



# EUROPEAN POLICY BRIEF

## **MiICT** FIRST POLICY BRIEF

March, 2020

### INTRODUCTION

The MIICT (ICT-enabled public services for migration) project aims to positively influence existing policies supporting the integration of migrants through recommendations and best practice modelling. While the main focus of MIICT is on ICT-based solutions, the consortium acknowledges that support for training and improving the societal understanding of migrants' challenges are central to improving migration integration. This policy brief is the first step on the path to ensuring MIICT is able to have an impact on policy beyond the duration and geographical scope of the project.

The MIICT 1<sup>st</sup> Policy Brief brings to light key policy areas to address in the context of integrating of third country nationals in Europe. It explains how the policy recommendations offered by MIICT were developed with the aim to support discussions on the current challenges and discourses surrounding the integration of migrants. Based on the challenges identified in the course of the MIICT research, several policy recommendations are formulated to improve migrant integration into host countries and communities. The proposed recommendations place particular emphasis on improving migrants' access to public services.

Policy recommendations address nine integration areas as reflections of the issues raised by multiple stakeholder groups throughout the empirical phase. The empirical work consisted of 1) focus groups carried out in Spain, Cyprus and Italy, bringing to light the challenges faced by migrants, service providers and NGOs; 2) interviews with migrants, service providers and NGOs currently living in seven different European countries; and 3) questionnaires completed by respondents from a diverse range of European countries. This was supported by desk-based research, conducted throughout the course of the project, in order to understand the extent to which these issues are addressed by current policy.

The issues raised by the research participants reflected the main challenges addressed in existing integration policies, most notably housing, employment, education, language, healthcare, social inclusion, trafficking, and legal assistance. The specific challenges research participants faced namely – migrants including refugees and asylum seekers, service providers and NGOs –revealed gaps in process and/or policy that resulted in restricting migrants' access to key services including employment, language learning and healthcare.

This policy brief is aimed at decision makers, lobbying groups and other interest groups. It outlines and elucidates key findings that can contribute to the development of future policies. The recommendations will also feed into the first policy roundtable briefing to be held on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March 2020 in Brussels.

## COUNTRY-SPECIFIC FINDINGS

While there are inherent challenges to migrant integration within all Member States, MIICT conducted focus groups with three stakeholder groups (migrants including refugees and asylum seekers, service providers and NGOs and subject matter experts) in Spain, Cyprus and Italy as these three countries are entry points for migration into Europe. Policy related issues for these specific national contexts and the wider EU arena were identified.

### ***Spain: Focus on Employment and Language***

Participants in the Spanish focus groups (FGs) were asked to address issues relating to employment obstacles. They raised specific concerns about the reluctance of employers to offer jobs to refugees because the 'Red Card' (a document certifying their status as a refugee) is only valid for six months. Where migrants had found work in Spain, it was often unrelated to the field in which they were qualified. Difficulties in recognising qualifications acquired abroad (even where migrants can provide documentary evidence) is a long-standing issue, providing barriers to employment and access to higher education, but one that is, as the FGs highlight, still lacking an adequate solution. In addition, migrants applying for jobs in Spain, due to cultural differences, were unaccustomed to recruiters' focus on proving relevant work experiences. Migrants found their employment prospects further limited by the restricted admission to specialised courses.

Participants in Spain also raised concerns about language learning provisions for migrants. Especially concerning was the observation made by service providers from the Red Cross that the number of men attending available language courses was higher due to cultural differences where women were often confined to the house taking care of children. . Given the centrality of language acquisition to integration, this could significantly hamper efforts to encourage migrant women to integrate into other areas of society. Insufficient childcare for pre-school children was identified as an additional issue that left women disadvantaged, as it prevented them from attending training courses, including language training. A further issue raised by the migrant participants was the difficulty in understanding the local dialect of Spanish used in Andalusia (location of the Spanish pilot). This challenge was encountered even among migrants arriving from countries where Spanish was the national language and highlights the location specific complexity of language related integration challenges.

### ***Cyprus: Focus on Welfare and Employment***

The Cypriot FGs emphasised multiple problems relating to the welfare benefits system. It was criticised for being opaque, bureaucratic and cumbersome. Inadequate (or non-transparent) record-keeping, means it can be difficult for migrants to understand and navigate. Delays in welfare payments prevented migrants from paying rent punctually, leaving them vulnerable to eviction, while also contributing to negative perceptions of migrants by the host society. This fuels two additional issues: a combination of xenophobia and racism, and landlords taking advantage of migrants' vulnerability (also a key problem in Spain). The difficulty of navigating health services was exacerbated by both a lack of transparency in procedures (compounded by the change to a National Health Scheme in 2019) and inadequate social networks among migrants, meaning there was no established and efficient way for them to share knowledge on the overall benefit system. The urgency of reducing the bureaucratic nature of the welfare system was emphasised as it limits migrants' ability to engage in most aspects of everyday life.

Multiple issues relating specifically to healthcare were identified among FG participants focused first and foremost on inadequate access for migrants. Most notably, access to psychological support, especially in the case of refugees and asylum seekers is particularly important. The need to pay some/any attention to mental health was reiterated by NGO representatives especially. Once again, cumbersome bureaucracy was named as a key factor in delaying access to health services as it was often difficult to obtain health certificates and appointments with specialists.

As in the Spanish groups, employment presented itself as a key issue for participants in Cyprus. Yet the specific challenges migrants encountered when seeking support differed in a number of ways. The time and cost of commuting to work, for example, was an issue for migrants in Cyprus that did not pose a challenge for their counterparts in Spain. Asylum seekers further reported that only certain employment sectors were open to them and that these were all low paying and could be intermittent (in other words not full time). Where migrants did find employment, they were often subjected to poor and dangerous working

conditions, including underpayment and a lack of safety. Such circumstances lead to risks that widen the gap between migrants and nationals and hamper efforts to integrate migrants into the workplace.

Two specific issues were raised with regards to the accommodation available to migrants in Cyprus. Firstly, the state of the available housing was found to be poor and even uninhabitable; secondly, there was an evident lack of public housing. The problem of finding suitable housing was emphasised by both migrants themselves and NGOs, with the latter naming overcrowding, unaffordability, and xenophobic discrimination from landlords as reasons.

Language was again identified as a hurdle to integration. Two inadequacies were mentioned in the communication between migrants and service providers: an inadequate offer of language courses and too few interpreters. Few of the migrants could communicate in Greek, which restricted their access to multiple aspects of society. One such aspect is education, which was raised as a key challenge for migrants, who encountered difficulties in accessing education due to a lack of suitable school and university places, inadequate job-specific training, the poor standard of available language courses, and difficulties travelling to educational institutions. Obstacles to communication, however, were not restricted to language barriers – a lack of trust in the authorities created further difficulties in the communication between service users and service providers. From the category of public service workers, police raised concerns about the “huge number” of refugees and asylum seekers and the related security risks associated with this influx. It is worth noting that this important dimension was not raised in the other pilot groups.

Public service representatives in Cyprus further reported understaffed areas. They explained that technical challenges arose as a result of insufficient staff levels to support the migration process. The representatives added that they often encountered legal challenges when working with migrants – most notably the fact that there are currently long examination periods on asylum applications, during which no information is provided on the status of reviews. While in the case of rejection the asylum seeker is given an official letter with information on how to appeal in court, access to files and legal aid is limited. Participants related to issues arising from the mixed migration flows mentioned above, explaining that differentiating between refugees and other categories of migrants proved problematic.

#### ***Italy: Focus on Legal Status and Language***

Migrant participants of the Italian FG were distinct from those in the Spanish and Cypriot pilots as they had all arrived in Europe as unaccompanied foreign minors. However, at the time of the research, all participants were legal adults. This category has been specifically chosen in order to identify challenges and gaps for all groups of refugees and asylum seekers including unaccompanied foreign minors. Accordingly, the challenges mentioned closely reflected those from other groups, including issues relating to language, racism and xenophobia, and difficulties accessing education and employment. Additionally, the former minors were confronted with problems relating to the legal system, including a lack of understanding on the side of the migrants, difficulty gaining refugee status (listed as greatest challenge), difficulty in obtaining documents, assessing age and lacking access to family reunification. Participants found that their integration was made especially difficult by their repeated transferal to different locations.

Problems associated with education included difficulty enrolling in school (similar to the Cypriot group) but also pressures to leave school upon reaching 18 in order to take up employment. The social and educational implications of this are extensive, as opportunities to enroll in higher education as well as to enter a broad range of career sectors become limited.

For tutors<sup>1</sup>, who were part of the Italian FG, communication was the most significant challenge in working with migrant minors. The issue of communication again extended beyond language barriers (although this was mentioned as well) to include a lack of cultural mediation, which was seen as fundamental for social integration. Operators<sup>2</sup> were accused of not effectively cooperating with minors, leaving them without the necessary assistance.

An interesting point was raised by public service providers in the Italian FG (and listed as their highest priority challenge) related to the problematic data-sharing arrangements in juvenile courts. In this regard, the lack of a central database which would be accessible to key administrative actors and containing

---

<sup>1</sup> Tutors in Italy are volunteers who are nominated by the juvenile court to assist unaccompanied foreign minors. This group was included as a stakeholder in the focus groups due to their central role in helping minors access services and integrate into the Italian society. Due to ethical consideration, minors themselves were not directly involved in the research.

<sup>2</sup> In the case of the Italian pilot, the term ‘operators’ refers to those working in social corporations and communities.

information on minors posed a significant hurdle. The fact that migrants were constantly on the move further complicated bureaucracy related issues.

The Italian pilot group was critical in illuminating issues that are specific to the situation of minors. Being a minor can make an individual more vulnerable to certain risks. An example given in the FG was their heightened vulnerability to criminalisation via trafficking gangs, although interestingly, migrant participants themselves did not raise this issue. Public service providers contributing to the FG suggested that a possible factor for the participation of minors in trafficking (both as victims and on the side of the perpetrators) is their tendency to be attracted to established communities with a similar ethnic background. Where these include criminal groups, such groups may exploit this tendency. The relationship between minors and crime was two-dimensional in the sense that they were perceived as more vulnerable to both committing and falling victim to crime and abuse, with their susceptibility for being forced into prostitution given as an example.

A further challenge specific to minors was the abrupt transition from being classed a legal minor to becoming an adult. As many migrants (including the majority of those in the Italian focus group) arrive shortly before turning 18, they are only provided with minor-specific assistance for a very limited period, a period deemed too short to ensure effective integration.

Beyond the issues unique to minors, a number of the challenges discussed mirrored those mentioned in the Spanish and Cypriot focus groups, such as the overcrowding of shelters, insufficient legal representation, and the need to address mental health.

The negative media representation of migrants in Italy was a concern for participants as it acted as a barrier for their integration into the host community. While hostility towards foreign newcomers into a community is not a new phenomenon, the channels for spreading negative or populist attitudes are taking on new and expansive forms such as social media and other online platforms. While the potential for new technologies to improve migrant integration is extensive, it is important to acknowledge and react to its ability to counteract such positive opportunities.

Overall, the group of (former) minors showed enthusiasm to be integrated into the host society, expressing interest in finding work, learning the language of the host country, accessing IT training, and partaking in sports. The Italian pilot emphasised the request of young migrants to have access to technology and, more specifically, to computers and smart phones – an issue not only corresponding to the ICT-dependence of many public services, but also other aspects of daily life.

## **INTERVIEWS AND ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRES**

Potential policy shortfalls were also addressed in interviews and online questionnaires. To a large extent, the issues raised in the interviews and online questionnaires by respondents in a diverse range of European countries, including the UK, Belgium, Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Spain, Cyprus, Denmark and France, reflected those discussed in the pilots' specific focus groups. However, a number of further concerns and recommendations emerged as well as new perspectives on the challenges highlighted above. The key issues identified by participants were: access to information, language barriers/ language learning, discrimination, and ICT accessibility and ICT literacy.

## **EMERGING POLICY SHORTFALLS RESTRICTING MIGRANTS IN FOUR KEY AREAS**

The following four key potential policy shortfalls have been identified:

### ***Employment***

The norms associated with the employment process vary in each country and, as such, were often unfamiliar to migrants looking to contribute to the labour market. Migrants were shown to be ill-equipped to successfully enter the labour market as a result of being poorly informed about the standard requirements. While governments continue to search for a solution to recognising official qualifications gained in third countries, often refugees and asylum seekers cannot present evidence of needed qualifications due to persecution in their country of origin. The persecuting state may purposefully withhold this evidence, or because the way in which they fled meant they could not bring the necessary evidence, that leads to this.

Sufficient access to job searching platforms is necessary to enable migrants to apply for open positions, yet current policies do not address this issue. The most prominent platform for advertising jobs in the EU is the internet. However, migrants could not stay up to date on employment opportunities primarily due to limited access to computers and the internet and not due to having limited digital skills. Additionally, there is an increasing trend by employers to ask applicants to enter their details online and send an electronic copy of their CV or other necessary documents. Without ensuring that migrants have sufficient access to the internet – including support in overcoming the financial and linguistic hurdles of accessing information on the internet – their integration into the labour market becomes severely restricted. Given the varying employment systems and norms across countries, next to internet access migrants often require guidance on preparing their applications, including the necessary computer skills to format CVs and further supporting documents.

While great emphasis is placed on training and improving the skills of migrants in order to enhance their employment prospects, specific guidance on which training is needed, is lacking and should be offered by employers and relevant service providers. The need for migrants to receive specialised training for specific employment sectors, as well tailored language courses and on the job training that specifically targets their employability as opposed to more generic courses, is evident.

Additionally, the cost and time associated with commuting to work posed a problem for migrants. Policy should focus on overcoming these challenges by facilitating better or cheaper travel arrangements and matching migrants to jobs that are close to their accommodation, or vice versa. Travel difficulties were also raised as a hurdle for accessing education, highlighting that the issue of commuting is a problem for a number of migrant groups and restricts their integration into multiple areas of society.

Current policies make limited efforts to promote a better understanding of migrants' situation and rights (especially those of refugees) among employers. This was highlighted by the reluctance to treat the Red Card as a work permit, suggesting employers were either poorly informed or mistrusting of the system. Private employers are encouraged to contribute to integration efforts; yet to facilitate this, more attention should be given to informing them about the labour rights of refugees. Equally, relaxing regulations on granting third country nationals work permits, and making employers aware of these regulations, would further support migrants' ability to become part of the local workforce.

### ***Language***

Throughout the evolution of integration policy, the role of language has been emphasised as fundamental to promoting migrant participation in diverse areas of society. While access to language courses is repeatedly raised in EU policy documents, too little attention is given to some fundamental hurdles in this regard. Relevant language courses, that meet the needs of migrants, taught by qualified teachers should be ensured, so that participants feel motivated to attend. Provisions for childcare and free transport should also be offered to enable participation. In addition to language courses, which are part of a more long-term integration plan, a sufficient number of interpreters and mediators should be available to ensure an adequate level of communication between service providers and migrants, especially in the period directly following arrival in the Member State.

### ***Healthcare***

The main healthcare related issues concerned barriers to accessing healthcare, which was restricted by bureaucracy (Cyprus), reluctance on the part of migrants to undergo treatment in hospitals due to a lack of childcare support (Spain), and poor cultural mediation and linguistic barriers (Italy). Attitudes towards healthcare and medical treatment vary substantially between cultures, particularly in relation to gender-specific issues, which require an especially culture-sensitive response. Policy should urgently address these issues, with specific attention to how they influence access to healthcare.

Despite growing awareness of mental health issues in Europe, the services offered to migrants remain insufficient and access to appropriate medical care severely limited. This is especially concerning in the case of asylum seekers, who may have experienced traumatic experiences before and during migration, and children. Moreover, shortfalls in other integration related issues, such as slow decision making processes for asylum applications, can worsen migrants' mental health by causing extreme anxiety. Such effects should be taken into consideration in future policy developments.

### ***Minors***

Given the delicate circumstances of minors before, during, and after the migration process, the wealth of policy relating to their protection is unsurprising. Nonetheless, the empirical work brought to light a number of challenges current policy fails to respond to. Data-sharing between juvenile courts emerged as

one such problem, as it is presently only prioritised in counter-terrorism efforts. There is a clear need to extend arrangements for civil and administrative purposes, both at a national and EU level. While the European Parliament “calls on Member States to gather disaggregated data on the situation of refugee and migrant children in order to improve the ability of systems to integrate refugee and migrant children”<sup>3</sup>, the need for data-sharing specifically among juvenile courts is not addressed.

In light of the high proportion of minors arriving shortly before turning 18, future policy should aim to ease the transition from childhood to adulthood. Abruptly interrupting the assistance offered to minors can significantly hamper their integration into the host society, while causing additional stress and anxiety to young people who are already faced with considerable challenges. Addressing issues of this child-adult transition could help to alleviate the pressure felt by older minors on the verge of adulthood to prematurely leave school on turning 18 in order to take up employment.

## POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the objectives of the MIICT project is to highlight and identify a number of issues and potential improvements that can be made to EU and member states’ policies and protocols around migration, access to the labour market and other public service access.<sup>4</sup>

MIICT provides 1) general policy recommendations for key challenge areas as well as 2) country-specific recommendations with the aim to contribute to the amendment of existing and the development of new policies relevant to these areas.

### GENERAL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS<sup>5</sup>

The general policy recommendations are categorised according to eight key challenge areas identified in the empirical research work. They have been conceived to reflect the cross-cutting nature of issues across national contexts and multiple actors, as outlined in the previous section.

#### **Employment**

- ✓ Harmonise legislation to enable asylum seekers to participate in the labour market earlier and to extend participation to a more diverse range of sectors
- ✓ Introduce effective and practical mechanisms that facilitate the assessment and recognition of academic qualifications, skills training and work experience of migrants
- ✓ Enforce stricter penalties for employers who abuse and exploit migrants
- ✓ Ensure the same minimum wage for national and migrant workers
- ✓ Introduce subsidised training programmes for migrants
- ✓ Encourage mentorship in specific professional domains
- ✓ Support combined language, skills and on job training programmes
- ✓ Encourage NGOs and public-private partnerships to provide assessment, training and advice on recognising foreign qualifications in areas of identified needs in local labour markets
- ✓ Encourage trade unions to play an active role in enhancing native workers’ awareness of issues related to multi-cultural working environments

---

<sup>3</sup> European Parliament Resolution of 12<sup>th</sup> of April 2016 on the situation in the Mediterranean and the need for a holistic EU approach to migration (2015/2095(INI)), §56

<sup>4</sup> We acknowledge the existence of certain constraints that member states might have in enacting such policies such as gaining access to funds.

<sup>5</sup> These recommendations have been formulated based on 12 months of in-depth research integrating quantitative and qualitative methodologies in several EU countries.

- ✓ Encourage business owners and employers to develop clear and standard contracts for migrants and to keep evidence of regular payments to migrant workers. This should be part of their effort to employ non-discriminatory employment policies.
- ✓ Encourage migrants' innovation and entrepreneurship and strengthen their ability to start a business
- ✓ Regularly identify shortages in the labour market and allow migrants to fill identified gaps in order to maximise their contribution to the host economy
- ✓ Introduce initiatives that improve migrant's access to the labour market
- ✓ Ensure equal access of men and woman to training and job opportunities under consideration of cultural attitudes and differentials

### ***Social inclusion and anti-racism***

- ✓ Introduce comprehensive national government run integration programmes for refugees
- ✓ Introduce anti-racism/anti-xenophobia prejudice reduction initiatives
- ✓ Foster integration initiatives that involve local communities
- ✓ Support pre-migration cultural awareness, language and skills assessment programmes
- ✓ Encourage non-formal youth civic education that targets and attracts migrants
- ✓ Support migrants-local communities' social integration through cultural and sports activities, further focussing on the participation of women and children
- ✓ Activate legislations that oppose xenophobia and racism

### ***Legal concerns***

- ✓ Enhance the capabilities of migrants/asylum seekers' reception centres to provide continuous and consistent legal support to migrants
- ✓ Strengthen the protection and assistance offered to migrant children and young adults
- ✓ Improve procedures for migrants to obtain citizenship or alternative forms of official long-term residence
- ✓ Introduce assessment procedures that better cater for the rights of unaccompanied minors
- ✓ Allow better access to legal aid for migrants
- ✓ Facilitate effective data-sharing between relevant institutions under consideration of strict data protection protocols in all reception centres and NGO front offices to ensure that migrants' personal data is protected

### ***Housing***

- ✓ Introduce strict penalties for landlords who abuse tenants
- ✓ Give more comprehensive access to public housing for migrants, asylum seekers and refugees
- ✓ Support initiatives that allow suitable and affordable long-term housing for migrants within local communities to enhance integration
- ✓ Support and enhance the conditions of asylum seekers' reception centres

### ***Healthcare***

- ✓ Ensure migrants have access to sufficient, relevant, and timely healthcare services including mental health services
- ✓ Support initiatives that enhance communication between migrants and healthcare service providers

- ✓ Improve childcare services for migrants of single parent families who need to undergo medical treatment
- ✓ Ensure cultural training on gender-specific issues for health and mental care providers

### **Education**

- ✓ Support multi-cultural awareness and skills development programmes for teachers and tutors involved with minors/migrant children
- ✓ Promote inclusive education at primary and high schools for migrant communities and provide the required training to teachers and school management
- ✓ Ensure that women have equal access to education and training opportunities

### **Human trafficking**

- ✓ Support the cooperation and competencies of national and EU Law Enforcement Agencies in combating human trafficking of migrants
- ✓ Enhance support programmes offered to migrants who are victims of human trafficking
- ✓ Enhance support programmes offered to migrants who are subjects of smuggling
- ✓ Enhance procedures for vulnerability assessments to ensure that victims of trafficking are identified at an early stage

### **Information and communication technologies (ICTs)**

- ✓ Provide digital hubs for refugees to connect to the internet, charge their device, and use a computer or learn new digital skills in libraries, NGOs and local councils
- ✓ Increase the supply of relevant online content from reliable sources
- ✓ Offer job-related ICT training to migrants
- ✓ Provide language and application support for migrants' in accessing online services

## **COUNTRY-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS**

While many policies are relevant to all European migrant reception/integration contexts, MIICT recognises the importance of responding to the specific contextual needs in each Member State. The following recommendations address the three countries in which our research was conducted.

### **Spain**

- ✓ Review the laws that regulate legal assistance to guarantee the constitutional right to effective legal aid and legal protection
- ✓ Improve procedures for accessing the Red Card
- ✓ Harmonise asylum procedures to prevent regional differences

### **Cyprus**

- ✓ Enhance the transparency of the asylum and welfare systems and ensure the ability to trace the status of benefits; introduce improved and modern ways to distribute benefits (swipe cards vs. printed food coupons and paper checks, for example)
- ✓ Improve access to the labour market for asylum seekers by improving labour market referrals process and expanding access to additional sectors; put protections into place to ensure that asylum seekers are not exploited
- ✓ Expand and further support migrant reception centres and enhance their conditions



- ✓ Improve communication between policy makers, migrants and service providers in order to enhance the migration policy making process
- ✓ Advocate for a comprehensive and consistent national plan for the migration
- ✓ Include NGOs in migration-related policy design
- ✓ Enable asylum seekers to appeal in ordinary courts if their applications are rejected
- ✓ Strengthen the relationship between authorities and migrant communities

### **Italy**

- ✓ Expand and further support reception conditions for minors
- ✓ Facilitate equitable access of vulnerable young migrants to social protection
- ✓ Enable young migrants to obtain full rights protection and access to decent work
- ✓ Enhance procedures for vulnerability assessments to ensure that victims of trafficking are identified at an early stage
- ✓ Enhance procedures to ensure that age assessments are undertaken according to national and European legislation
- ✓ More protection for unaccompanied foreign minors in the neo-adult phase

### **FURTHER RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS**

In response to the findings detailed under Evidence and Analysis and in addition to the policy recommendation made, MIICT is currently developing IMMERSE (Integration of Migrants MatchER Service), a database system designed to tailor public services to the needs of migrants. The platform has an informative goal, as it provides migrants with information in nine areas understood as central to successful integration: legal status, language, education, employment, social welfare, accommodation, healthcare, transport, and social integration. This information is either provided directly or through links to external services. In addition, IMMERSE offers transactional functions in the same areas, whereby users are able to create profiles and receive innovative services directly through the platform. Those benefitting from IMMERSE include users from the migrant community as well as providers of public services, who can take advantage of its efficiency in information sharing, but also the wider community due to a better integrated and more socially cohesive society. IMMERSE will build upon the laudable contributions of existing integration projects in addition to own work within MIICT, incorporating new ways to capitalise on technology and advances in innovation and efficiency.

MIICT will also introduce an integration framework to facilitate the seamless integration of heterogeneous services within the existing infrastructures of public services. This will support the long-term viability of MIICT solutions.

### **RESEARCH PARAMETERS**

MIICT aims at designing, developing and deploying tools that address the challenge of migrant integration through the co-creation of improved ICT-enabled services with migrants, public sector services and NGOs (non-governmental organisations).

These services are provided by co-designed ICT enabled solutions, delivered via the IMMERSE platform, that assist the integration of migrants including refugees and asylum seekers through the customised access to key public services. The IMMERSE platform will enable migrants to benefit from a set of digital services available seamlessly across the EU and complement existing public services.

MIICT provides a direct impact upon various existing and future EU migrant groups. It delivers a tangible impact to the migrant integration and harmonisation process through several key processes such as new collaborative holistic research to identify the primary problems and challenges that migrants face. This

research will not only benefit future EU research projects, initiatives and Member State policy making but will mould practical ICT solutions to directly resolve migrant problems and enable the more inclusive integration of migrants into the social and economic structures of host countries. It will also influence existing migration policy through recommendations and best practice modelling. Policy impact is achieved through different means including this and future policy briefs.

The core concept of MIICT is aligned to the principles of INSPIRATION, IDEATION and IMPLEMENTATION, grounded in the participatory human-centric approach of co-design and co-creation.<sup>6</sup> Multi-disciplinary stakeholders participate in the design, development and deployment process to ensure the identification of needs and requirements from both the perspectives of migrants, public sector services and NGOs, the collaboration of cross-disciplinary expertise from academia, industry and the private sector in the development of digital services, and the realisation of improved service delivery via a thorough and rigorous piloting and evaluation process. This methodology enables research participants (including the project team) to be actively involved in the cyclical stages of questioning, reflecting, investigating, developing, implementing and refining.

Requirements elicitation formed the core of the INSPIRATION phase which was concerned with acquiring an understanding of the communities' needs during research. In MIICT, 'communities' included the network of end-users and other interest groups, as well as the specific actors implicated in the work, public authorities who provide access to public services, and migrants as the users of those services. During the INSPIRATION phase specific challenges were shaped and framed. These challenges represented the needs to be addressed by the MIICT ICT solution (IMMERSE platform) and formed the nuclei of proposed policies. The challenges were understood from two dominant perspectives: those of the migrant actors and those of the public sector service providers. The project's NGO and interest group partners provided further input to supplement and enhance our understanding of migrant integration challenges and requirements. Focus groups with migrants, service providers, NGOs and subject experts at three pilot locations (Spain, Cyprus and Italy) as well as interviews and online questionnaires across Europe shaped the pillars of requirements elicitation and informed policy recommendations.

Moving forward with the research, co-design and co-creation workshops formed the core of the IDEATION phase. Participants from the INSPIRATION phase alongside the multidisciplinary team of experts that make up the project consortium's design and development team convened across a number of co-design workshops using well-established methods including cognitive and context mapping and storyboarding to detail problem areas where MIICT's ICT development and proposed policies can facilitate improvements and implement change. Furthermore, workshop participants were engaged to tease out potential solution prototypes based on the outcomes of previous workshops and focus groups.

This participatory human-centric approach will be continued during the IMPLEMENTATION phase, as the IMMERSE system currently under development will be extensively tested and validated in real world conditions during the live prototyping at sustained service delivery at the three pilot locations: Spain, Cyprus and Italy. Migrants including refugees and asylum seekers, service providers and NGOs that work closely with migrants will be involved in testing the IMMERSE platform with the objective of establishing the long-term feasibility and sustainability for delivered ICT supported services via the platform.

Utilising the three-pronged approach of 'INSPIRATION', 'IDEATION' and 'IMPLEMENTATION', MIICT adopts design thinking as part of its overall approach. The use of design thinking as a human-centred methodological approach allows integrating users (in our case migrants and refugees) directly into the design of public services. It also integrates them into the policy making process ensuring ultimate impact. The methodology addresses a very real gap that exists in the trust many citizen groups have with their governments – which they may believe have lost, or in some cases never had, sight of their wants, needs and cultural identities. Because of this, MIICT's approach puts citizens' needs back at the forefront of public service design to create tangible and positive impacts, whether through ICT supported services or by supporting future migrants' related policies.

All collected research is processed in accordance with the GDPR guidelines, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the European Convention of Human Rights. MIICT has been designed from the ground up to adhere to GDPR regulations to ensure that MIICT can lawfully, ethically and practically operate in all

---

<sup>6</sup> E. B.-N. Sanders and P. J. Stappers, "Co-creation and the new landscapes of design," *CoDesign*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 5–18, 2008.

Member States. Thus, the requirements of GDPR are observed in MIICT implementations so that the IMMERSE platform complies with the legal requirements and ensures the highest level of protection of its end-users. The overall risk-based approach enshrined in this legislation is reflected in the project, which incorporates the privacy by design concept throughout all its activities.

## PROJECT IDENTITY

<b>PROJECT NAME</b>	ICT Enabled Public Services for Migration
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	Prof. Babak Akhgar, Sheffield Hallam University (SHU), Sheffield, United Kingdom, <a href="mailto:miict@shu.ac.uk">miict@shu.ac.uk</a>
<b>CONSORTIUM</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ADITESS ADVANCED INTEGRATED TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS AND SERVICES LTD, Cyprus</li><li>• AGENFOR INTERNATIONAL, Italy</li><li>• ASSOCIATION DES AGENCES DE LA DEMOCRATIE LOCALE, France.</li><li>• CENTRE FOR RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY HELLAS (CERTH), Greece</li><li>• CENTER FOR SECURITY STUDIES, Greece</li><li>• CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF DEMOCRACY, Bulgaria</li><li>• ASSOCIATION OF CITIZENS FOR RESEARCH, ANALYSIS AND PUBLIC POLICY DEVELOPMENT, Republic of North Macedonia</li><li>• FUNDACION EUROARABE DE ALTOS ESTUDIOS, Spain</li><li>• KOINONIA CARITAS CYPRUS, Cyprus</li><li>• LAUREA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES Ltd, Finland</li><li>• LAW AND INTERNET FOUNDATION, Bulgaria</li><li>• MINISTERIO DELLA GIUSTIZIA, Italy</li><li>• MUNICIPALITY OF ENGOMI, Cyprus</li><li>• SHEFFIELD HALLAM UNIVERSITY, Centre of Excellence in Terrorism, Resilience, Intelligence and Organised Crime Research (CENTRIC), United Kingdom</li><li>• SYNNO GmbH, Austria</li></ul>
<b>FUNDING SCHEME</b>	Horizon 2020 Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2014-2020) “Societal Challenge 6 – Europe in a changing world: Inclusive, innovative and reflective societies”; Call: MIGRATION-2018; Topic: “Addressing the challenge of migrant integration through ICT-enabled solutions”
<b>DURATION</b>	November 2018 – October 2021 (36 months)
<b>BUDGET</b>	€ 3,262,575.00
<b>WEBSITE</b>	<a href="http://www.miict.eu">www.miict.eu</a>
<b>FOR MORE INFORMATION</b>	Contact: Prof. Babak Akhgar, Sheffield Hallam University (CENTRIC), <a href="mailto:b.akhgar@shu.ac.uk">b.akhgar@shu.ac.uk</a>
<b>FURTHER READING</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Legal and Ethical Analysis Report</li><li>- MIICT Inclusivity Handbook</li><li>- ICTs for Social and Public Sector Service Transformation &amp; Policy Review Report</li><li>- Phase 1 Co-Creation Report</li><li>- Integrated Report of the 1<sup>st</sup> Policy Briefing and Roundtable &amp; Project</li><li>- Communication and Dissemination Report</li></ul>