

1 | FROM MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION CHALLENGES TO GOOD PRACTICES: PRACTITIONERS' PERSPECTIVES

Gregg Bucken-Knapp, Manana Gabashvili and Karin Zelano

INTRODUCTION

Managing migration and the integration of migrants remains one of the most salient issues in European Union member states and several Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries. Over the past fifteen years, these regions have witnessed a number of dramatic events that have resulted in large-scale flows of migrants within and across state borders, including the ongoing Syrian civil war, as well as military conflicts that both Georgia and Ukraine have experienced with Russia. In the short term, the flows of migrants seeking safety resulting from such conflicts brings about immediate challenges for receiving states and regions: including temporary housing, emergency medical care and food. In conflicts where migrants are forced to flee across state borders, formal application for refugee status become relevant, whereas in situations characterized chiefly by internally displaced peoples (IDPs) – such as those in Georgia and Ukraine – the administrative challenge of determining an individual’s formal legal status is no less demanding, albeit different (Global Protection Cluster, 2010). Over the longer term, for those migrants who are officially granted the right to remain having fled conflict, the challenges become complex for the individual as well as the host society: how to ensure meaningful integration through the development and implementation of appropriate policies across the full spectrum, including access to continued education or validation of existing educational qualifications, appropriate job training, and measures designed to enhance social inclusion (Bucken-Knapp, Omanovic, Spehar 2020).

Even EU member states with comparatively low numbers of refugee admission, such as the Baltics, have had to grapple with these challenges given the comparatively less developed nature of refugee integration programs, as well as persistent cultural ambivalence regarding refugee admission (Yatsyk 2018).

However, it is not only unforeseen crises that have produced migration and integration challenges for these regions. The expansion of the European Union in 2004 and 2007 stands as a particular example in this regard. Both for the larger number of states that employed transitional measures to ensure a more controlled flow of mobile EU citizens, and for those few that sought to embrace EU mobility without exclusion, the challenges have been substantial. For the vast majority of mobile EU citizens who have become comparatively well-established, the needs may not have been dramatic, but have certainly been real: locating relevant information in other EU member states regarding rights and services, particularly with regards to labour market access, rules for establishing businesses, access to targeted language education, and the ability to have one's educational qualifications quickly validated all stand out as priorities. In a much smaller number of cases, albeit vastly more salient in the public debate and media discourses, the focus has been on the smaller number of vulnerable mobile EU citizens who have made their living via begging, and whose transient status by and large excludes them from being formally included in the regulatory and social fabric of the EU countries to which they have relocated (Bucken-Knapp, Hinnfors, Spehar, Zelano 2018).

Against this backdrop, the aim of this toolkit is to provide a practitioner's perspective on some of the key challenges currently facing certain EaP and EU member states when it comes to migration and integration. The focus is emphatically on the practical. While debates regarding overarching policies and societal attitudes are indeed important, each of the chapters in this toolkit is primarily concerned with identifying a concrete challenge that public sector or civil society actors face when working with migrant communities and then highlighting how it might be realistically addressed so as to bring about a more positive result, both for that given case, but also for practitioners who face potentially similar challenges in other geographical settings.

The chapters have their origin in the Swedish Institute’s 2018 Summer Academy for Young Professionals (SAYP) module held in Tbilisi, Georgia with the theme *Migration and Integration in the Eastern Partnership and the Baltic Sea Region: Policy and Administrative Challenges for the Development of Inclusive Societies*. Each year, the SAYP programme allows for young professionals for EaP countries and the Baltic Sea Region (including Sweden) to gather for two weeks and undergo intensive training in a theme closely-related to their professional sphere of interest. As the follow-up project to this module, select participants have continued work on themes and cases of interest and produced these chapters, with an eye towards ensuring that their insights can be shared with the broadest possible community of practitioners working within the field of migration and integration across Europe.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A “GOOD PRACTICE” APPROACH, FOR PRACTITIONERS AND SCHOLARS ALIKE

A central theme underpinning each of the chapters is that of good practice. Or stated somewhat differently, the chapters very purposely do not attempt to argue on behalf of there being a definitive best practice emerging as a result of their respective case study. Yet, while understanding that even the term “good practice” has been contested for being either excessively vague or serving as a marker of what should be the highest quality (Coffield and Edward 2009), the chapters in this anthology opt for use of good over best practice in an effort to underscore how different forms of context can limit the broader applicability of a given solution. Indeed, the chapter authors work from a logic that policies, programs and administrative practices are all highly dependent on a number of factors – including the current policy landscape, the relevant institutional framework, the actors involved and their prominence in the field, the salience of the issue within the broader society, and recent or longer-term historical background. The varying importance of these factors in the different cases suggests very clearly that potential solutions in one organisational or geographical setting may not necessarily translate smoothly into

other settings. However, the chapters all make an effort to provide conclusions that clearly spell out what might be general insights valuable also to other contexts.

It is worth emphasizing that the design of the chapters is not informed by methodological approaches that question the utility of single-nation case studies for making broader contributions. Rather, the authors all work from an assumption that practitioners in the diverse field of migration and integration have an inherent curiosity for learning more about other cases and settings – partly for increasing one’s familiarity with that which one did not know previously, but also for the manner in which exposure to new cases can provide inspiration for rethinking how the challenges one works with on a day-to-day basis can be more effectively met. By the same token, this lack of a formal methodology and the emphasis on the practical contribution to meeting societal challenges, as opposed to speaking chiefly to scholarly debates, do not imply that the toolkit chapters are not of interest to scholars as well. While acknowledging that scholars and practitioners are often framed as occupying two very discrete universes quite distant from one another, these seeming differences can be understood as creative tensions across occupations, which can be navigated to the mutual benefit of both (Bartunek and Rynes 2014). Indeed, the chapters lend themselves to being read fruitfully by a broad range of audiences. For practitioners, of course, the chapters speak to concrete situations that are dealt with on a daily basis – locating housing stock for new arrivals, providing information specifically required by highly-skilled migrants, assisting lawyers representing asylum seekers in considering the full scope of legal options for securing a favourable outcome. Yet, it is apparent that the cases dealt with in these chapters also have much to offer scholars working within the multidisciplinary fields of migration and integration studies. Indeed, the authors frequently offer otherwise rare glimpses inside the black boxes of public sector bodies and civil society organisations, providing valuable insight into how challenges are problematized, why some strategies are considered inappropriate candidates, and how new ways of thinking could be framed to garner support from relevant actors and the broader public. As such, the chapters provide migration and integration scholars with material that speaks in detailed ways to the role of institutions, the autonomy of street-level bureaucrats, the legacy of previous migration events, and the constraints imposed by political culture and public

opinion. Along these lines, the chapters should also be of particular interest for students of migration and integration studies. Pointedly, we would argue that each chapter contains the well-developed embryo of a small-scale research project, and that in many cases, these themes could easily be operationalized and explored across a range of geographical settings.

THE CONTRIBUTIONS

The first four chapters of the toolkit consider the development of good practices across a range of integration issues for Ukraine's IDPs, which since the start of the conflict with Russia in the eastern portions of Ukraine are estimated to number between 800,000 and 1,500,000.

Semenenko, Borova and Halhash provide a fitting open to the toolkit by putting the spotlight on the importance of social cohesion, which in broadest terms can be understood as the individual's relation to relevant groups in society – in this case, her or his community. Making detailed use of the Social Cohesion and Reconciliation (SCORE) Index, which has been developed to measure social cohesion in conflict areas, the authors present findings from three separate measures of social cohesion in Eastern Ukraine that were conducted in 2015. While the data is highly nuanced, the authors call attention to the comparatively higher degree of social cohesion that exists in the regions of Eastern Ukraine as opposed to other conflict zones throughout the world. Even with that encouraging finding, there is a clear realization that there is still substantial scope for activity to foster increased social cohesion and reconciliation in Eastern Ukraine, which constitutes the focus of the latter portion of the chapter. The authors detail the use of public dialogues and focus groups as part of a United Nations Development Programme Initiative in these regions, which allowed for a finer-grained understanding of challenges to be gained, and which has subsequently served as the basis for a multi-year programme focusing on increasing good governance through the engagement of citizens in the affected regions.

Matveieva, Ivanova and Vershynina focus on what is often seen as one of the most vexing challenges for the integration of migrants in any setting: ensuring that meaningful employment opportunities can be provided. In the case of Ukraine, less than a third of IDPs have regular employment, which is further compounded by the need for job retraining, given the large number who had previously been involved in mining and other forms of extraction – industries that simply do not exist to the same extent in the individual’s new host community. The authors highlight one particularly effective good practice that has emerged, the Helping Hand Programme, which operates along three prongs to integrate IDPs in the local economy: through grants to start small businesses, opportunities to take part in community service initiatives, and receiving assistance with locating new employment opportunities. Along similarly encouraging lines, the authors note that while there have been limits to the ability of state initiatives to achieved desired employment outcomes for IDPs, there are a number of success stories at the local level, particularly in terms of collaboration between local citizens and civil society organisations. The authors conclude by calling attention to a need for further action to be taken at the local level, but for this action to very clearly involve local actors who can meaningfully support IDP integration in ways appropriate for both individuals and these communities.

Levchenko’s chapter provides a powerful argument that making use of restorative justice has the potential to be a particularly effective strategy for bringing about conflict resolution, a sustainable peace and refugee integration. Taking its point of departure in recognizing that both victims and societies have specific interests that must be respected, but also that perpetrators need to be socially integrated, the restorative justice approach spans a diverse set of strategies for meaningfully involving all parties in the efforts to being about an encompassing sense of justice. While acknowledging that there does not exist one shared understanding that is exhaustive in terms of classifying restorative justice practices, mediation does emerge as a particularly advanced form, and the author provides a compelling case for how mediation can be meaningfully employed at different phases in the restorative process. In the latter portion of the chapter, Levchenko shifts the focus from the conceptual to the concrete, with a discussion of how restorative justice programs have been implemented in Ukraine with regards to IDPs. She concludes

by outlining two critical goals – integration and peacebuilding; and the use of employment and business networks, underscoring how these broad goals can only be achieved by working with more detailed sub-projects focusing on reconciliation, with experienced facilitators playing a central role in the process.

In the toolkit's final chapter dealing with Ukraine, Ferlikovska emphasizes the importance of developing adequate housing solutions for IDPs. She emphasizes that even in a situation where a substantial constraint exists in the form of ineffective central government regulation, it is still possible to devise innovative solution that have the potential to be implemented at other levels of governance. Ferlikovska notes that an especially promising strategy is not to opt for new builds, but rather to look at the existing housing stock that is under-utilized. Such housing stock will naturally differ from case to case. However, in the case of Ukraine, abandoned Soviet-era housing complexes, derelict housing and escheat properties all serve as a valuable source of potential housing for IDPs. Yet, it is not simply a question of existing housing stock. In order to create viable long term accommodations for individuals, a detailed strategy for adequately making use of this stock must be developed and implemented. Ferlikovska proposes a three-step strategy that begins with a comprehensive stock-taking exercise, transferring ownership (or right of usage) of the properties to local communities, who can then engage in a similar exercise for IDPs, and the ensuring that adequate funding exists for renovation of the newly-transferred housing stock. It is important to note that Ferlikovska's proposed approach offers a meaningful role to local government actors, which also allows for the engagement of IDPs at the level of governance closest to them.

Following this, the toolkit shifts focus to the two of the states in the Baltic Sea Region – Lithuania and Estonia. Makaveckaitė emphasizes one of the key hurdles for any asylum seeker hoping to build a new life in the destination country: persuading the authorities to grant legal residence for either the shorter or longer term. Her specific focus is on the European Union principle of subsidiary protection, with a particular emphasis on the Lithuanian case. Makaveckaitė's chapter can be regarded both as a detailed to-do list and roadmap for individuals seeking refugee status, but who are instead granted subsidiary protection. Chiefly a form of temporary status, subsidiary protection can be withdrawn even after many years of legal residency,

often leaving affected individuals unprepared for how the formal process to remain can be successfully navigated. Given that, her emphasis is on the specific ways in which individuals with subsidiary protection can convert their status to other forms of legal residency. Central to this is an awareness from the outset that subsidiary protection is temporary and that the individual must not only seek to be broadly integrated into the host society (through work, studies or relationships) but that she or he must maintain sufficient documentation of this integration into the host society, so as to be able to make a persuasive claim for a new permit status when the time comes.

In putting the spotlight on the Estonian case, Spiegel presents us with an interesting puzzle of enormous practical significance – how can support be fostered for admitting refugees to a small EU member state that has historically taken a very small number of individuals seeking protection, and whose political culture is partially characterized by a skepticism to refugee admission and integration? Making use of both interview data with relevant elites and official documents, Spiegel calls attention to the discursive challenge that confronts those who would seek to increase the number of refugee admissions, noting that refugees to Estonia are often times constructed as threat in the public debate and media discourse, rather than a positive force for Estonian society as a whole. Through her interviews, her argument about potential good practices suggests that challenging this skeptical discourse is perhaps best addressed through more concrete measures that foster integration of refugees into the labour market, provide them with the necessary language skills and also ensure their involvement in the local communities. At the same time, it is clear that meeting the discursive challenge of skepticism to refugees also involves emphasizing the future labour market needs of Estonian society, and how these cannot be met without an additional influx of human capital.

The two next chapters explore migration dynamics that are comparatively under-explored – both for practitioners and for scholars – the continuing relationship of states to their diaspora communities. Several EaP states have witnessed diasporas of varying sizes in recent years, particularly as large numbers of working-age citizens look for employment opportunities abroad (legal or otherwise). This situation has also been confronted by several of the states that acceded to the European Union

in 2004 and 2007, as well as some states who have been members for decades (such as Ireland, Portugal and Spain). Gorgoshidze's chapter addresses the case of Georgia, which has witnessed multiple waves of emigration since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Even with improving economic conditions, especially since Georgians have been able to make use of visa-free travel to the European Union from 2017, emigration from Georgia is significant. She details the way in which both the Georgian state, and also one of the leading international organisations involved in migration issues in Georgia, the International Center for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) have each (and often collaboratively) meaningfully engaged with the Georgian diaspora community so as to ensure better communication and to foster their inclusion in projects that are of importance both to Georgia and their host societies. Her contribution lays out a successful roadmap for working with the diaspora communities, that involves gathering data on the characteristics of the diaspora community, ensuring meaningful lines of communication that can be either direct or mobile, making use of high-profile diaspora community members, and ensuring that the relevant Georgian state agencies can improve their level of coordination to bring about a more effective inter-institutional cooperation. This broadly encompassing strategy is argued to have the potential of assisting diaspora community members with protecting their rights, tapping into their potential to promote Georgian society abroad, and allowing for their involvement in the future development of Georgia itself.

Katselkina's chapter addresses the current status of diaspora policies in all six of the EaP states, both as a mapping exercise of their current extent, but also so as to highlight gaps that might realistically be addressed through targeted measures. Her detailed overview of the current policies and practices of the six EaP states shows certain commonalities both in terms of the issues that are being addressed, but also commonalities in terms of issues which are not yet a priority across the EaP. Most notably, she demonstrates that EaP states understand the economic potential of their diaspora communities – who have often emigrated in search of more lucrative employment opportunities. In this case, EaP states often have well-established programs to encourage economic investment from diaspora communities. Policies to strengthen the link between diaspora communities and the country of origin are also common, including access to the country of origin's labour market or education.

By the same token, Katslekina identifies three key gaps that exist to varying extents across the EaP when it comes to engaging with their respective diaspora communities: the quantity and quality of information provided to these communities, the lack of a focus on cultural factors similar to that of the economic relationship, and the lack of clear programme targets, which makes evaluation highly difficult.

The final chapter in the toolkit considers the case of Sweden. While much of the emphasis on integration in the Swedish case over the past decade has had to do either with vulnerable mobile EU citizens or asylum-seekers from states involved in ongoing conflicts, most notably Syria, Bychkovska focuses our attention on another important integration challenges, and one that has received less of a detailed focus: welcome information targeting highly-skilled labour migrants in Sweden. She documents that there is an impressive amount of initiatives that already exist intended to assist highly-skilled migrants with navigating their new lives in Sweden. Yet, she hones in on that way in which scope and quality of information provided to this type of migrant is, at times, insufficient. Here, Bychkovska highlights multiple factors, including the target group not being available that information exists, that information may be too general or sparse, that information quickly goes out of date or is poorly translated into target languages. When considering good practices, she is quick to point out that there is much to be had in the way of inspiration – yet that much of the possible initiatives are in place outside of Sweden, particularly in North America and other European Union countries. Indeed, her rich overview of potential good practices can be read almost as a shopping list for any agency tasked with improving information provided to highly-skilled immigrants.

LOOKING FORWARD

While we have argued that toolkits do not necessarily divide practitioners and scholars as much as they potentially unite them, there is no question that the logic of the toolkit itself differs from that of the traditional scholarly publication. In most cases, even when scholarly publications conclude by pointing out the road

forward for other researchers, or even practitioners, that is often a minor focus within the overall conclusion. By contrast, the nature of the toolkit is not to provide a definitive account of the degree to which a scholarly argument has been substantiated. Rather, the hope is that these chapters can provide inspiration and persuasion to a diverse range of practitioners to re-visit the challenges that they have been unable to solve yet, and to reconsider them in light of the approaches proposed throughout the chapters. Moreover, we would argue that the chapters should also inspire practitioners to realize that there are integration challenges within their own national context that have not yet been problematized, but yet are worthy of attention. This might include the needs of highly-skilled migrants, who are often pushed to the administrative and policy sidelines given the needs of those migrants who are more immediately vulnerable; the value of diaspora communities for states who wish to more broadly reframe migration narratives, or the necessity to look at different levels of governance for solutions to policy problems that have traditionally only been examined at one, often national, level – such as housing.

Lastly, we stress that this toolkit comprises evidence of the impressive degree of expertise and engagement that already exists among young professionals throughout the Eastern Partnership countries and the Baltic Sea Region. The level of nuance and rigor on display in these chapters, as well as the creativity and genuine enthusiasm for meeting challenges head on and finding practical solutions is laudable. Certainly, the pressing issues of migration and integration will always mean that there are tough challenges to be met. But the spirit of rising to those challenges that is evident throughout the chapters of this toolkit suggests that we have real reasons to be hopeful.

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