

## COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE MANIFESTO

Project WELCOMM is an effort by an international partnership among five civil society organisations active in the field of integration - coming from Austria, Croatia, Italy and Slovenia. The partnership was established around an EU AMIF (asylum, migration, integration) funded project WELCOMM - *Supporting integration of third country nationals through developing learning and collaboration tools to build welcoming and inclusive communities*, which developed different [tools](#)<sup>1</sup> to facilitate the process of integration of third country nationals - providing online information, training seminars, and linking the expert and the community of practice. Developing such tools certainly puts one (who is in the position of “the first country” national) in a certain power position towards the ones defined as “third country nationals”. Do we accept it as such or do we use the funding mechanism to question and challenge it?

In late December of 2017, the European Commission and the EU Social and Economic partners signed a '[European Partnership for Integration](#)', “laying down key principles and commitments to support and strengthen opportunities for refugees and migrants legally residing in the EU to integrate into the European labour market”<sup>2</sup>. One of the actions that came out of that partnership is the establishment of the European Migrant Advisory Board (EMAB) in March 2018 - a board that comprises of a diverse group of experts with migrant and refugee backgrounds. The board as such works on increasing the participation of migrants and refugees in different policy-making processes affecting migrants’ access to rights. In 2019, it published a research titled [Ask the People](#) - a consultation, which was done between September and December 2018, consisted of 21 focus groups that engaged a total of 260 participants. “The results demonstrate that migrants and refugees have the experience and expertise to inform public debates and to ensure better policy making. Currently, experts who have experience as migrants and refugees are underrepresented in the decision-

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://welcomm-europe.eu/info-for-refugees/>

<sup>2</sup> [https://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-17-5352\\_en.htm](https://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-5352_en.htm)



This project was funded by the European Union's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund.

The content of this communication represents the views of the author only and is his/her sole responsibility. The European Commission does not accept any responsibility for use that may be made of the information it contains.

making processes.”<sup>3</sup> Integration is a two-way process - is a statement we often hear in discussion on integration, and as such is often defined in national policies; but do we really practice it as a two-way process? Who is being integrated and into what? How do we include social groups who are participating in the society but living on the margin of it?

“In order for EU and member state authorities to implement recommendations, the EU should involve them in ‘structured participation’, meaning that participation is not an add-on but rather a planned process from design to evaluation within existing structures and processes.”<sup>4</sup> EMAB gives this as an overall recommendation for long-term, sustainable, constructive and inclusive policy that takes into consideration all aspects of society - no matter what their current values are, and shapes realities of the practice according to them.

The value we promote within this text lies in the idea that migrants and refugees enrich and challenge our societies; and that society has to take that process seriously and work on it. We need to create spaces for exchange, have the capacity to understand “difficulties” no matter how hard they can be to experience and we need to act - not re-act!

Europe is a multicultural, intercultural continent and the current migrant situation is challenging Europe to resist racism and xenophobia. When speaking about integration and support - we also have to consider how we do that for each-other because every practice that excludes one person today, will exclude you tomorrow. This is currently visible in shrinking civic spaces and criminalization of solidarity.

We are not completely failing, if we start learning from each-other and act.

Integration has been discussed for a long time now and within different scope of individuals - from scholars to practitioners and politicians. Within these discussions, there are different opinions and approaches - one is provoking the other and theories develop. We, on the other hand, are practitioners and the perspective

---

<sup>3</sup> European Migrant Advisory Board (2019), “Ask the People”, Brussels, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> European Migrant Advisory Board (2019), “Ask the People”, Brussels, p. 37.



This project was funded by the European Union's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund.

The content of this communication represents the views of the author only and is his/her sole responsibility. The European Commission does not accept any responsibility for use that may be made of the information it contains.

we discuss in this text comes from realities we live in - hoping they will enrich discussion and make changes for the better. "Integration should be conceptualised as a process that takes place between insiders and outsiders, which implies a relational understanding of integration."<sup>5</sup> We need to reach that shift in the practice - and stop communicating that process of integration only applies to refugees, migrants "Third Country Nationals". "Integration is to be located in the power relations between insiders and outsiders, who are both intrinsically part of the process. Integration provides information about the relationships between people, not about (the categories) of individuals."<sup>6</sup>

We believe in the necessity of articulating - needs of both sides (old and new citizens) for building solidarity. Through the articulation of need , personal relationships can arise and lead to the creation of mutual connection and understanding. However, "more integration does not necessarily equal more harmony, since changing power relations cause social frictions."<sup>7</sup> All this should happen in local communities where everyday life happens and people create their realities together. It is crucial to initiate more events to exchange within local communities. Integration is meant for all citizens, even though funds are addressed for the "Integration of Third Country Nationals". Integration funds can be used for the needs of all citizens, not only one group and some examples in practice show how it works - Italian cities of Riace and Palermo. In Riace the major has used integration money to relive the city for all, while in Palermo integration was used to fight issue concerning the mafia. "In Palermo, integration is so good that Italians and migrants have the same problems. Anything that doesn't work doesn't work equally for both groups. We no longer have any service specifically designed for migrants, because when they solve their problems, migrants go to the same places as other citizens - they turn to the city administration. It is migrants who have taught Italian citizens the right to call the authorities for unemployment. When we talk about human rights, we are not talking individually about migrant, LGBT or other's rights, but about the whole society, the circle in which everyone must remain. If we tolerate that the rights of migrants can be attacked, then we also accept that tomorrow, someone may endanger the rights of any other group, such as women or ill people. National authorities first began to attack

---

<sup>5</sup> Klarenbeek, L. M. (2019) Reconceptualising integration as a two-way process, *Migration Studies*, p.13

<sup>6</sup> Klarenbeek, L. M. (2019) Reconceptualising integration as a two-way process, *Migration Studies*, p.13

<sup>7</sup> Klarenbeek, L. M. (2019) Reconceptualising integration as a two-way process, *Migration Studies*, p.14



This project was funded by the European Union's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund.

The content of this communication represents the views of the author only and is his/her sole responsibility. The European Commission does not accept any responsibility for use that may be made of the information it contains.

migrants, and subsequently organized a terrible congress in Verona where they attacked women's rights. A few years ago we warned about this and it turned out we were right. When we defended the rights of migrants, we actually defended our own rights.”<sup>8</sup>.

---

<sup>8</sup> Adam Darawsh, Palermo deputy major for culture, authors translation from Croatian to English - [https://www.kulturpunkt.hr/content/braneci-prava-migranata-branimo-i-svoja-prava?fbclid=IwAR0FKP4XbwWlj-Ffi5UhH9Ivbwt2CAJ\\_Fu278nN\\_hEV4cu-DCBooX7nIDXc](https://www.kulturpunkt.hr/content/braneci-prava-migranata-branimo-i-svoja-prava?fbclid=IwAR0FKP4XbwWlj-Ffi5UhH9Ivbwt2CAJ_Fu278nN_hEV4cu-DCBooX7nIDXc)



This project was funded by the European Union's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund.

The content of this communication represents the views of the author only and is his/her sole responsibility. The European Commission does not accept any responsibility for use that may be made of the information it contains.