactions if all interaction opportunities focus on the workplace. In turn, this can create a vicious cycle which is hard to escape, as wider social connections are often a significant factor in helping people to find a job. Even if migrants overcome any disadvantage by finding employment with an employer from a similar background, this can still contribute to fragmented communities living parallel lives with limited interaction between them, undermining social cohesion. Conversely, a wider range of interaction opportunities may reinforce and multiply the benefits gained through any one particular positive interaction.

Questions for implementation:

1. (i) Where are the places that migrants and others both potentially use in your locality? (ii) Do they interact with each other in these places? (iii) If not, why not? (iv) Could redesigning these places (or how they are used) help to improve the likelihood of positive interactions? If so, what contribution might you make towards doing this?
2. (i) What (if anything) currently generates positive interactions in your context? (ii) How might these be built on to increase their range and impact?
3. (i) What other shared interests, activities or occasions do migrants and others in your local communities have in common? (ii) How could you use these to create new opportunities in which they might encounter each other? (iii) How might these be used to help them to engage in dialogue with each other and recognise common objectives?

Key Recommendation 1.2: Develop improved skills for interaction amongst participants

Interacting effectively with those who are different to yourself can often be very challenging, whether you are a migrant or an existing member of a local community. The other person may have a very different culture and customs, resulting in them appearing to act and think in very different ways to you. This can often cause misunderstandings and even conflict. Overcoming these barriers to effective communication requires skills in intercultural communication that enable people to learn more about each other, including some of the important ways that people may differ from what they expect. Hence, some projects have responded by helping both migrants and people within receiving communities to develop these skills to help facilitate effective interaction.

Questions for implementation:

1. (i) What opportunities are available for people (both migrants and those in receiving communities) to learn skills that might help them to relate to those from different

backgrounds and cultures? (ii) Who does (and doesn't) take up these opportunities? (iii) Why? (iv) How might you promote the learning of these skills amongst the public in your context?

Key Recommendation 1.3: Develop improved processes to support and promote positive interactions, including generating wider involvement and providing training for those involved in promoting and enabling this work

Prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination can often make people reluctant or even opposed to interacting positively with others whom they perceive as different to themselves. Because of this, some forms of encounter can have divisive outcomes. In addition, many opportunities for potential interaction occur in everyday contexts in which people have a choice whether or not to interact, with whom they wish to interact, and how they might wish to do so. New opportunities created to promote greater positive interaction between migrants and receiving communities may only be taken up by those who are already open to building positive relationships, and fail to reach those with the most to learn.

Processes which help develop positive interactions between more diverse individuals often include the following characteristics:

1. They involve people with a diverse range of backgrounds and identities.
2. They place these diverse people in a shared safe space where (as far as possible) participants have equal status.
3. They help these diverse people to identify shared interests, similarities or common goals.
4. They are easily accessible, and enable people to build relationships gradually, without requiring those who may consider getting involved to make any long-term commitment at the outset.

5. They provide some form of low-key support, structure and/or environment that facilitates the interaction taking place.
6. They often create carefully-designed opportunities for myths about the other group to be constructively challenged through experience.

Some of these processes may occur without specific intervention, through informal relationships forming in contexts like shared neighbourhoods, schools or workplaces. However, especially where interaction is not happening of its own accord, a wide range of people and organisations can be encouraged to take a lead in creating a range of different opportunities to build a greater range of positive interactions that may appeal to different people; e.g. employers, civil society organisations, local public sector bodies, faith groups, etc.

This work can often be difficult (and even dangerous) for those involved in building bridges of interaction between previously-separated individuals and communities. As a result, the provision of quality training and support for those creating these opportunities is imperative if they are to be successful and sustainable.

Questions for reflection and implementation:

1. (i) In your experience, who are the people or organisations that are actively promoting interaction to take place in your context? (ii) How could they be supported to do this more, and how could other individuals/groups be encouraged to get involved?
2. (i) To what extent do the processes that these individuals and groups use reflect the characteristics highlighted above? Are there any additional characteristics that are important in your experience? (ii) What training and support is currently available for those who are involved in bringing diverse groups together? (iii) How could policy-makers improve the training and support (including resources and funding) available to these practitioners and organisations?

Section 2: Developing Contexts That Support Positive Interactions

The relationship between challenges in policy development and local interaction

Achieving widespread positive interactions relies upon the existence of a cohesive framework of integration policies, each with their specific focus, including policies which focus on legal rights to equality of opportunity and treatment, access to social and economic life, citizenship, combating racism and xenophobia, etc. These policies have already been developed extensively at national and international levels, and the principles on which they are based benefit to a large extent from a developing international consensus, at least at a European level.¹ The development of various systems of indicators (and other research) has helped to measure progress towards achieving these aims.² However, this research has shown that putting these principles into practice has often proved challenging and raised its own dilemmas. Particularly contentious areas that affect interaction include: (i) the terms on which migrants should be recognised, and by whom; (ii) the nature of their participation (and how this should be encouraged); (iii) the extent to which services should be adapted to meet their needs (and how this might best be achieved). The key recommendations below address each of these areas in turn.

Key Recommendation 2.1: Promote recognition of migrants' positive contributions

Recognising, respecting and valuing the potential of migrants to contribute in a wide range of ways (socially, economically, etc.) to the receiving society is a crucial foundation on which positive interactions can be built. Promoting greater recognition of the positive ways in which migrants can contribute to the receiving society supports positive interaction both:

1. E.g. For a summary of agreed 'Common Basic Principles' on integration, and ways of implementing them in your context, see Appendix A.

2. One comparative example which compiles different indicators is the *Migration Policy Index* at: www.integrationindex.eu/.

- (i) at a social level, by helping to build an environment in which positive interactions are more likely to take place;
- (ii) at an individual level, by forming an essential factor within (or arising from) such interactions.

Recognising migrants' potential to make a positive contribution sends an important message that their presence is welcomed. Migrants can often gain negative impressions through discriminatory encounters and immigration processes that are perceived to present hostile hurdles to their presence in a particular place. Initiatives which welcome migrants can help to counteract these negative impressions. This recognition can encourage migrants to interact more (due to a perceived greater likelihood of receiving a positive reaction when they try to do this). Amongst both migrants and the wider public, it can also help to counter the many negative portrayals of migrants that are prevalent in the media (and often exacerbated by groups who use migrants as scapegoats, by blaming them for a wide range of perceived negative changes in society). Providing this welcome and recognition can be done formally (for example, at civic reception events hosted by local mayors) and informally (e.g. through working with local press to publicise 'good news' stories about migrants who are contributing to the local community in various ways, such as volunteering, or other successful interaction initiatives that have taken place). This can also help to create an environment in which politicians and officials can speak out in a positive way about migration and integration issues, rather than exacerbating the scapegoating process.

Questions for reflection and implementation:

1. (i) How are migrants commonly portrayed in popular media in your context? (ii) What positive images and good news stories are available in your context? (iii) How could you encourage these to be seen and heard?
2. (i) How do migrants perceive their degree of welcome on arrival in your country/area? (ii) What particular encounters, systems or structures contribute towards these perceptions, both positively and negatively? (iii) What would help to improve their sense of positive recognition?

3. How might you use improved recognition and positive interaction to help enable officials and politicians to reduce public scapegoating of migrants?

Key Recommendation 2.2: Empower migrants’ participation (and being clear what they are participating in)

There is a wide range of ways in which migrants can be empowered to take up and make the most of the opportunities that are available for positive and equal interactions. Those migrants who do not feel empowered, and who don’t possess the necessary skills and opportunities, are unlikely to be able to do this. Empowering migrants involves giving them the opportunities to display their skills to their best effect and giving them opportunities to contribute actively as agents for integration, development and social cohesion. Effective communication is fundamental for interaction to work; therefore, properly-designed language learning policies tailored to individual needs are essential. Many existing resources focus on ways of providing accessible basic language training in the language/s of the receiving society. Opportunities for migrants to learn more about the receiving society’s history, culture, institutions, laws and/or context can also be helpful. However, the extent to which this is helpful if it is made mandatory is controversial. As stated earlier, empowering migrants’ participation in the labour market is particularly important, and policymakers should take measures to make this transition easier; for example, by providing a “qualifications equivalence service” that help migrants to have their existing training recognised (where relevant) within the receiving community.

Opportunities for civic and political participation also provide established ways which can promote the interaction between migrants and receiving societies (particularly at local level). However, it is important when talking about participation to be clear what migrants (and/or other local residents) are being asked to participate *in*. Participation can be in a wide range of different activities, for a wide range of different purposes. For example, one form of participation may be participation in citizenship for longer term migrants through a nationalisation process that may ultimately lead to a right to vote in local and/or national elections. Whilst this can help integration in its own way, it does not necessarily cause interaction to happen between different migrants. Nor does it necessarily cause interaction to take

place between migrants and others within receiving communities who are not policymakers/service deliverers. Being clear about the purpose of any particular participation opportunity, and communicating this clearly to potential participants, is important to ensure that they are designed in ways that achieve their aims. Furthermore, strengthening and supporting civil society in particular ways (as explored further in Section 3) can be an important way of making quantitative and qualitative improvements to the opportunities for participation, and thereby the opportunities for interaction between migrants and receiving societies. By being clearer about these different types of participation and routes in which they can be enabled, more opportunities for interaction can be created, and they can be more likely to be mutually reinforcing.

Questions for reflection and implementation:

1. (i) What different forms of participation opportunities are available in your context? (ii) How effective are these at supporting interaction and integration?
2. What other forms of opportunities for participation could you introduce?
3. (i) How might different participation opportunities be linked together to help them to support each other in your context? (ii) What contribution might you be able to make towards this?

Key Recommendation 2.3: Consider how existing policies can promote or inhibit interaction whilst providing flexible, tailored services

Promoting more, and more positive, interactions is a cross-cutting (transversal) concern which can be affected by a wide range of different agencies and policy areas. Section 1 considered how policymakers can create opportunities that promote interaction which are applicable to a wide range of policy areas (such as education, health, housing, etc.). However, it is important to note that many policies can inhibit positive interactions, often in unintentional ways.

An important example of this is the particular difficulties that can arise for policymakers and service deliverers when trying to decide whether to provide a service (e.g. a health service or a language class) in a segregated or integrated way. Separate services are sometimes

provided in order to better meet migrants' specific needs, which may differ from those in the rest of the population in some important way/s. Providing services in this way means that the service provision can more easily be tailored to migrants' specific backgrounds and needs. Without finding some way to adapt services, universal services can often fail to effectively reach migrants and meet their needs, and may even be argued to have developed forms of institutional discrimination that exclude migrants and undermine their equality. However, the resulting segregation in delivering the provision can mean reduced opportunities for migrants to interact with others at a time when recognising similar needs could be helpful to their integration and sense of belonging. It can also exacerbate accusations of migrants being given 'special treatment' not available to others within the wider community.

Questions for implementation:

1. (i) Which policies do you think might contribute to inhibiting interaction in your context? (ii) How could you find out more about which policies inhibit interactions from migrants and other local residents (and how they would like these to change)?
2. (i) How could the design of these policies be adjusted so that they provide opportunities for flexible, tailored service provision that meets everyone's needs whilst also promoting positive interactions? (ii) What contribution might you be able to make towards enabling this to happen?

Section 3: Recognising and Respecting Diversity Whilst Building a Sense of Belonging through a Web of Interactions

The relationship between interactions, identity and belonging

Developing a sense of migrants' belonging in the wider community is an essential element in the integration process for both migrants and those within receiving communities. However, the feeling that you "belong" in a particular place, culture, and/or group is very personal and subjective, irrespective of whether or not you are a migrant. Two people in exactly the same environment may feel very differently about it, and these feelings will, over time, affect their sense of who they consider themselves to be.

Even though these feelings and self-perceptions are individual and personal, they will develop and change over time due to a person's continuing interactions with others (as considered in Section 1) and with their social/cultural/political/environmental context (as considered in Section 2). Each of these layers (self-identity, interpersonal interactions and wider context) affects the others; this is an inter-connected on-going process. As a result, positive interactions with a wider range of people within supportive contexts (as described in the previous sections) can play an important role in developing the extent to which individuals feel that they belong in particular communities, places and countries. Within this, each positive interaction across diversity is a two way process that can lead every participant to learn and change by understanding others better, whilst also becoming more grounded in an increasingly better understanding of oneself and one's own culture.

However, the formation of particular groups and networks, and the ways that people relate within these groups/networks, and how they relate to each other, can all have a profound effect on whether particular interactions also contribute towards social cohesion and integration. Interaction processes need to be designed to take this into account so that not only migrants but also those within receiving communities feel less threatened and more like they belong in their changing environment. This can be illustrated if you think about the

relations between people being like strands of a spider's web. If each point of intersection on the web were a person, and the strands between them are the different links that they have with other people, then the strongest web will be the one with the most diverse links. The following recommendations help to address these issues in ways that use interaction to deepen everyone's sense of belonging together and working towards a shared future.

Key Recommendation 3.1: Recognise and respect the complexity of diversity when seeking to enable migrants to be involved in wider society, especially when involving them in developing policies, services and interventions

Policymakers seeking to build policies that develop mutual recognition and belonging between migrants and receiving societies need to recognise that a key challenge is developing ways of doing this that are sensitive to the needs of *everyone* involved in the process. This involves recognising that there will be a wide range of individual, group and cultural differences even *within* migrant communities.

This issue is particularly crucial when empowering migrants to participate through informing the development of policies and practices that affect their lives. Enabling this type of participation in policy and service development is a recognised principle that is well established in discussions of integration best practice. This requires a particular form of interaction, between migrants and those who develop policies, make decisions and/or deliver services that are of relevance to them. To be effective for this purpose, convenors of consultations must ensure that they listen actively to the migrants and ensure they engage in, and act on, the dialogue.

Recognising, and being sensitive to, the differences within and between migrant groups is crucial if policymakers are to avoid just hearing those with the loudest voices within a particular ethnic, national and/or religious group to the exclusion of others. For example, gender and age can often play a significant role in determining which voices from within a particular community are represented and heard. Specific opportunities for groups such as women and children/young people may help to ensure that their voices are heard as well as the voices of the older men who often present themselves as the 'representative' voice of a particular community.

Such opportunities, especially if opened to the wider community, can also provide potential environments in which migrants from these groups can mix with others, as Recommendation 3.2 explores further below.

Note that due to the complexity of diversity, any person seeking to represent others will be unlike those whom they say they represent in at least some ways. If policy-makers use this as an excuse to alienate people when these participants challenge the status quo, then this can undermine their belonging and may have repercussions on the extent to which others may choose to get involved. It is much better to open up more routes to hear a range of voices than to just undermine those that are already participating.

Recognising, exploring and addressing the dynamic ways in which power, inequality and diversity interact with each other and affect the interactions of particular individuals and groups is crucial to achieving a balanced success in involving everyone.

Questions for reflection and implementation:

- 1. What opportunities exist in your context for migrants to inform or participate in design and delivery of policies and services that affect them, so that these policies and services are better adapted to meet their needs?*
- 2. To what extent do these opportunities provide a range of routes for participation that give diverse migrants (even within the same ethnic, religious or national group) opportunities to participate?*
- 3. To what extent do these opportunities connect effectively with appropriate decision-making processes so that organisations act on the feedback received?*
- 4. (i) What needs to happen in order to ensure as many diverse voices as possible are heard and that these experiences are shared? (ii) What could you do to contribute towards this?*
- 5. (i) How do differences such as gender affect people's interactions with each other in your context? (ii) How might*

you promote more equal and empowering interactions involving a wider range of people within diverse communities?

Key Recommendation 3.2: Develop policies which make the most of the potential arising from the multiple aspects/dimensions of everyone's identity, and which allow for these to change and adapt over time

Key Recommendation 3.3: Build stronger networks across diverse groups based on multiple connections and affiliations, both for the public and for practitioners

By recognising the complexity of people's differences, rather than over-simplifying them or pretending that they don't exist, new possibilities for developing integration practice become opened up that enable diverse groups to engage with each other with integrity. Identities and cultures are deep-rooted but not fixed, and evolve constantly through complex, interactive psychological, social, cultural and political processes. Migrants may be exposed to an arguably more challenging set of these processes as they move from one country to another, but this process of engaging with people who are similar to us in some ways and different in other ways is part of everyone's life experience.

Everyone has multiple aspects/dimensions to their own identity; for example, a person can simultaneously be a father, practice a particular religion, be an avid supporter of a particular sports team and see themselves as having a particular ethnic/class identity, etc. Feelings of belonging can be affected by which combination of these characteristics we think matter (and to what extent) in deciding who is 'us' and who is 'them' on a particular occasion. Groups play an important role in this process; for example, whilst watching a football match, the supporters of a particular football club may feel like they belong with each other despite their diversity in other respects because they share their identification with that club. This does not mean that they share every aspect of their personal identities with each other, or become clones of each other. However, it does mean that they do develop a shared identity around the thing/s that they have in common that have brought them together (such as their support for their team winning the match, their love of watching the game, etc.), and the resulting affiliation becomes part of who they are.

The nature of individual and group identity dynamics is that we tend to define ourselves in opposition to an ‘other’ who is not like us, and decide who belongs in our group accordingly. In addition, belonging is not just determined by the individual by themselves. Other people (and their groups, organisations and authorities) may also decide whether they consider a particular person to belong with them. Profound difficulties often arise for those (in this context, especially 2nd and subsequent generation migrants) who experience these different identity claims as competing with each other, especially where they feel forced to choose between important aspects of themselves.

However, identity affiliations do not necessarily have to be seen as conflicting with each other: by enabling people to consider how to hold different identity affiliations together, and explore for themselves how they relate to each other, people can be assisted through the process of adapting to change of building a more secure and inclusive sense of identity. For example, some aspects of our identity may be better seen as being ‘nesting’; i.e. compatible but on different levels, such as our sense of belonging to a particular neighbourhood, city, region, country, Europe, etc. Other aspects of a persons’ identity may be made compatible through seeing themselves as a ‘hybrid’ combination (for example, integrating different ethnic/cultural influences together). This may affect both existing residents (e.g. in widening their perspective of those who might be able to be seen to belong in a particular area) and migrants (e.g. in enabling them to integrate a relationship with both their country of origin and their current country of residence).

In terms of the relationship between identity and our social interactions, this involves recognising that every individual is *both* like every other person in some respects *and* different to them in other respects. Crucially, these principles can play an important role in deepening the effectiveness of interaction activities in promoting belonging. Recognising the importance of different identity affiliations within every individual can provide a crucial bridge between otherwise very different groups, by recognising that every individual belongs to overlapping groups. These affiliations can provide an alternative (deeply committing and emotionally-engaging) basis for recognising those who are perceived as ‘the other’ to become seen as ‘one of us’ in important respects. For example, individuals that

may be from very different religious or cultural backgrounds may nevertheless share a passion for the same hobby, or be equally committed to caring for their children, and hence find that they can relate to some deep aspect of each other on this basis. Enabling people (whether migrants or others) to find these shared bases of identity is important. However, for them to work in building a wider sense of belonging, it is crucial that those engaging in the interaction see their positive experience as being able to be generalised beyond the particular individuals involved. For this to happen, group differences (e.g. between migrants and receiving communities) as well as similarities also need to be acknowledged as part of their interactions in different settings.

Whilst building recognition of aspects of identity which are shared with others can be very positive in promoting belonging, it also carries a risk. Identifying strongly with one particular group, culture or cause can exclude others who do not share that identification. If people cluster and coalesce into groups in ways that limit interactions between people on the grounds of particular aspects of diversity, fault lines can develop and relationships can become polarised. The more diverse the range of connections that can be built between people, the stronger the web of relationships that results, and the less likely that they will fracture into polarised relationships along any one particular fault line.

Policy-makers and practitioners can play a key role in enabling this diversity of relationships to develop, not least through:

1. Supporting open networking and the making of multiple new links and connections based on shared ties of identity, whilst recognising the risk that if these are formed on just one basis, it might lead to some people being excluded. At the same time, avoid building closed networks that result in communities withdrawing within themselves and becoming insular despite living in very diverse environments.
2. Actively supporting initiatives aimed at building trust between migrants and local residents and, in particular, those initiatives taken by voluntary associations and organisations, faith groups and other social partners.

3. Developing the skills of practitioners and policy-makers in being aware of the impact of their own identity and culture on their work and being able to reflectively using their own identity to build bridges between different groups where this is appropriate. Developing networks of activists from different backgrounds and cultures, including both migrants and those from receiving communities, can be a particularly effective way of doing this. For example, running Inter-Cultural Communication and Leadership Schools is one way of developing these skills in a way that brings activists together in a network.³
4. Reviewing policies that require people to tick boxes and fill in forms that force them to choose between aspects of their identity that they may hold simultaneously.

It is worth clarifying that, in focusing on interaction, the intention is not to suggest that ‘activities for migrants from single cultural/faith groups should never be funded or supported’. Neither is the intention to suggest that ‘all activities which are not multilateral are divisive’. Indeed, such activities may be an important way of reaching particular groups, enabling them to explore the specific issues that arise between their culture and the cultures of those within the receiving society, and helping them to engage/adapt.

What is important is that those within such groups should also be supported to build wider links on a range of other grounds as well. If both migrants and those within receiving communities reflect this diversity of connections with each other, then the resulting interactions can help develop a deeper sense of belonging and social cohesion.

Questions for reflection and implementation:

1. To what extent do migrants say that they feel they belong in your context: (i) in their local community; (ii) in your country?

3. See www.intercivilization.net for details.

2. (i) What do they feel strengthens and limits their sense of belonging? (ii) What changes in policy or practice might help to improve this?

3. What steps could you take to build networks and share the experience of those promoting interaction from diverse communities in your context?

Selected Links to Further Resources

The following resources may help you to find examples related to aspects of this approach and explore this approach further. Please note that the inclusion of a link to a resource in the list does not necessarily imply that their contents match the approach in this document entirely. Reflect carefully when applying ideas from other contexts into a different place to see if they need adapting to match your particular setting.

Council of Europe

Orton, A. (2012) *Exploring Interactions in Migrant Integration: Connecting Policy, Research and Practice Perspectives on Recognition, Empowerment, Participation and Belonging*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing

This is the companion volume to this summary policy document, which provides details of the evidence base and wider theory which led to the development of this approach, along with more detail on some of the issues raised and many more related examples.

Taran, P et al (2009) *Economic migration, social cohesion and development: towards an integrated approach*, Strasbourg, Council of Europe Publishing

This presents the main aspects and characteristics of migration in the member states of the Council of Europe, analyses policy challenges raised by contemporary migration, and identifies an appropriate and integrated policy agenda.

Coussey, M (2000) *Framework of integration policies*, Strasbourg, Council of Europe Publishing

This publication maps out policy action needed in the 3 different stages of the integration process: in the context of new arrivals of immigrants; in the promotion of equality of opportunities for long-term migrants; in multicultural and ethnically diverse societies to ensure social cohesion. It brings together the proposals and recommendations in this area developed by various Council of Europe bodies prior to 2000.

Niessen, J (2000) Diversity and cohesion: new challenges for the integration of migrants and minorities, Strasbourg, Council of Europe Publishing

This report identifies ways and means of establishing, with a comprehensive approach, positive community relations for European societies.

Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Migration Affairs

Final declarations of the ministerial conferences in Helsinki (September 2002) and Kyiv (September 2008).

Concerted development of social cohesion indicators: a methodological guide, Council of Europe Publishing, 2005

A methodological guide to the concerted development of social cohesion indicators including a shorter set of indicators relating to the integration of migrants.

European Union

The European Website on Integration

This provides further resources on themes of active citizenship, economic participation, social cohesion, education and culture, anti-discrimination and equality, and tools and techniques; see: <http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/resources/index.cfm>.

For practice examples from the same source, see: <http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/practice/index.cfm> .

The European Union’s “Handbook on Integration for Policy-Makers and Practitioners” provides a wide range of relevant examples and guidance. The 3rd edition focuses on working with mass media, awareness raising and migrant empowerment, and creating platforms for dialogue. It was published in 2010 and is available to download for free in multiple languages from: http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/resources/detail.cfm?ID_ITEMS=12892 .

International Labour Organisation

Involving Migrants in Work: A specific range of resources relating to involving migrants in work, including a database of practice approaches, has been compiled by the International Labour Organization, and can be found at:

www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/migrant/equality/index.htm

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

Integration evaluation tool

Networks of cities

Two networks of cities exploring related approaches at a local level are:

- **‘Cities for Local Integration Policy’ (CLIP)**, “a network of 30 European cities working together to support the social and economic integration of migrants”; see: www.eurofound.europa.eu/areas/populationandsociety/clip.htm
- **The Intercultural Cities programme, run jointly by the Council of Europe and the European Commission;** see www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/policies/Cities/default_en.asp

Appendix A

Summary of commonly agreed basic principles on integration adopted at the European level

The commonly agreed basic principles on integration of migrants at European level set out below are drawn from the following Council of Europe and European Union documents:

- Final declaration of the 7th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Migration Affairs (Helsinki, 16-17 September 2002)
- Final declaration of the 8th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Migration Affairs (Kyiv, 4-5 September 2008)
- A Common Agenda for Integration Framework for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals in the European Union (European Commission, 2005)
- *Diversity and Cohesion: new challenges for the integration of immigrants and minorities* (Council of Europe, 2000)
- *Framework of Integration Policies* (Council of Europe, 2000)
- Recommendation R(92)12 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to Member states on Community Relations.

1. Integration is a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member State. It aims to promote an open and welcoming society and to encourage the participation of migrants in economic, social, cultural and political life.

2. Integration implies respect for the fundamental values of the European societies, in particularly with regard to human rights, democracy and the rule of law. At the same time, it requires the recognition by the host society of the positive contribution that migrants make to society.

3. Effective integration is only possible in societies based on equal rights, obligations and opportunities, where cultural diversity is respected while barriers to integration, in particular, discrimination, racism and xenophobia are removed. People and, most importantly, public officials should understand and value ethnic and cultural diversity and be aware of the gender perspective. Moreover, the practice of diverse cultures and religions is guaranteed under the Charter of Fundamental Rights and must be safeguarded, unless practices conflict with other inviolable European rights or with national law.

4. The participation of migrants in the democratic process and in the formulation of integration policies and measures, especially at the local level, supports their integration.

5. Basic knowledge, understanding and respect of the host society's language, history, institutions and fundamental values is indispensable to integration. Enabling immigrants to acquire this basic knowledge through implementing introduction programmes for newcomers and encouraging language acquisition is essential to successful integration.'

6. Frequent interaction and dialogue between immigrants and host communities is a fundamental mechanism for integration that should be widely promoted. Efforts should be made to associate the host community and migrants in activities aimed at promoting mutual understanding. Shared forums, intercultural dialogue, education about immigrants and immigrant cultures, and stimulating living conditions in urban environments enhance the interactions between migrants and host societies.

7. Efforts in education are critical to preparing immigrants, and particularly their descendants, to be more successful and more active participants in society.

8. Migrants should be empowered to achieve their potential in receiving countries and enhance their commitment to integration. In this context, employment is a key part of the integration process and is central to the participation of migrants, to the contributions migrants make to the host society, and to making such contributions visible. It is crucial to promote equal access to employment for lawfully residing

migrants by, particularly, facilitating the assessment of qualifications and skills (including those acquired in informal and non-formal settings) and improving access of migrants to vocational training. Equal treatment with regard to recruitment, career promotion, employment conditions and salary is also essential for integration.

9. In order to ensure the effectiveness of integration, the needs of vulnerable persons such as children, the elderly, disabled persons and persons who have been traumatised or physically harmed by torture and war, or in crossing borders or at sea should be properly accommodated.

10. Family reunification and the acquisition of citizenship/nationality of the receiving country by long-term migrants and recognised refugees are important in facilitating integration and building the sense of belonging and should be ensured.

Appendix B

Recommendation CM/Rec(2011)1 on interaction between migrants and receiving societies

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Considering that the aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve greater unity between its members and that this aim may be pursued, in particular, through common action in the fields of migration, integration and community relations;

Recognising the important contribution of migrants to the social and economic development of the member states of the Council of Europe and the need to enable them to develop and make full use of their potential, knowledge and skills for the benefit of themselves and the societies in which they live;

Recalling that integration is an interactive process based upon mutual willingness to adapt by both migrants and the receiving society ;

Considering that the development of policies to improve the interaction between migrants and receiving societies and the participation of migrants and persons of immigrant background in civil society is critical to successful integration ;

Emphasising the need to encourage migrants and receiving societies to undertake common activities in favour of the local community and the development of civil society ;

Recalling the undertaking in the Final Declaration of the 8th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for migration (Kyiv, 4-5 September 2008 to enhance social cohesion by improving the integration of migrants and persons of immigrant background and the re-integration of migrants who return to their countries of origin, in particular, by promoting interaction and dialogue between migrants and receiving societies;

Acknowledging the particular difficulties in the successful implementation of policies to promote and support interaction and dialogue between migrants and receiving societies and wishing to give member states further guidance in this area;

Reminding member states of the need to take further steps to reinforce social cohesion and the integration of migrants and through this facilitate their full civil, social, cultural and political participation in the communities in which they live;

Recommends that, with a view to going beyond the simple tolerance of difference, achieving full recognition of migrants' human dignity and building a sense of their belonging to receiving societies, member states should take all necessary actions to facilitate diverse and positive interactions between migrants and receiving societies and, in particular, those set out below.

1. Create diverse and improved opportunities for public interaction.
2. Develop improved skills for interaction amongst participants.
3. Develop improved processes to support and promote positive interactions, including generating wider involvement and providing training for those involved in promoting and enabling this work.
4. Promote recognition of migrants' positive contributions.
5. Empower migrants' participation (and clarify what they are participating in).
6. Consider how existing policies can promote or inhibit interaction whilst providing flexible, tailored services.
7. Ensure that policy-makers and practitioners recognise and respect the complexity of diversity when seeking to enable migrants' involvement in wider society, especially when involving them in developing policies, services and interventions.

8. Develop policies which make the most of the potential arising from the multiple aspects and/or dimensions of everyone's identity, and which allow for these to change and adapt over time.

9. Build stronger networks across diverse groups based on multiple connections and affiliations, both for the public and for practitioners.

Recommends, furthermore, that for the purposes of developing policies to implement the aforementioned actions member states should draw upon the guidance and methodology set out in the Council of Europe policy document « Building migrants' belonging through positive interactions : a guide for policy-makers and practitioners » .

Concerning the communication of this recommendation and its follow-up,

Member states are encouraged to translate the present recommendation into their official language(s) so as to ensure that relevant actors fully understand its implications. Member states should, in any event, draw its principles to the attention of the public and private bodies concerned in their respective countries, via the appropriate national channels;

Member states are also encouraged to define indicators making it possible to measure compliance with the principles of the present recommendation and application of its provisions.

This policy guide was adopted by the European Committee on Migration (CDMG) and its publication authorised at its 59th meeting (15-17 November 2010).

It is a companion volume to the report “Exploring interactions in migrant integration: connecting policy, research and practice perspectives on recognition, empowerment, participation and belonging”.



COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

www.coe.int

The Council of Europe has 47 member states, covering virtually the entire continent of Europe. It seeks to develop common democratic and legal principles based on the European Convention on Human Rights and other reference texts on the protection of individuals. Ever since it was founded in 1949, in the aftermath of the Second World War, the Council of Europe has symbolised reconciliation.