



## State of art of cultural policies for the integration of migrants at the European level





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## Abstract – Synthesis

The Erasmus+ project “MigrArts: integrating migrants through arts and culture” aims to improve the integration, inclusion and emancipation of migrants by better taking into account their cultural rights, at the local, national and European levels. In a context of rising nationalism and increasing security rhetoric in Europe, it seems more than necessary to promote an inclusive Europe that is strong in its diversity. Culture and arts are essential vectors for promoting both diversity, humanity and universality as components of our societies, and intercultural dialogue. The MigrArts project is intended both to support the recognition and effective consideration of migrants’ cultural rights and to promote self-fulfillment through the development of creative skills and a sense of belonging. The project aims at supporting organizations working in the cultural field or in the social one, to work together in an innovative, inter-sectoral and intercultural approach. MigrArts is coordinated by la Ligue de l’enseignement (France) in partnership with Arci (Italy), Center for peace studies (Croatia) and Community development institute (North Macedonia).

### Introduction: considering the role of cultural policies within integration policies in general

Culture is powerful enough to transform lives, to share knowledge. It also contributes to promote inclusion, dialogue and the respect of human’s rights. By this way, it can contribute to social cohesion. In this framework, we should consider the importance cultural rights, as an integral part of human rights, universal, indivisible and interdependent. Patrice Meyer-Bisch, President of the Observatory of Diversity and Cultural Rights and member of the Fribourg Group and who is at the origin of the Fribourg Declaration on Cultural Rights suggests this definition: *“They are the rights, freedoms and responsibilities for a person, alone or in community, to choose and express his/her identity by accessing, practising and contributing to cultural references perceived as necessary resources for his/her identification, communication and creation process. Thus, they include both the rights that protect identity (non-discrimination or respect for identity), the means of expressing this identity (freedom of expression, right to participate in cultural life, right to use language, etc.) and access to the various resources needed to live one’s identity freely throughout life (education, information, freedom of association, access to heritage).”* According this definition, culture is not limited to intellectual knowledge. It also contributes to the construction of one’s identity.

Thus, it is imperative that cultural policies involve migrant’s people as it is fundamental to take into account their cultural rights. However, professionals working to improve and ensure the inclusion of migrants in our societies lack of tools and methods. The MigrArts project aims to provide a framework for understanding the current institutional framework at European and national levels in terms of integration and inclusion, but also to provide operational tools to educators and social workers for them to be able to better take into account the cultural rights of migrants in their daily work.

In a context of rising nationalism and increasing security rhetoric in Europe, it seems more than necessary to promote an inclusive Europe that is strong in its diversity. Culture and Art are essential vectors for promoting both diversity, humanity and universality as components of our societies and intercultural dialogue.



For several decades, migration policies have adopted an increasingly security-oriented approach. The European Union and more and more of its Member States barricade themselves and restrict the rights of migrants, especially those who leave their countries under duress - exiles - as a result of disasters, dictatorships, wars and misery. At the same time, the possible development of a reception and integration policy based on solidarity, law and cultural principles is relegated to the background. The deployment of these European policies has led to the creation of a link between flow control policies and immigrant integration policies. Thus, once the borders between two countries are crossed, migrants face new 'borders' within society itself, which take on ethnic, normative, cultural and socio-economic connotations.

Over the past year, the EU's political debate has been focusing on the main challenges faced by the Union and the Member States: the management of migration flows, but also the promotion of integration policies that could have a social, economic and political impact within the EU. In many EU countries, the political scene has been dominated by a rise of anti-migrations speeches, picturing migrations as a threat for cultural identities and welfare systems. That reinforces an overgrowing fear, which feeds xenophobia and hate speeches. And results in a rise of discriminations against migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Therefore, migrant's people are facing difficulties accessing their economic, social and cultural rights. They encounter a greater risk of social exclusion than the native population, especially with respect to accessing employment, education, health and social services. Within the migrant population some groups are particularly at risk, thus, requiring tailored integration measures. This is especially the case for low-skilled migrants, women and unaccompanied minors, migrants with disabilities and irregular migrants. The integration of migrants in a host country is multidimensional, hence, it should involve their socio-economic integration. To this dimension must be added, at the institutional and civil society level, in-depth work on the inclusion of cultural rights in the actions and measures to be implemented.

## 1. The main European policies for the inclusion and integration of migrants

The integration and inclusion of migrants in host societies takes place on several levels and isn't unidimensional. In order to better understand the functioning of EU migration policies, we will focus here on key texts that shape the way the EU and Member States manage the arrival of migrants and their inclusion such as agreements, treaties and frameworks on migration, integration, and inclusion.

### 1. A - Migration and integration policies of the European Union

At the EU level, the issue of immigration and asylum seekers appeared for the first time in the Treaty of Maastricht and the establishment of the European Union in 1992. This preliminary study led to the creation of a common base for migration policies and was later on defined in the Treaty of Amsterdam. Nowadays, although treaties on the subject have been ratified, the European asylum policies are criticized, in particular



because of the lack of legal ways for citizens of developing countries to enter the European Union, but also because of the distribution criteria of the Dublin Regulations.

Indeed, if the European Union releases common standards and procedures of asylum, Member States, however, are responsible for labour immigration and integration policies. Given the situation, one of the EU's goal since the early 2000 has been to harmonize asylum applications, procedures, reception and rights of in the field of asylum. However, differences still exist between all the Member States, especially when it comes to the share of responsibility and the legal ways to enter the European Union and its Member States. As a result of these disparities, the refugee crisis of 2015 and 2016 led to conflicts between some the Member States' relocation. Due to the massive and tragic loss of lives in the Mediterranean Sea, the European Union has decided to relocate migrants between the different Member States. Relocation within the European Union enables those who requested asylum in one EU Member State to travel to another EU Member State, where their asylum application will be further processed. Therefore, by the end of 2018, 34.700 out of 160.000 contracted relocations were completed (through relocations asylum seekers are transferred from their current host European country, normally their first country of entry into the EU, to another European country). But, as the politic decisions of the EU are not always legally binding, some Member States refused to take asylum seekers and hence infringed upon an EU right. To sum up, even if an important development of common migration policies has been achieved since the establishment of the European Union in 1993, migration, asylum and integration remain topics of conflict and discussions between Member States.

### 1. B – The Dublin Regulation.

For the sake of clarity and homogeneity, the asylum policies of the Member States were supposed to become consistent and common in the Dublin Convention of 1990. The main goals of this Convention are to process asylum applications as quick as possible (according to determined criteria), to avoid refugees seeking for asylum and multiplying applications in several EU countries as well as situations in which migrants are left without asylum application. To do so, the Dublin Regulation ensures that asylum seekers can only apply for asylum in a unique European Member State. As a matter of fact, deciding which Member State is responsible for the application is defined in a set of criteria. The first criteria is the family unity, followed by the existence of a valid residence permit or visa. If none of the previous criteria are met, it is the first European country the asylum seeker enter that is responsible of the asylum procedure. In consequence, some Member States (due to their geographical localisation) are facing high numbers of asylum seekers in comparison to other Member States.

The implementation of Dublin III-Regulation aims to protect as much as possible asylum seekers and to increase the efficiency of the asylum system. Nevertheless, the reforms do not meet the objective of a fair distribution of asylum seekers, which is globally recognised as a weakness by the EU peers and represent a weakness of the EU's asylum policies framework. Although EU citizens have the legal right of free movement



and residence in the European Union, Schengen Borders Code I and the Dublin III Regulation are restrictive, aiming to prevent citizens of developing countries coming in the European Union.

## 1. C – The Action Plan on integration and inclusion

In order to include migrants more effectively and to propose more adequate policies, the European Commission designed an Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion for the European funding cycle 2021 to 2027. The main subject of this Action Plan is to emphasize that migrants have the right to stay in a European country, and that therefore, they need to be offered equal opportunities. According to this statement, if migrants can stay within the European Union, they are however requested to respect European values, like democracy, law, freedom of speech and religion, as well as non-discrimination policies. The definition of the concept of integration laid down in the Action Plan defines integration as a “two-way process whereby migrants and EU citizens with migrant background are offered help to integrate and they in turn make an active effort to become integrated”. The key principles are “inclusion for all”, “targeted support where needed”, “mainstreaming gender and anti-discrimination priorities”, “support at all stages of the integration process”, and “maximising EU added value through multi-stakeholder partnerships”. All those principles underline the importance of multilevel governance within the EU. Indeed, support at all stages means to offer pre-departure measures in the countries of origin, like language and orientation training. Concerning the integration of migrants, the European Commission describes different sectoral areas, like education and training, employment and skills, health, housing, and the achievements in those areas. The latter support migrants to meet the requirements of the two-way process of integration. The Action Plan especially puts an emphasis on language training, participation in the labour market (especially for women), equal access to health care services and housing.

In addition to describing the different phases of integration of migrants in the host society, the plan has a section dedicated to women in a migration context. Indeed, women are more subject to discriminations based on gender, race, ethnicity, religion, whether they have a residence title, etc. According to the updated Action Plan, multilevel governance aspect should be taken into account and partnerships with all governance levels, stakeholders, social and economic partners and rural regions shall be built. This means that migrants should be able to participate in decision-making processes at all governance levels.

It also considers the need for cooperation between key players and focuses on bottom-up processes of integration in the societies. In order to support the social inclusion and interaction of migrants within the host societies, the European Union has decided to increase the cooperation between stakeholders and the exchange of measures and good practices between the Member States. Although migration policies appear to be a subject of shared competencies between the EU and its Member States, states are responsible for integration policies. Even though Member States develop legal and policy frameworks to improve integration, their implementation often deviates from the primary hypothesis when it comes to practical realisations. The actual Action Plan includes guidelines and recommendations for various stakeholders such



as national governments, regional and local authorities and civil society, with the overall aim of improving integration and inclusion strategies.

## 1. D – The New Pact on Migration and Asylum.

The New Pact on Migration and Asylum proposed by the European Commission in September 2020 highlights the need of shared responsibility of all Member States and the importance of partnerships with key developing countries of origin and transit, in order to increase the effectiveness of EU policies. In this new pact, a link is made between the concept of asylum and return. The objective behind the link between these two concepts is to allow a better reception and a better management of the return of migrants, at the level of the borders of the countries concerned. The European Union is looking for a greater adaptability and flexibility of European migration policies. In conclusion, the Asylum Procedures Regulation is supposed to establish simpler, clearer and shorter procedures, as well as a “more effective” border procedure. It should be noted that unaccompanied minors and families with children under the age of twelve shall be exempted from this border procedure. Another part of this pact is the focus is on reinforcing the fight against migrant smuggling. The development of legal pathways to Europe is about labour mobility and is called “talent partnership”, which means that the European Union is interested in attracting talented people with specific skills. This point of view is criticized by some actors. Indeed, it means that some people are worthy to be welcome, and some not. Making a choice at the European border goes against the universal right of being treated equally. Despite its intention to be comprehensive, the Pact does not mention pathways to enter the European Union for people in need of protection, a bias that is criticized by NGOs. Finally, the New Pact on Asylum and Migration is supposed to replace the criticised Dublin Regulations: it should implement a solidarity mechanism in order to create a climate of shared responsibilities between Member States. In conclusion, the New Pact on Migration and Asylum is a communication paper instead of a programme calling for the more solidarity between the Member States. Several NGOs have criticised the fact solidarity is seen here as a state of choice and not an obligation. This is leading migrants to be relocated from European countries to others or being send back to their country of origin.

## 2. The European Union’s cultural policies for the integration of migrants

### 2. A Policy and regulatory framework

Some texts dealing more specifically with the EU's cultural policies. It is in this perspective that in 2002, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees published a report: “Refugee Resettlement – An International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration”<sup>1</sup>. It described refugees' integration as a:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/protection/resettlement/4a2cfe336/refugee-resettlement-international-handbook-guide-reception-integration.html>



“mutual, dynamic, multi-faceted and on-going process”<sup>2</sup>. Specifically, the report highlighted: “the conditions for and actual participation in all aspects of the economic, social, cultural, civil and political life” of the host country. Indeed, the report stresses the importance of the recognition of refugees' culture for their integration and contribution to multicultural society. Similarly, a 2013 Committee of the Regions' study on developing countries' integration discussed socioeconomic, legal and cultural aspects of integration, and pointed out the recognition of migrants' culture as an integration factor.

Furthermore, the 1966 United Nations International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights<sup>3</sup>, granted all men and women possibility to enjoy all economic, social and cultural rights (Article 3) and to take part in cultural life (Article 15(1)a). We consider that states submitted to the Covenant shall create conditions for everyone to benefit from them. Nowadays, this is still not the case. In the European Union, Article 22 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU<sup>4</sup> provides for the respect of cultural diversity. According to Article 79(4) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), integration policy is primarily a national competence. The role of the EU is to support national measures through funding and guidelines on good practices. On the basis of Articles 6 and 167 TFEU, the EU plays the same supporting role in respect of cultural policies of Member States and consequently their cultural integration policies.

The Covenant suggest actions and pilot projects in order to increase immigrants' cultural participation and contacts between migrants and host society through cultural activities. The first edition of the Commission's Handbook on Integration for policy-makers and practitioners suggested introducing integration indicators on its socioeconomic, cultural, civil and political dimensions. Its third edition developed the cultural dimension. It highlighted the role of arts and culture in giving a voice to migrants and refugees, in discussing differences among populations, or as a work opportunity. Since many migrants settle in urban areas, the renewed European Agenda for Integration of 2011 stressed the role of local communities in stimulating migrants' participation in cultural activities, thus contributing to social cohesion, particularly in disadvantaged urban areas. The 2020 Commission Action Plan on the integration stressed participation in cultural life as an important factor in creating a sense of belonging to the host society, a process of informal learning, and mutual understanding. The Commission recommended EU financial support to cultural diversity projects through arts and culture.

Moreover, in the common basic principles for immigration integration policy within the EU (CBP)<sup>5</sup>, the November 2004 meeting of the Justice and Home Affairs Council stressed that successful integration of migrants by individual Member States was in the common interest of the European Union. It listed recommended actions in this area, such as shared forums, inter-cultural dialogue and education about

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/52a6d85b6.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-economic-social-and-cultural-rights>

<sup>4</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C\\_.2010.083.01.0389.01.ENG&toc=OJ:C:2010:083:TOC](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C_.2010.083.01.0389.01.ENG&toc=OJ:C:2010:083:TOC)

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/en/jha/82745.pdf](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/jha/82745.pdf)





immigrant cultures, which enhance interaction between immigrants and Member State citizens and promote mutual understanding. The following year, the European Commission adopted the communication<sup>6</sup>, “A common agenda for integration - Framework for the integration of third-country nationals in the European Union” to facilitate the implementation of the Common Basic Principles.

The Manual of artistic tools for migrants “Art of adaptation”<sup>7</sup>, published in 2012, resulted from the Ariadne project, supported by the EU's Lifelong Learning programme. It researched the role of art in the adaptation process, analysed positive impacts of art and creative activities on the ability to adapt, to change, and as a therapeutic tool to address trauma in one's personal development. This approach mirrors the needs of refugees who flee war zones and whose cultural identity has been undermined. In June 2016, the Commission held a structured dialogue<sup>8</sup> with organisations working at local level in the area of culture, on the role of culture in promoting the inclusion of refugees and migrants. The resulting report pointed an urgent need to find strategies allowing large numbers of refugees fleeing conflict and war zones to be included in European societies while preserving their cultural roots and identity. It focuses on culture as a factor in helping refugees to recover from trauma, develop their skills, and feel empowered, as well as contributing to conflict resolution and prevention, and mutual understanding. It underlines that smaller local projects of cultural expression could have greater impact and result in more people-to-people contacts. The impact of cultural actions is difficult to assess, while the creative process itself can bring change through co-creation and co-production. The process is as important as the outcome and could also back up the development of integration policy in other fields (such as education and housing). The report recommends establishing a new EU funding programme, especially for local authorities, including those in rural and remote areas, to finance “spaces of welcome” for refugees. Such safe spaces should be implemented swiftly and culturally engage local and refugee communities, allowing them to explore identity issues and promote inclusion. By supporting art and culture projects involving the whole community, the EU will help build bridges between people and strengthen democracy. The report stresses the need for a wider cultural strategy to develop an open and equal dialogue between newcomers and their host cultures, so that both communities share the task of integration.

## 2. B- Financial support for the cultural integration and inclusion of refugees and migrants

There are currently no tools to understand how much of the expenditure on integration measures for asylum seekers, refugees and migrants, is allocated to improving their participation in cultural life and the promotion of artistic and cultural pathways and projects. However, the European Union provides funds to develop projects for the integration and inclusion of migrants, including in the cultural field.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52005DC0389>

<sup>7</sup> [https://issuu.com/artemisiz/docs/ariadne\\_emanual\\_english](https://issuu.com/artemisiz/docs/ariadne_emanual_english)

<sup>8</sup> <https://voicesofculture.eu/>



To begin with, the Regulation (EU) No 516/2014 established the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund which provides support for Member States' action: €385 million of its €3.1 billion budget is assigned to funding grants and other direct actions over the 2014-2021 period. The fund has provided €9.5 million in 2017 for integration of third-country national projects, including for their participation in cultural life.

Moreover, the Creative Europe programme safeguards and promotes Europe's cultural and linguistic diversity. This way, European cooperation projects can create intercultural dialogue and help bring communities together. In the wake of the 2015 migration crisis that turned into an international political crisis, the Creative Europe program launched in 2016 launched a specific call for “Support to refugee’s integration” under its cross-sectoral section. The call notes that “at a time when Europe is receiving an extraordinary number of refugees, intercultural dialogue through culture and the arts plays an important role to integrate refugees”. The directorate General Education and Culture of the European Union sees a crucial role for the culture sector to play in addressing this global challenge through supporting initiatives that use culture and creativity for integration of refugees. It has therefore allocated €2.5 million for 12 projects on refugee cultural integration starting in September 2016<sup>9</sup>. These projects included activities in different fields (theatre, music and storytelling productions) allowing refugees to express themselves as well as for EU citizens and refugees to get to know their respective cultures, and co-create together.

### 3. An overview of national policies for the integration of migrants focusing on arts and culture in France, Croatia, North Macedonia and Italy.

The countries taking part in the MigrArts project are very different in several aspects. Integration policies for migrants are much more developed in Italy and France for historical and social reasons. Those policies are less developed in Croatia and Macedonia, who are also dealing with increasing migrations while trying to implement better reception conditions and inclusion management. Cultural policies concerning refugees, migrants, on the other hand, are still very fragmented in all countries. The role of institutions is not yet central and, at the same time, in the absence of specific resources and the temporariness of interventions, there is no real awareness of the value of artistic and cultural practices within policies, integration measures for migrants.

In this sense, a comparative analysis of the different countries can offer an interesting overview.

In Italy and France, there is a lack of awareness of the institutional and social actors involved in the reception and protection of migrants and thus no coordination between them. Elements related to inclusion and culture can be found in the integration plans of both countries. However, their effectiveness can be questioned as they lack implementation measures and resources. Many initiatives come from the civil society with financial resources from foundations or temporary programs of ministries.

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<sup>9</sup> [https://culture.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2021-03/creative-europe-refugees-integration-projects-2017\\_en.pdf](https://culture.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2021-03/creative-europe-refugees-integration-projects-2017_en.pdf)



In Macedonia, we observe that institutions recognize the importance of developing local and national cultural policies with regard to migrant integration but do not possess well-structured programs. One possible explanation for this could be that the number of refugees and migrants in Macedonia has been relatively low over the past few years. Another one could be that there is a lack of motivation and initiatives to develop this kind of program. Cultural practices are limited within the transit centres.

Cultural policies related to refugees and other migrants in Croatia could be better defined within the existing legal framework related to integration. However, there is the need for a precondition that needs to be implemented in practice - that is the access to all the basic rights written in the law. Integration rights for persons granted international and temporary protection are regulated by the Act on International and Temporary Protection. Certain rights are additionally regulated by separate legislation and regulation, depending on the field of competence. Examples that exist are the short-term projects organized within the civil society, but once the projects are implemented and financial means are spent - the practices stop. Croatia, as part of the former Socialist Federal Yugoslavian Republic, is part of the Non-Alignment movement where some practices were also created and were supported by the Republic. However, they tend to be forgotten and erased.

The MigrArts project gives the possibility to explore more and create proposals for the implementation in policies and practice that would improve the use of cultural policies in the integration of refugees and migrants - learning from other partner countries, but also from the past. At the European level, the meeting of the Justice and Home Affairs Council taking place in November 2004, stressed that successful integration on migrants by individual Member States was in the common interest of the European Union. It listed recommended actions in this area, such as shared forums, inter-cultural dialogue and education about immigrant cultures, which enhance interactions between immigrants and Member State citizens and promote mutual understanding. The following year, the European Commission adopted the communication, 'A common agenda for integration - Framework for the integration of third-country nationals in the European Union' to facilitate implementation of the Common Basic Principles. It suggested actions and pilot projects increasing immigrants' cultural participation, and contacts between migrants and host society through cultural activities.

The first edition of the Commission's Handbook on Integration for policy-makers and practitioners suggested introducing integration indicators on its socioeconomic, cultural, civil and political dimensions. The third edition developed the cultural dimension. It highlighted the role of arts and culture in giving a voice to migrants and refugees, in discussing differences among populations, or as a work opportunity. Since many migrants settle in urban areas, the renewed European Agenda for Integration of 2011 stressed the role of local communities in stimulating migrants' participation in cultural activities, thus contributing to social cohesion, particularly in disadvantaged urban areas.

The 2016 Commission 'Action plan on the integration of third country nationals' stressed participation in cultural life as an important factor in creating a sense of belonging to the host society, a process of informal



learning, and mutual understanding. The Commission recommended EU financial support to cultural diversity projects through arts and culture. The impact of cultural actions is difficult to assess, while the creative process itself can bring change through co-creation and co-production. The process is as important as the outcome and could also inform the development of integration policy in other fields (such as education and housing). By supporting art and culture projects involving the whole community, the EU will help build bridges between people and strengthen democracy.

The EU needs a wider cultural strategy to develop an open and equal dialogue between newcomers and their host cultures, so that both communities share the task of integration. In early 2016, due to the political imperative following the summer of 2015 to act on the refugee crisis in Europe as a global challenge, the Creative Europe program launched a specific call for 'Support to refugee integration' under its cross-sectoral strand. The call notes that "at a time when Europe is receiving an extraordinary number of refugees, intercultural dialogue through culture and the arts plays an important role to integrate refugees. DG Education and Culture sees a crucial role for the culture sector to play in addressing this global challenge through supporting initiatives that use culture and creativity for integration of refugees.

In recent years, financial support measures have been implemented by Member States and local authorities. There has been no real commitment on the part of the European institutions and there are currently no tools to evaluate the part of the expenditure on integration measures for asylum seekers, refugees and migrants that is allocated to participation in cultural life and the promotion of artistic and cultural pathways and projects.