

Executive summary

Recent migration to OECD countries has been substantial: 5 million additional people migrated permanently to OECD countries in 2016, up 7% compared with 2015. But migration to the OECD is not a new phenomenon: more than 10% of residents in the OECD area in 2016 were born abroad and in 90% of OECD regions, foreign-born populations are largely made up of settled migrants who have been in the host country for more than ten years.

Migration is not only a matter of how many people are migrating, but how well they integrate into their host country societies. The integration of migrants and refugees requires concerted efforts across all levels of government, but such efforts can yield real benefits. If integrated successfully, migrants contribute to their host countries in many ways – not least of all, economically.

At the same time, integrating migrants and refugees poses great challenges. These are highly diverse groups of people and communities. Migrants are men and women, young and old, from different cultural backgrounds and with different reasons for migrating as well as different levels of skills and work experience. Furthermore, the size and composition of migrant communities vary enormously.

Such diversity has to fit in with the specific economic, social and geographic characteristics of the host countries, regions and cities. These characteristics often shape how localities can offer integration services, which in turn may influence how migrants and refugees are dispersed across regions and which can create inequalities in terms of the opportunities available to them.

This report examines how such policy is set and managed at the local level and what can be learnt from existing experience. It describes why and how countries, regions and cities can adapt integration policy to their own, distinct local realities, drawing on a newly created statistical database on migrants and on an OECD survey of 72 cities, including nine large European cities (Amsterdam, Athens, Barcelona, Berlin, Glasgow, Gothenburg, Paris, Rome, and Vienna) and one small city in Germany (Altena), which are also the subject of in-depth case studies. These nine large cities are not only among the European cities most affected by the current wave of refugees and asylum seeker arrivals, but most also have a long tradition as immigration hubs.

Key findings

Integration begins from the moment migrants arrive in their host countries and where migrants settle can affect their paths to integration. This study shows that new migrants to OECD countries tend to come to places where there are already large existing migrant communities. In Europe, many large cities have such communities and draw migrants from outside the European Union, although migrants from other EU countries tend to be spread out more across regions. Some small and medium-sized cities in the OECD have also become migrant destinations.

What do cities and regions need to do to effectively integrate these new community members? In recent years, many have had to scale up and adapt their existing migrant integration services, but co-ordination and resources have been a challenge. Nearly 90% of the 72 cities surveyed for this study reported a lack of adequate co-ordination with central government in this area. A critical lack of emergency reception facilities represented a concern for the 9 large case study cities, while it was a concern only for 16% of the small and medium-sized cities. Many cities also evoked structural problems in public service delivery and housing for migrants. In this context, some cities have tried various innovative approaches to integration service delivery, including working with local civil society groups to provide complementary integration measures (language, cultural and vocational classes, skills assessments, internships and volunteering experiences, etc.) as early as possible following migrant arrivals.

Integrating migrants can benefit everyone, as part of efforts to create more inclusive and sustainable cities for all. Initial qualitative evidence does show that the presence of migrant communities could have a positive impact, even in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, by revitalising demand for local business, bringing local and migrant families together around public schools and health centres and diversifying the cultural activities for all residents. Yet only a few of the cities surveyed currently reflect in their local development strategies the added value that migrants can bring, although there are some cities that have communicated the advantages of diversity both for economic development and to balance out local demographic losses.

Finally, cities should invest in measuring the results of their integration work. This is needed to both monitor the performance of existing programmes and adapt them or develop new ones as necessary and to provide evidence on the benefits of integration as well as the costs of not effectively integrating migrants. Measuring integration successes can also help to build positive attitudes towards migrants in their host communities.

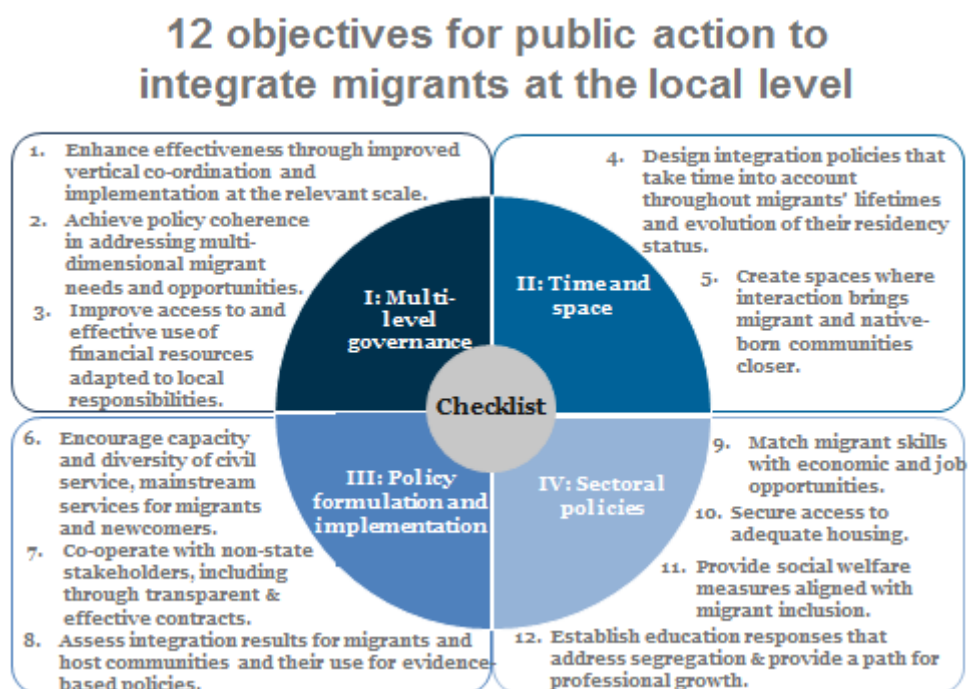
Developing local integration policies

This report presents 12 key points for local, regional, national and international policy makers and practitioners to consider as they develop and implement local migrant integration programmes:

1. Enhance effectiveness of migrant integration policy through improved vertical co-ordination and implementation at the relevant scale.
2. Seek policy coherence in addressing the multi-dimensional needs of, and opportunities for, migrants at the local level.
3. Ensure access to, and effective use of, financial resources that are adapted to local responsibilities for migrant integration.
4. Design integration policies that take time into account throughout migrants' lifetimes and status evolution.
5. Create spaces where the interaction brings migrant and native-born communities closer.
6. Build capacity and diversity in civil service, particularly in the key services that receive migrants and newcomers.
7. Strengthen co-operation with non-state stakeholders, including through transparent and effective contracts.
8. Intensify the assessment of integration results for migrants and host communities and their use for evidence-based policy making.
9. Match migrant skills with economic and job opportunities.

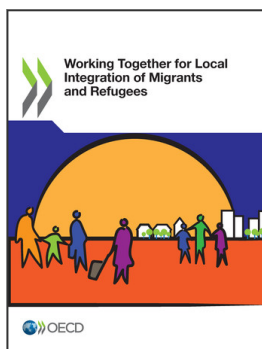
10. Secure access to adequate housing.
11. Provide social welfare measures that are aligned with migrant inclusion.
12. Establish education responses to address segregation and provide equitable paths to professional growth.

Figure 1. Checklist for public action to migrant integration at the local level



Source: Authors elaboration

Part I. What do we know about migrant integration at the local level?



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