



**Lab 1: Policy Advice - Migrant integration in
the Alpine area: identifying transnational
policy issues and objectives**

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Minutes

Organisation(s) Piedmont Region, FIERI

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Lab 1: Policy Advice

Lab outline: The Lab aims to feed the Pluralps White Paper by gathering experts, policy-makers, social workers and practitioners together in order to identify and discuss policy issues and objectives in the field of migrant integration that should be addressed transnationally to reach positive results.

Total time available: 135 min

Language: English

Materials used: flipchart paper, maker pens, whiteboard.

Facilitators: Irene Ponzo (FIERI), Wolfgang Pfefferkorn (CIPRA International), Miriam Weiß (EURAC)

Number of participants and facilitators: Approx. 20

Structure of the workshop:

- 1) Presentation of the Lab's aims and method (10')
- 2) Inputs from the experts (30')
- 3) World Café (80')
- 4) Sharing the table discussions in the final plenary session (15')

1) Presentation of the Lab's aims and method

The facilitators explained the aim of the Lab, which was to collect inputs for the Pluralps White Paper.

The method of the Lab was based on the World Café which followed brief inputs from experts.

Generally, the discussion in World Café happens in small groups around tables and is articulated in rounds of conversation developed around specific questions and lasting 20-30 minute each. At the end of each round, the participants stop the discussion and switch to another table, except for the so-called "Table hosts" who have the task of welcoming the participants from the other tables and share the key insights from the previous conversation in order to foster the development of links and connections.

At the end of the Lab, Tables hosts illustrate the key insights emerged from the three rounds of conversation.

2) Inputs from the experts

The Lab started with inputs from the experts on two main issues:

- peculiarities of the Alpine area with regard to migrant integration, specific potentials and the pitfalls;
- issues or areas of intervention where transnational cooperation would be needed or more fruitful.

Andrea Membretti (EURAC)

The dialectic between cultural heritage and cultural innovation is crucial. Who is going to welcome whom? It's not just a question of identities but also of power relations.

The alpine area is characterized by the presence of empty spaces and places in crisis – even though those spaces are never completely empty so that the settlement of newcomers always implies negotiations with the longstanding residents. What we are going to do with those physical and cultural empty spaces? How can we profit from them? All those issues should be addressed through a "negotiation of the mountains" on spatial and cultural local resources. Spaces for negotiation, which can host also potential conflicts that can be difficult to express and deal with, are needed: they are common in urban areas, not so outside the cities.

Giulia Galera (Euricse)

Opinion and attitudes towards migrants are more fluctuating in mountain areas than in urban contexts. This implies that the impact of good or bad management of migrant inflow and presence is stronger and win-win situations are easier to create. But we need a transnational perspective and a bottom-up approach able to value and spread the local positive initiatives.

The key policy fields in this regard are the following: housing patterns (disperse or concentrated); education; skill assessment to value the skills of which neither migrants could be aware of.

Ingrid Machold (BABF)

Service provision is key for integration. Specific services for migrants may create competition with the locals and social tensions, and foster stigmatization: it would be better to address all people, not single groups. However, a single solution cannot fit all: services have to be flexible and inclusive.

It doesn't make sense that each Municipality develops its own solutions: transnational supporting structures developed by the governments are needed.

3) World Café

The questions around which the World Café developed were the following:

- What are the main changes needed to achieve migrant integration in the Alpine area? (first and second rounds)
- What kind of interventions are needed to achieve those changes? (third round)

The main insights emerged from the three rounds of discussion are the following.

White Paper's target group(s). To whom should we address our policy recommendations? It depends on the issues but mainly to the local level and to the transnational platforms (which involve all levels of government). It is important to consider the differences between the Alpine countries, between rural and urban areas and the different types of stakeholders on the ground.

Promoting an integrated approach. It is important to promote an integrated policy approach inside the public institutions, overcoming the sectorial approach and fostering a translocal logic. Specific services devoted to this purpose could be established, e.g., an "integration manager" who deals with integration issues in a cross-sectoral manner.

Recognition of voluntary activities. Voluntary work and organisations have been growing in response to the recent arrivals of newcomers but they should receive a greater recognition in policy-making.

Promoting and upscaling good practices and developing strategies to prepare societies to welcome newcomers. It would be advisable to scout good practices and build upon them; to assess good practices and extrapolate the innovative elements to be replicated in other local realities; to identify key actors leading facilitation/experimentation of social innovation; to enhance the capacity-building of both local policy-makers and volunteers and support them to identify innovative and successful elements; to foster knowledge-based policies and the widening of policy perspectives through discussion about facts and figures on demographic changes (ageing societies, need for work force, new forms of migration, etc.); to bring together economists, social workers, cross-sectoral experts, political representatives to change the rules of the game.

Funding opportunities. Many organisations in small municipalities of the alpine area do not know the funding opportunities. Others are active only due to funds focused on very specific topics (e.g. funding for mountain areas) disregarding other funds (e.g. European Integration Fund) that could be used as well to develop their activities and improve the quality of life in the area.

EU funds are too fragmented, which hampers the development of an integrated approach toward the integration of newcomers. Furthermore, each funding programme has its own rules so that managing projects on different funds could be difficult especially for small organisations in the mountain area.

The transformation of a good idea into a good application cannot be taken for granted since participating and winning the calls and managing partnership projects require skills and competences that could be lacking in small organisations and mountain areas. The project-based approach brings about the risk that funding is distributed according to the local ability to develop applications instead of on the base of needs.

The required financial capabilities is a problem for small organisations as well, especially when public entities are reluctant to take the lead.

The national and EU calls reveal a gap between local needs and governments' priorities. For instance, the Italian government issues Calls aimed at stopping the abandonment of mountain areas whereas the problem is to foster returns of new generations and newcomers since local people have already left.

A bottom-up approach is needed as well as the assistance of regional public bodies to support local organisations' capacity building and consortium development.

Since EU bodies do not seem to be aware of the real needs in local areas, especially of the rural and mountain ones, the establishment of a community board could help to link local communities with the EU throughout the Alpine regions and to lobby for the communities.

There is a need for the rescaling of resources, both in terms of money and knowledge, among the rural and urban areas.

Building multiple memories and identities. Fondazione Nuto Revelli has developed an initiative to return both people and memories (of the WWII) to the mountain areas. Questions arise: The memories of whom? Do people coming from non-EU countries have the same memories of the WWII as Europeans? Could memories be negotiated and enriched through the confrontation of different perspectives? It is important to recollect also the memories of newcomers to build a new local identity.

In addition, native people of the mountain areas may be heterogeneous. It is then important to encourage people to become aware of the multiple identities they carry in order to see newcomers as an enrichment of their own culture. Exchange between newcomers and local people has to be encouraged instead of focusing on adaptation: addressing the integration of the whole population, not only of newcomers; living together versus integrating someone new into existing structures. Raising language awareness and learning from the different religions are important elements as well.

A re-interpretation of the idea of citizenship and cultural heritage with regard to mountain communities is needed. Nationality should be disentangled from citizenship.

Generations. We cannot have the same expectation towards all generations: young and elderly people have different attitudes and reaction to newcomers and require applying different tools of intervention.

Opportunities and spaces for discussion and negotiation. A culture of discussion is often missing. It is important to enable people, including newcomers, to participate in the local societies and discuss fears related to ongoing social changes. It would be advisable to support the creation of public spaces to promote a common vision of local development, support conflict solution, foster exchanges between newcomers and long-established population (e.g. community cooperative approach). The establishment of those places should be supported through incentives rather through top-down decisions.

Media. In mountain areas, where sources of information might be fewer than in urban contexts and discrimination is not a issue in the public and policy debate, mass media might have a greater impact. It is then important to provide more transparent platforms to spread objective facts and empirical evidence and counterbalance negative media narratives with positive narratives.

Access to resources. It is crucial to facilitate the access to the local resources (land, housing, etc.) and the right to use them. This requires a cultural change: Shifting from private property to commons? Promoting a sharing approach and community taking care of the commons?

Health and intercultural mediation. The Rhone-Alps Region is developing a pilot action within the PlurAlps project to foster the settlement of doctors where they are lacking. Since the recruitment of doctors is upon Municipalities, the Region acts on the labour supply: it works with medicine students by training and informing them in order to foster their settlement in rural and mountain areas. There is also the idea to develop "health houses" so that doctors can work together making the work in rural areas more attractive.

Web services that match labour demand and supply in the health sector could be useful.

In Alpine Italian areas, non-EU doctors are starting to take over positions of retired doctors since native doctors do not want to work in small municipalities but the local population sometimes expresses discontent with this.

Intercultural mediation is needed not only for foreigners but also for small mountain communities that may have difficulties in expressing their needs and could be hostile to the arrival of newcomers. Additionally, medicine students need cultural mediation to reframe and better understand the mountain communities so to consider the option of working there. Does everybody need intercultural mediation in a pluralist society?

Education. It is important to invest in education, learn how to live together and include intercultural values in education. In this perspective, it is important to include intercultural learning as part of education curricula and to train teachers about pluralism. But teachers cannot know everything: migrants can be employed as experts. However, also migrants have to be trained to play this role by understanding and mastering the implicit rules of interactions of the receiving community in general, and of the school in particular. More generally, teachers have to be aware of the opportunities and chances of cooperation with other local actors strengthening the relation between school and extra-school actors and activities.

Segregation. Segregation of migrants is a risk in rural and mountain areas as well.

4) Sharing the table discussions in the final plenary session

Finally a feedback round was done and each Table host presented the results of the three rounds of conversation occurred at his/her table to the others.