



PEER REVIEW
IN SOCIAL PROTECTION
AND SOCIAL INCLUSION
2008

SUPPORT FUND FOR THE
RECEPTION AND INTEGRATION
OF IMMIGRANTS AND THEIR
EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

SPAIN 20-21 OCTOBER 2008

SYNTHESIS REPORT



On behalf of the
European Commission
DG Employment, Social Affairs
and Equal Opportunities



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Summary

In the framework of the European Commission's Peer Review in Social Protection and Social Inclusion and Assessment in Social Inclusion programme, the Spanish Ministry of Labour and Immigration hosted a Peer Review meeting in San Lorenzo del Escorial (Spain) on 20–21 October 2008. The subject of the Review was “The Fund for the Reception and Integration of Immigrants and their Educational Support” — a scheme that has been operating in Spain since 2005.

Together with the host country, seven peer countries took part: The Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia and The Netherlands. Also participating as a European stakeholder was Caritas Europa, in addition to two stakeholders from the host country — The Red Cross and CEPAIM — and representatives of the European Commission's DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities.

This synthesis report is a summary and independent overview, based on the national reports from the peer countries and the host country, the short report, the minutes and the valuable contributions of the participants during the meeting.

This report is divided into two parts. After a description of the main elements of the policy under review, the first part looks at the transferability of different aspects of the policy and the second part outlines the key lessons learnt on the integration of migrants.

Description of the main elements of the Spanish policy

The increasing flow of migrants, both internationally and at a European level, has acted as a catalyst for the development of integration policies at national level and for plans to coordinate migration policies among different countries.

Due to its geographical location and large migration flows, the Spanish Government is particularly committed to the integration of immigrants.

The roles and responsibilities of civil services in immigrant integration policies are set out in the Spanish Constitution. While the Ministry of Labour and Immigration has responsibility for developing policies, the Constitution attributes exclusive powers in key areas relating to immigration, such as employment, education, health, social services or civic participation, to the Autonomous Communities and Local Authorities.

To coordinate the various initiatives taken at different levels (government, civil society, stakeholders and other actors), a Strategic Plan for Citizenship and Integration 2006–2010 was drawn up and a collegiate body responsible for coordinating cooperation between the Administration, the Autonomous Communities and Local Authorities on all activities that affect immigrant integration policy was created. It is known as the High Immigration Policy Council.

Also, a financial instrument, known as the Support Fund for the Reception and Integration of Immigrants and their Educational Support, was established and has been operating since 2005. The Fund is intended to reinforce the work carried out by the Autonomous Communities through their individual immigration plans. It complements and strengthens their public funds and actions.

The general principles on which the Fund is based are: equality and non-discrimination, interculturality, citizenship and integration. Funding is allocated to two specific areas — assistance and integration of immigrants and educational support — and can go towards the following actions: reception, education, employment, housing, social services, health, childhood and youth, equal treatment, women, participation, awareness-raising and co-development.

The General State Budget has a specific remit to finance the Fund and, since 2005, the following sums have been allocated to it: €120 million in 2005, €182 million in 2006, and €200 million in 2007 and 2008. The Autonomous Communities are required to co-finance at least 30% of the Fund.

The Fund's management principles are set out in the Cooperation Framework — a collaboration agreement signed between the Ministry of Labour and



Immigration and each of the 17 Autonomous Communities. The Cooperation Framework sets out objective criteria for the regional distribution of the funds among the Autonomous Communities, based on proposals formulated by the High Immigration Policy Council. These proposals must then be approved by the Council of Ministers before being published in the Official State Journal.

The first Cooperation Framework was signed in 2005, and it is updated every year thanks to a clause that allows it to be extended. Before signing the agreements and the annual extension protocols, the departments in charge of integration policies and of education in the regions first have to draw up an annual Action Plan. In addition to providing general information on the situation on immigration in the region, the plan must include an implementation programme, as well as a description of each planned action, the area and the measures under which they fall, those in charge of their implementation, the cost, source of financing, and relevant indicators. Since 2006, guidelines for drafting the Action Plan have been provided annually. Once the Action Plan has been reviewed by the Directorate General for Immigrant Integration in order to verify its compliance with the Cooperation Framework, it is approved and signed by both parties.

The Fund has proved to be an effective tool that has served as a model in terms of establishing improved cooperation among civil services. It has also been a model for the joint programming of work, leading to joint financial efforts towards a common objective.

An external evaluation of the 2006 Support Fund was performed in 2007. The conclusions of the Evaluation Report reflect positively on the Cooperation Framework's results in terms of management cohesiveness in general and, in particular, in those areas of action examined. The Fund's influence was not only considered important because of the cooperation achieved between the three different levels of government, but also due to the shared learning experience. In terms of results, a major step forward was taken in terms of bolstering reception systems and, particularly, social services, education, and employment, especially at a local level. On the other hand, the monitoring mechanism set up to analyse compliance with the Agreement, was not always viewed as effective as the information transmitted was not always complete or received on time.



Finally, it is important to stress that the Fund was set up as an ‘extraordinary measure’, aimed merely at supplying a transitory reinforcement mechanism, in accordance with the concept of integration defined in 2004 by the European Union Council as “a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States”.

Part A. Relevance and transferability aspects

An assessment of the relevance of the policy to the peer countries

Currently, immigration remains a politically indifferent issue in **the Czech Republic**, due to the low number of foreigners in the country (according to the Czech Statistical Office there were 410,094 foreigners by mid 2008). However, recently, the situation has started to change, with the flow of immigrants almost doubling in the past year. The Czechs therefore believe that the Spanish model could be of interest, not only thematically but as a tool for coordinating different national, regional and local policies on social integration.

In **Denmark**, as in Spain, the responsibility for integration policy and its implementation is shared between several authorities. Whereas the state sets the legal and institutional framework for integration policy, it is the 98 municipalities that are responsible for its implementation. In addition certain initiatives and projects are initiated or supported directly by the state. However, a significant difference between Spain and Denmark is that Denmark does not have a collegiate cooperation and coordination body similar to the High Council for Immigration Policy, in which the General State Administration, the regions, and local governments are represented. Consequently, from a Danish perspective, the question of the potential transferability of the Spanish solution is not of immediate relevance.

Germany, like Spain, is a federal state, where a centralistic approach is not possible for constitutional reasons. What's more, given the multifaceted nature of integration, the central government is unable to govern the variety of programmes needed. Therefore a common policy approach requires the central government in both countries to convince the Länder (federal states) and the local governments to cooperate. A significant difference between Spain and Germany is that Germany has faced immigration for a much longer period so that the integration of second and third generation migrants is now the main policy challenge. Despite its long experience of immigration, public discourse long negated the fact that Germany was an immigration country, obstructing a coordinated policy approach. Germany

does not have a Support Fund similar to the Spanish one. Instead, it relies strongly on the European Social Fund, as well as on funding secured by mainstreaming immigration issues into other policy areas, such as labour market policies. Indeed, it would be constitutionally difficult for Germany to create a nationwide Support Fund, as this would interfere with the rights of the Länder.

Unlike Spain, **Greece** had never in the past considered immigration to be a social phenomenon and the integration framework is still at the discussion stage. The Spanish model could nevertheless provide added-value to Greece's efforts to address the issue of migrant integration in a coherent way. An area of significant interest for Greece was Spain's precise and accurate recording of needs and its consequent allocation of funding. Such a breakdown could help Greece to overcome the significant overlaps and fragmentation of competences between state services. On the other hand, the Spanish federal model cannot be emulated.

Given the similarities that exist between Spain and **Italy**, there is little doubt that measures similar to those adopted by the Spanish government could also have good results there. In Italy, the role of central government in integration policy has gradually been decreasing and social inclusion and integration are being regionalised. The major difference between existing Italian funds and the Spanish Support Fund is that the Italian model does not foresee any drafting of annual Action Plans either by the individual Regions or by the central government.

In **Latvia**, the Spanish experience regarding the reception and integration of newly arrived migrants could be partially transferred. Indeed, different integration programmes should depend on whether they are aimed at recent arrivals or second and third generation immigrants and the Spanish approach could be particularly relevant for Latvia's preparation of different inclusion policy steps for newly arrived asylum seekers, recognised refugees, economic migrants and migrants' family members. Those parts of the Spanish policy that could be particularly of interest and potentially transferable are: language training for various target groups; integration and cultural orientation courses very soon after arrival; inclusion of newly arrived migrants, and especially of children, in the education system; coordination



of integration practices, sharing of best practices at local level, and, finally, involvement of NGOs, which could work with various groups of migrants.

The situation in **the Netherlands** is more similar to that in Denmark than in Spain. However the coordination approach could be useful as, in The Netherlands, covenants are often concluded between the government and local authorities. However, there is a risk (which has actually occurred) that separate agreements would be made with municipalities on different subjects. Despite interdepartmental cooperation, it remains difficult to prepare an integrated plan for integration with municipalities based on clear financing criteria. This is due to the fact that various departments have responsibility for various policy areas (e.g. civic integration, reintegration, emancipation, and education) and have different budgets.

Stakeholders' comments

Also present in the Peer Review meeting, **Caritas Europa** believes the way the Fund is set up has its merits as it promotes the involvement of all governmental levels in the implementation of the National Action Plan. It feels such coordination is not only necessary to improve the integration of immigrants in reception countries, but also to achieve strong vertical and horizontal coordination with the countries of origin's policies for maintaining links with their diaspora.

The association is further convinced that the Spanish example could be of relevance to other EU Member States where national, regional and local authorities all have more or less defined roles and responsibilities in the area of migrant integration. And it believes other Member States without a federal structure could also make use of the coordination elements of the Spanish model.

According to Caritas Europa, it would be feasible to transfer the Spanish example to other nations. In order to guarantee efficiency and effectiveness of the Fund, the organisation proposes that a range of projects eligible for funding be defined during the planning process, in close consultation with the authorities involved, as well as with civil society organisations, including



immigrants themselves. The main obstacle to this in some Member States could be the lack of coordination and of political will to invest in integration policy. It nevertheless feels integration programmes would be more successful if all sectors of society are involved.

Caritas Europa further points out that the fund should rather concentrate on specific aspects of integration, such as welcoming procedures, information about administration, health systems, schooling and language education, religious dialogue and intercultural exchange, etc., instead of targeting specific groups in society. This is namely because the composition of the target population would vary from one country to another, with some having a much higher proportion of Third Country nationals in their population while others have long-established ethnic minorities. Furthermore, some countries prefer to use the term “ethnic minorities” rather than “migrants”.

Lastly, the association believes support funds for the integration of migrants, like the Spanish model, should integrate a monitoring phase in its planning process, so as to ensure funds really contribute to solving problems. This would also ensure that projects in various policy areas are coherent, and guarantee that integration be not only a matter of equal opportunities, but also an issue of equal rights.

The host country stakeholders

During the Review, a representative from CEPAIM, a Spanish organisation member to the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN), underscored that the difficulties in coordinating integration policies both in the EU and within individual countries remain one of the biggest challenges it faces. It stressed that better coordination is not only needed at all levels of governance, but also with NGOs, which represent crucial actors. It felt the involvement of third sector organisations in defining Spain’s social inclusion policies and in elaborating integration and citizenship plans was an important transferable element of the country’s policy.

A representative of the Spanish Red Cross briefly described the work performed recently by the Red Cross in this field, including emergency



reception along the coasts and at airports, and subsequent efforts to ensure full integration through employment. Other services provided by the Red Cross and other Spanish NGOs include voluntary returns, family reunification, searches for missing persons and the relaying of messages in emergencies.

Nevertheless, the Spanish Red Cross representative pointed out that a key problem in Spain remains that there is no common understanding of integration. Political parties, administrations and organisations all have different views. Unless the concept is strengthened, the likelihood is that local administrations will be aware that funding is available, but that they will not know exactly what it is meant to be for.

The two Spanish associations also agreed on the need for a strong involvement of NGOs. These must play a leading role in integration, because they can provide a component that no administration can offer: voluntary work by citizens who physically accompany the processes. NGOs further help to promote the coordination of actions carried out by the three levels of government. Immigrant organisations also play an extremely important role and should be supported, reinforced and empowered, in terms of both social and political participation.

Peer country discussions¹

During the meeting, the main issues discussed in the working groups were the following:

- The fact that national government policies on immigration tend to be aimed either at **assimilation** or at **multiculturalism**, despite the fact that a middle path way could be a desirable option. Indeed, most migrants want to integrate into the receiving society to a certain extent, but without losing their own identity. So “compulsory integration” may prove counterproductive. The receiving society must become a welcoming society.

¹ The participants split into two working groups to discuss transferability aspects of the policy under review, as well as differences and common challenges. They then reported back to the plenary.



- **Coordination** between different levels of government raises particular issues in countries where integration is a devolved responsibility. The Spanish experience of a regional approach could be of value to other countries in that position.
- There is a widely felt need for improvements in the **evaluation** of integration policies and the development of appropriate indicators.
- In the context of **family reunification**, mothers are generally crucial to their family's integration into the receiving society. Some countries therefore place a particular focus on language training for mothers of immigrant families. Others take the view that their educational system should be equipped to cater for children who have not fully learnt the receiving country's language during their pre-school years.
- **Services** should be available to all citizens of a society and migrants' access to services should be part of that **universal** entitlement. This does not, however, exclude the possibility of specific service provision for migrants where needed. For example, some countries require that integration efforts be focused not so much on new immigrants as on second or third generation residents from immigrant backgrounds. This reflects the different immigration histories of Member States. The issue of universal access to services is also affected by the structure of service provision in a particular country. Do NGOs play a role in service provision? Are services provided by the State on its own or in cooperation with the private sector? What, if any, is the solidarity role of the extended family? What is the role of volunteers?
- The **sustainability** of programmes and projects is a key factor for successful integration. However, both NGOs and local authorities face the challenge of ensuring the **continued financing** of useful projects.
- There is a fear of creating parallel societies within a main society. However, "**unity within diversity**" should be the slogan here. Indeed, society is composed of many different interest groups (for example,



the parents of school pupils) and being a “member of society” does not entail being a member of every group within that society.

Despite the varying political contexts present in the peer countries, all of them found interesting elements in the Spanish approach that they regarded as worthy of transferring to their systems.

- For representatives of **the Netherlands**, where the approach is to provide migrants with different very specific, tailor-made programmes to give them the linguistic and cultural prerequisites for integration into Dutch society, the humanity of the Spanish approach was considered a key element for transferability. It was seen as something that everybody could take home as a lesson. Dutch integration efforts also particularly target women, as they help their families and their community to better integrate into the host society. The Dutch tailored approach was initiated in 2006, so it is a little too early to evaluate it.
- In **Greece**, different actors are involved in the formulation and implementation of integration programmes, which was considered a very important point. The Greek Government will soon be introducing a new coordinated Action Plan, called “ESTIA”, which is currently under discussion. The basic idea behind the said plan is to coordinate all competent government institutions, as well as the third sector, in order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of immigrant integration programmes. An important lesson that Greece can learn from the Spanish experience concerns the allocation of State funds and the need to ensure sustainable, reliable funding for integration projects. The coordination model implemented by the Spanish Fund could also serve as an example given the centralised Greek governance structure, which accumulates most competences at the level of central government. What’s more, the Greek government is willing to work towards the efficient integration of migrants and finds the relevant efforts of other EU countries extremely useful.
- In **Denmark**, where the approach to immigrants is rather similar to that in the Netherlands, the humanity of the Spanish approach was



again seen as an element that could be transferred. But a continuing challenge remains the question of how to evaluate the effectiveness of integration efforts and how to avoid the pitfalls.

- In the **Czech Republic**, migration does not attract much public attention or public discourse and ethnic groups are the hotter topic. It was thus emphasised that integration is a matter of working with the whole of society, and not migrants alone. The main issue relating to the Czech approach was seen as being the sustainability of its migrant integration programmes.
- With its long history of migration and the longstanding official denial of its existence, **Germany** has a broad approach to integration. The challenge for Germany is not so much in handling new migration as in correcting the mistakes of the past years. Programmes need to be tailored to second and even third generations. As regards transferability, Germany saw Spain's funding arrangements as a potentially interesting element, although the problem is not so much one of money as one of using it effectively and evaluating what has been achieved.
- **Italy** also rated the Spanish experience highly, seeing similarities with its own situation. However, in Italy, the Constitutional Court declared the Italian Fund for the social inclusion of migrants (worth €50,000,000) unconstitutional because it was in violation of the principle of separation of competences between the central government and the Regions. An approach that could be used nowadays at government level would be one that foresees dedicated allocations, directed at resolving some of the more critical problems throughout Italian territory, particularly in the main cities, such as social alienation of some minorities, as in the case of Roma.
- **Latvia** has only just begun its integration programme for newcomers, although a similar programme targeting ethnic minorities has existed since the Soviet era. Latvian migrants returning from abroad also represent a separate target group, with specific integration needs. Latvia wants to establish an integration centre and believes



good practices from the Spanish experience could be transferable. However, this will require adequate funding and strong political will.

Thus, it emerged that national circumstances are so diverse that only certain parts of the policy under consideration are transferable. In particular though, the humanity of the Spanish approach to migrants, the mutual exchanges between migrants and the receiving society were highlighted as lessons to take home to other countries. Besides this, the fact that the Spanish Fund's operating principles expressly call for all stakeholders, especially immigrants themselves, to participate in the design and execution of the different activities, was seen as an interesting approach. Also, whilst the idea of creating integration centres was of interest to some countries, the regional approach was considered as being potentially of value to others.

On the other hand, some aspects appeared as more difficult to transfer to other European countries. For example, the Spanish approach not to discriminate against undocumented immigrants in integration programmes might not be possible in those EU countries where laws require social workers to report illegal migrants (including in the areas of healthcare and education). The political sensitivity of this issue in some countries is also a limiting factor when it comes to transferability.

Part B. Conclusions and lessons learnt

On top of the transferability issues described in the previous section, the key points raised during the meeting related to coordination, integration, effectiveness and evaluation.

Coordination

Coordination is of particular importance. Indeed, despite the variety of state structures in the different countries, a common feature that appears is that, while action takes place on the ground, it has to be connected to the broader decisions being taken at national level. This requires building institutional confidence, fully involving local networks, achieving a common understanding among all stakeholders about immigration and integration, and providing the people who work at local level with information about the policies (for example, in Spain, an information website called Integra Local exists²).

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Coordination is needed in reference to various levels and issues. In the first place, the concepts behind the integration policies (reception, migrants, integration, and so on) require coordinated definitions in order to ensure a common understanding of the fundamental aims of integration policies. This is still far from the case. Similarly, a different understanding of the aims of integration is apparent both across countries and within countries and across different departments. What's more, better coordination is not only necessary between the different levels of government, but also between the NGOs, the various ministries and the European Institutions.

As the Spanish representatives pointed out, some lessons about coordination have been learned. Indeed, the year after the Spanish Fund was established, it was realised that coordination was lacking at every level. However, efforts to tackle this problem proved successful and, in the following years, the difficulties decreased. The regions have now created new departments or directorates for immigration where before there were none. Some of them have linked their immigration structures to their development cooperation

2 <http://www.integralocal.es>



structures. So the Fund has served to build awareness of the need to create the right structures at regional and local levels. However, relations between regional and local government still pose a challenge and local authorities have reported to the national government that 40% of the funding the regions are supposed to pass on to them usually only reaches them partially and late. In some cases, there appears to be a lack of transparency regarding contracts and tendering procedures. Nevertheless, in recent years, regional governments have increasingly taken to issuing calls for projects before awarding funding. But regional governments complain that local authorities do not have any action plans or are not able to explain clearly enough the projects they intend to undertake. Also, as the local authorities derive their project funding from different levels, there is sometimes duplication. This is also sometimes the case in relation to efforts undertaken by NGOs. But local authorities are increasingly willing to draw up local integration plans and the Fund has helped to create the right structures. It has also responded to local authority requests for training.

Finally, despite these coordination problems, there has been general agreement that coordination must remain flexible enough to allow for initiatives to be taken on the field. Action should come first and coordination should follow. The coordination should take place through the actors involved in the different processes. In addition, a framework agreement between the federal and regional levels could be beneficial for the coherence of integration policies at different levels. EU countries without a federal structure could also benefit from using elements of the Spanish Fund structure in terms of coordination.

Integration at local level

The local society's attitude is crucial to the success of integration and there was a common understanding among the peer countries that it is at the local level that integration policies will succeed or fail. Clear distribution criteria must be established for programmes run by both regional and local authorities and by NGOs. Local cooperation networks need to be well structured and stable. In this sense, annual budgets — rather than multi-annual ones — are not the best way of financing integration work. (This



aspect is strongly related to the issue of effectiveness, which will be further developed below).

On top of this, all peer countries agreed with the idea that women and the issue of family solidarity are key to the process of integrating migrants — especially for children — and that priority should be given to the education of children.

It was also stressed that authorities should focus on the positive facts and figures, such as the number of mixed marriages, the success stories, the skills level of the second generation. Such actions should be developed at local level.

Effectiveness

Ensuring the effectiveness of integration programmes requires partnership and networking with NGOs. Strong political consensus is also a likely factor of success of these policies. Another important condition for guaranteeing the efficiency of policies is the participation of immigrants themselves. Countries have to make efforts to develop intercultural skills, for example among teachers, police and other professions working with migrants. An “us and them” thinking about migrants should be avoided and volunteer involvement in integration work should be encouraged.

In addition, **stable** structures and funds, rather than temporary ones, are essential. This means multi-annual funding plans are needed, so that investments supporting long-term integration processes can be made. Short-term projects rarely succeed, because once the funding ends, nothing else happens. Instead, structured long-term financing that is embedded in local authority policy is needed. In Spain, the multi-annual nature of the allocation of funding provides **greater security, predictability and sustainability** for recipients, but the Spanish Ministry of Labour and Immigration representatives emphasised that the Fund is designed merely as a support structure. The Autonomous Communities have their own plans and funds for integration. The central government Fund is intended to support those already working in this field and to build awareness among those —



mainly the smaller regions — that have not yet faced as much pressure from immigration but that need to start taking some action. The Fund can help them to determine their needs and, from then onwards, they will have to build the necessary teams and institutions within their own structures and provide their own funding. So the Autonomous Communities and local authorities should start budgeting for these kinds of actions to promote integration. And to coordinate these actions and ensure their overall effectiveness, it is thus important to maintain the support from central government. There are therefore great challenges ahead.

Evaluation

Evaluating the impact of programmes for migrants is an important issue in all the peer countries, and particularly in those where such programmes are relatively new. But the problem is that it is not easy to evaluate the outcome of policies. In the Spanish experience, indicators exist, but there is very little feedback on them, possibly because the information requirements have not been sufficiently standardised. Many advances have nevertheless been made in terms of cooperation and information, but the big challenge ahead remains guaranteeing the quality and quantity of information, as well as making it more comparable. On the other hand, some of the Autonomous Communities have set up permanent teams and structures devoted to immigrant integration policies, and this has noticeably improved the technical aspects of cooperation.

Nevertheless there is a widely felt need for improvements in evaluation processes. This could, for instance, be the focus of further Peer Reviews and/or other exchanges of experience at the European level.





<http://www.peer-review-social-inclusion.eu>

Support Fund for the Reception and Integration of Immigrants and their Educational Support

Host country: **Spain**

Peer countries: **Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Netherlands**

Migrants in nearly all EU countries are particularly vulnerable to the risk of poverty and social exclusion. In most countries, therefore, according to the evidence available, they have on average lower rates of employment and higher rates of unemployment than non-migrants as well as higher rates of school drop-out and homelessness which together tend to give rise to significantly lower levels of income and more widespread deprivation. At the same time, given the slow growth of population throughout the EU and a prospective decline in population of working age in the coming years, migrants are seen as an increasingly important source of labour.

Accordingly, EU Member States are making greater efforts to widen the access of migrants to employment and education and to increase their participation in society more generally.

The Peer Review organised in Spain will present details of the Support Fund for the Reception and Integration of Immigrants and their Educational Support, established in 2005, which is part of a broader strategy for integrating migrants into society. It is managed by three levels of Spanish authorities - local, regional and national - cooperating together, which has facilitated the creation of networks and the sharing of experience while ensuring the coordination and transversal implementation of policies.