

Summary report (by Dr. Oliver Schmidtke)

Context: The politics of migration in Europe has taken a critical turn in recent years. While attempts to install modern immigration policies that regulate the recruitment of newcomers - similar to those in place in Australia, Canada and the USA - have widely stalled in reaction to pervasive political opposition, political attention has since shifted to issues of immigrant integration. These developments are in sharp contrast to the 1990s when the shared assumption was that Europe would gradually, albeit persistently, move toward multicultural policies. Instead, during the 2000s, numerous European countries witnessed growing public concern and populist mobilization regarding the cultural and religious diversity that had accompanied immigration. In this political environment, integration policies have moved away from public endorsement of cultural diversity and migrants' entitlements (as prominently represented by the Canadian multicultural model) toward a stronger emphasis on state-monitored processes of integration.

Key Research Question: Yet while there are clear trends of convergence across Europe in terms of how issues of integrating immigrants is tackled, it leaves the observer with the puzzling account of a plethora of approaches and initiatives across the continent that do not necessarily adhere to the logic of the current political pressure toward obligatory integration policies. What we find empirically is growing evidence of an increasing divergence in integration policy formation, not only across but within nation-states. This observation provided the background for this project's main research questions: What is driving these initiatives in the field of integration policy? Where does the political impetus for more 'liberal' integration policies come from? Under what conditions and through what processes do these initiatives succeed in an environment in which competitive party politics and public opinion tend to oppose them?

Key hypotheses: In order to explain the dynamics behind integration policy formation in Europe, it is necessary to move beyond a conceptualization that is restricted to national politics and its institutional arrangements and actors. It is conceptually misleading and empirically erroneous to speak of a single - national - model responsible for forming, deliberating, and implementing immigration and integration policies. According to the project's key hypothesis, the sub-national level of governance has developed into a meaningful arena of political debate and policy formation in the field of integration policy. Regions and cities - often in close conjunction with the European governance level - have become important laboratories for deliberating, developing and implementing integration policies. As such they have become significant sites of policy innovation often in open contrast to the lack of coherent policy formation at the national level. We link this observation to the structural changes in Europe's emerging system of multi-level governance, which has empowered the subnational level of governance in its efforts to design and implement integration policies.

Key research findings: The European case studies (North-Rhine Westphalia in Germany and Emilia Romagna in Italy) investigated in this project provide evidence that the emerging system of multi-level governance in Europe has created political opportunities for the subnational level to play a distinct role in shaping the conceptual design, practice, and effects of integration policies in Europe. Three key factors can be identified that point to a structural change in the political environment whereby regions and cities have established themselves as key actors in shaping policies and societal practices of integrating newcomers.

- a) **Public debate and politicization:** First, we detected a distinct logic of deliberating and framing the issue of migration management at the regional level. In this respect, North-Rhine Westphalia and Emilia Romagna constitute cases where the politicization of migration issues is less likely to arise in competitive party politics, and where instead the issue is prone to more pragmatic discursive negotiation across party lines. This allowed for the mainstreaming of migration-related issues into key

areas of (local and regional) policy making. The distinct logic of framing and politicizing issues of managing migration and diversity, the move away from a dramatizing discourse on migrants and diversity toward the prevalence of pragmatic, interest-driven frames at the local-regional level, create significant opportunities for innovative policy development at the subnational level.

- b) ***Modes of political inclusion:*** Second, we found a greater degree of formal and informal methods of including migrants and their organizations into the political process. Even though it is difficult to stipulate what kind of impact migrant organizations have on this field of public policy we argue that the local and regional level has generated some marked opportunities for community input and initiatives. Indeed, in our case studies we have found a link between the pragmatic orientation and breadth of integration initiatives on the one hand, and the way in which community organizations have become more firmly embedded in institutional practices and accepted by the wider policy community on the other. This more robust inclusion of migrant organizations into decision-making process has a significant effect on policy making and implementation (confirming the hypothesis of the multi-level governance literature concerning an increasingly polycentric and deliberative nature of the policy process).
- c) ***Multilevel policy coordination and learning:*** Third, we identified a particular dynamic in this policy field that – at least partly – can be attributed to the increasingly significant role of the sub-national level of governance. With the European Union creating incentives (in terms of resources and policy benchmarking) and the nation-states handing down responsibility in this policy area, the sub-national level of governance has taken on an increasingly important role in initiating horizontal and vertical forms of integration policy coordination. This has also initiated a dynamic *policy learning process* among different levels of governance. This has two critical effects: it empowers subnational policy actors and it creates expectations for ‘laggards’ in terms of developing more comprehensive initiatives in the field of integration.

Wider societal implications of the project

- **Innovative policy potential for Europe’s system of multi-level governance:** The project underlined the creative potential for policy development in a more complex system of multilevel governance. This system empowers a greater variety of governance actors, generates distinct arenas of political deliberation and decision-making and generates the framework for policy learning. This project underlines that this dynamic should not simply be understood as a hierarchical system of policy adoption. Rather, the field of immigration and integration policy under investigation here demonstrates how new opportunities for innovative policy development emerge in particular at the subnational level. The European Union plays a critical role in galvanizing new approaches at this level of governance through benchmarking, resources for local programs and civil society actors. Beyond empowering municipalities and regions we also found a new dynamic in horizontal and vertical policy learning with an implication beyond the policy field under investigation.
- **Civil society engagement:** The political integration of immigrants is normally conceptualized and publicly debated as a mode of participating in electoral and party politics. Yet, this project employed a wider concept of political participation. It demonstrated the positive effects of allowing for civil society-based forms of political engagement. In this respect, it developed an often neglected dimension of political inclusion: While issues of immigration are regularly the subject of controversial public debate, the engagement of immigrants themselves and their organizations is, in particular in the European context, typically detached from considering processes of successful integration. From a conceptual and empirical perspective this project underlined that these civil society practices can themselves play a critical role in promoting integration and a normatively

desirable mode of conflict regulation. Civic engagement can be interpreted as a promising path toward a more inclusive social fabric and toward more effective ways of governing cultural diversity in Western societies.

- **Social inclusion:** Comparing various, locally and regionally based approaches to integrating immigrants underlined the potential for more inclusive policies. Also as part of the collaborative research efforts with colleagues from across Europe and Canada the research conducted as part of the Marie Curie Fellowship provide a rich empirical account of successful initiatives in this policy field. This refers to both, the substance of the policies at the subnational level as well as the deliberation and decision-making process that unfolds at this level of governance.