



# EUROPEAN POLICY BRIEF



## SECOND POLICY BRIEF

March 2021

### INTRODUCTION

The MIICT (ICT-enabled public services for migration) project works towards the development of ICT-enabled solutions and toolkits to enhance migrant's integration. It also proposes inclusion policies by public administrations and the civil society, promoting in parallel discussions with experts in the field of migration, aiming not only to positively influence existing policies but also to propose new recommendations relevant to migrant integration.

The aim of this 2<sup>nd</sup> MIICT Policy Brief is to present further recommendations on existing policies around migration issues, proposing in that way certain issues that must be taken into consideration. It capitalises on the findings from the [MIICT 1<sup>st</sup> Policy Brief](#) (March 2020), as well as on the discussions of the Joint Migration Policy Roundtable, a 3-day online webinar among six EU funded projects which worked towards the development of ICT-enabled solutions and toolkits for the implementation of inclusion policies by public administrations and the civil society and produced a [Joint Migration policy Whitepaper](#). The MIICT-specific policy recommendations and reflections were raised during the MIICT policy roundtable discussions that took place during January 2021. Consortium partners engaged themselves in discussing, all the proposed policies of the whitepaper, prioritizing them in accordance with the core objectives of MIICT project, as well as to the reality of the pilot countries (Cyprus, Italy, and Spain). The discussed issues highlighted the main obstacles/challenges that need to be taken into consideration for a smooth and accurate policy application and proposed further recommendations aligned with encountered challenges.

This policy brief is aimed at decision makers, lobbying groups, and other interest groups. It outlines and elucidates key findings that can contribute to the development of future policies. The recommendations will also feed into future Joint Policy Development roundtables, where further policies will be shaped, taking into consideration to promote in the best way possible the interests of the migrants, the public service providers, as well as the relevant local host communities.

MIICT aims at designing, developing, and deploying tools that address the challenge of migrant integration through the co-creation of improved ICT-enabled services with migrants, public sector services and NGOs (non-governmental organisations). The core concept of MIICT is aligned to the principles of INSPIRATION, IDEATION, and IMPLEMENTATION, grounded in the participatory human-centric approach of co-design and co-creation<sup>1</sup>. As outlined in the first MIICT Policy Brief, different stakeholders from multi-disciplinary sectors (migrants, public sector services, NGOs/CSOs, Academia, industry) participated in the design, development, and deployment process to ensure the identification of their needs and requirements, which were mainly focused on nine integration areas : **employment, social inclusion and anti-racism, housing, health, education, human trafficking, legal issues, as well as information and communication technology**. In addition to that country-specific recommendations have been also outlined and proposed, and ultimately embedded to the final document.

Failing to organise another face-to-face meeting in Brussels, with participants from inside the MIICT consortium as well as experts of the field, due to COVID-19 pandemic situation and the lockdowns that had been imposed inside European Union, from March 2020 till September 2020, the European sister projects MIICT, REBUILD, NADINE, MICADO, EASYRIGHTS and WELCOME, have been invited by the European Commission to discuss “virtually” a set of topics, addressing the challenge of migrant integration from several sides, such as “Data management and ethics”, “ICT tools: design and software development”, “Target users, Users needs analysis, users’ involvement”, “workshops and pilots planning, implementation evaluation, Communication/dissemination opportunities”, as well as “Public Authorities: local, national regional, European level; involvement and scalability of project results”.

Building on the positive experience from these sessions, the MIICT consortium decided to organise a virtual and closed Joint Migration Policy Roundtable event between the 14th and the 16th of October 2020, with the participation of five more European sister projects (REBUILD, NADINE, MICADO, EASYRIGHTS and WELCOME). All these projects have been funded under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, working towards the development of ICT-enabled solutions and toolkits for the implementation of inclusion policies by public administrations. The 6 projects organised bi-weekly meetings to agree upon the content and the agenda of the 3-days-long virtual workshops, with the continuous support of their responsible Project Officers from the Research Executive Agency. The outcomes of these sessions, influenced the agenda of the Joint Migration Policy Roundtable, resulting to the final prioritization of the three main topics of discussion/pillars:

- a) Co-creation and participatory design
- b) Multi-stakeholder collaboration
- c) ICT tools and digital services for supporting integration.

Based on the fact that the involvement of key stakeholders for a clear understanding on the individual situation and the social embedding that leads to an efficient and effective integration of migrants and refugees, a more holistic approach has been adopted during that meeting, focusing on the common factors between projects and the overall implementation approach and objectives. All the discussions and debates formulated an initial input paper which was submitted for the EU Public Consultation<sup>2</sup> on the integration and inclusion of migrants and people with a migrant background on the 21st of October 2020.

The final result of the Joint Migration Roundtable has been depicted to the Joint Migration Policy Whitepaper which is intended as a strategical input for shaping future migration policy of the EU, with the following proposed policy recommendations to have been clustered under the abovementioned 3 specific pillars:

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<sup>1</sup> E. B.-N. Sanders and P. J. Stappers, “Co-creation and the new landscapes of design,” *CoDesign*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 5–18, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Have your say (europa.eu)

Common Pillars	Specific Policy Recommendations
1. <i>Co-Creation and Participatory Design</i>	<b>1a.</b> Understand migrants’ and refugees’ life as a prerequisite for participation. <b>1b.</b> Address specific issues and challenges in a wider perspective. <b>1c.</b> Recognize the necessity of co-design for trust building. <b>1d.</b> Remove barriers to participation first. <b>1e.</b> Push ahead participatory design. <b>1f.</b> Pilot the culture of co-design as an internal cultural change in public administrations
2. <i>Multi-stakeholder collaboration</i>	<b>2a.</b> Encourage a multi-stakeholder approach. <b>2b.</b> Work towards the delivery of digital services to migrants and refugees <b>2c.</b> Promote Funding and Sustainability <b>2d.</b> Focus on the migration topic <b>2e.</b> Capitalise on success stories for migration reception and integration. <b>2f.</b> Adopt a multi-stakeholder integration process
3. <i>ICT tools and digital services for supporting integration</i>	<b>3a.</b> Promote digital transformation. <b>3b.</b> Encourage Innovation, research, and development. <b>3c.</b> Promote Digital education and infrastructure. <b>3d.</b> Assess Future integration policies

MIICT consortium partners during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Policy Roundtable discussion, mapped out all the possible obstacles and/or challenges that have to be taken into consideration for the further policy development, prioritising in parallel the aforementioned policies that were relevant to MIICT project and specifically to pilot countries’ needs, proposing further policy recommendations to overcome specific identified challenges.

To begin with, as far as **Co-Creation and Participatory Design** is concerned, the necessity of addressing the issues of accessibility, engagement, and relatability, was underlined to ensure the participation of migrants to test the usage of offered services. Working hours of migrants, lack of childcare, difficulties in accessing service locations, language limitations as well as limited access to technology (e.g., lack of internet connection, lack of tablets etc.) and generally accessibility issues, could hinder them from participating to certain activities as well as from adopting offered ICT services. Engagement issues have also been raised mostly in relation to public authorities and other similar service providers, underlining their limited access to technological resources (e.g., e-mails and linked online services) as well as their slow predisposition to change and adapt with new realities (e.g., policy/procedural changes, digital transformation, cultural changes etc.). Relatability was additionally linked to the former, as users and relevant stakeholders cannot usually be related to the technology they are offered, as they will not be able to use it in their daily operations. They can see and understand the potential, but they cannot immediately ‘relate’, as their daily reality is very different. Certain bureaucratic procedures along with “arteriosclerosis” on procedural implementation add further challenges to the implementation of innovative technological solutions. The differentiation of public authorities related to migration in all the three pilot countries, intensify the pre-mentioned limitations, as the responsibilities and the decision-making mechanisms are scattered, hindering the whole process of implementation and further exploitation of the proposed ICT solutions.

Moving to **Multi-stakeholder collaboration** the need to target organisations rather than personal capacity for the participation in the design and feedback processes of MIICT solutions was highlighted. The fact that individuals may be easier to be approached, was stressed out, as it is difficult to engage stakeholders such as municipalities or other local authorities as whole. However, in most of the times these individuals do not possess the well-rounded knowledge on organisational priorities as well as the mandate to promote certain proposals and solutions as well as policy recommendations. Budgeting and financial support on the sustainability of ICT solutions proposed by EU projects is another limitation and an important point that also complements the engagement obstacle mentioned above. Since migrants are asked to participate in certain field tests and feedback sessions during or after their working hours, the lack of any kind of compensation or other similar incentives hinder them from active participation in co-creation design approaches. The same challenge applies also to other stakeholders and not only migrants (e.g., service providers, NGOs, etc.), as

they need some direct and short-term incentives that will make them dedicate their time and commitment to workshops and participatory design processes, which will present them 'what is in for them' on a long-term basis. This applies mostly when participants are required to take part in multiple iterations in different research phases, even outside their working hours and premises, as is the case with co-creation research projects.

The COVID-19 pandemic has put an additional barrier, due to the lack of personnel on behalf of service providers and NGOs as well as the level of their priorities which are mainly shifted and focused on more tangible issues related to the pandemic. More to add, the current reality where face-to-face meetings and travelling have been replaced by online meetings and new communication platforms, has brought a fatigue to some of the relevant stakeholders to engage themselves in testing out another novel ICT platform, with no direct advantage for them in the near future. Representation is another important issue that presents challenges toward a multi stakeholder collaboration. It is noted that it is difficult to achieve a full representation of migrants, since sometimes refugee and migrant communities do not represent all migrants (e.g., LGBTQ+ migrants that have separate organisations, ethnic divisions within different communities so one organisation may not speak to all etc.). Turning to the future exploitability of the project outcomes, a major challenge was the sustainability of the IMMERSE platform itself after the end of the project. Policy roundtable participants underlined the fact that due to the nature of this ICT tool and especially the target audience of migrants, refugees as well as public service providers, there are inherent obstacles that limit its future lifespan either to interested public authorities inside each country that will be willing to adopt this solution, or to follow-up funds from next EU project calls, risking of course the possibility of not being picked for future funding. Any potential funding solution coming from the commercial sector (Small Medium Enterprises etc.) presents several challenges from an ethical point of view and if a sustainability solution lays upon Non-Governmental Organizations and Civil Society Organisations, then again obstacles relate to limited financial as well as technical capabilities to maintain and administer such technical platforms.

Finally, regarding **ICT tools and digital services for supporting integration**, the lack of an advanced digital knowledge inside public administration hindering stakeholders from being actively involved in the co-design and future implementation of ICT solutions was highlighted. Even if public authorities are generally very responsive and engaged, due to bureaucratic systemic reality, along with resistance to change, the adoption of any novel ICT solution is hindered. If no adequate periodic training is being provided to them, considering the significant turnover of personnel in institutions in a number of countries, or if they are not in line with ongoing national strategies/priorities/processes/upgrades, such solutions will clash with the aforementioned bureaucratic procedures and will not find a fruitful ground for further development and implementation. In addition to that, the delivery of digital services should be coupled with raising migrants' digital skills and their abilities to navigate through the often complicated and un-harmonised digital public services.

## POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

MIICT project adopts and is aligned with all the recommendations outlined in the Joint Migration Policies White paper. It proposes also the following additional MIICT specific policy recommendations  
**Capitalise on a Change Management Component.**

It is important to bridge the gap among the identified stakeholders' needs and the way they can be applicable during their daily reality, for the projects to be able to offer them user-friendly solutions. The main challenge researchers faced when accessing stakeholders and promoting the IMMERSE platform was that even though the relevant stakeholders were positive and open to adopt new ICT solutions, they had to overcome certain operational, bureaucratic, and organisational obstacles for these solutions to be incorporated in their daily activities. Relatability issues have been the most identifiable challenge that emerged from the beginning of MIICT project. For that reason, MIICT proposes that EU projects should also consider capitalizing on certain **Change Management Processes**, parallel to the developed ICT solutions. In that way, projects could guide the relevant stakeholders through a series of changes (in procedures, mentality, and work approach) that they may experience when the latter will try to apply the ICT solutions. This recommendation moves beyond the standard practices of training sessions and manuals, and delves to the core issue of change resistance, which is related to **readiness assessment** of each relevant stakeholder in terms of adopting new processes,

resistance management as well as coaching, **feedback analysis** and **corrective actions** that will ensure a long-term implementation of innovative solutions.

**Capitalize on cooperation and coordination among stakeholders, focusing on organisational engagement rather than on individual participation.**

Cooperation and coordination among stakeholders are keys to ICT-facilitated integration of migrants as this is a multidisciplinary area where no single stakeholder, or a group thereof, can move forward without the support of others. During the course of activities, especially in Live Prototyping of the IMMERCE platform, MIICT researchers faced difficulties engaging specific local authorities and other relevant municipalities and/or relevant public organisations. They had the chance to work along with specific individuals from their contact lists, but they stressed out the fact that when it came to the final promotion of the IMMERSE platform to their authorities, they were not the ones mandated to take the final decisions, so additional replicated work had to be done towards this direction. For that reason, MIICT proposes that the focus of the target population should shift from the involvement of individuals within organisations to **organizations' overall commitment on a local and regional level** (e.g., NGOs, public service providers etc.), as that will help facilitate better engagement, support and acceptance of priorities and proposed innovations.

**Encourage active participation through introducing certain incentives for all possible stakeholders.**

This is a delicate and important policy recommendation, that recognises the need to **adopt transparent and legally and ethically compliant mechanisms** that can enable supporting the participants during the co-design and co-creation processes and giving them **short-term incentives** to dedicate their time and effort to an approach with long-term benefits. Due to specific limitations in terms of accessibility (e.g. migrant working hours that hinder them of participating to certain sessions, limited internet accessibility, limited technological resources and/or digital knowledge), as well as due to the COVID-19 situation (lack of personnel, having other priorities, fatigue towards technology) MIICT researchers faced difficulties in engaging a vast volume of participants without providing them specific practical incentives. For that reason, EU's support and guidance is needed towards this direction, e.g., via boosting the engagement of public authorities through open EU invitations, via setting up a joint area of best practice exchange around incentives used in other EU projects, as well as via setting up a list of legal and ethical frameworks and considerations for incentives that could be used in future activities.

**Bring forward the active participation of migrant representatives and local communities and citizens from diverse backgrounds to better influence decision-making.**

This recommendation encapsulates the fact that during the project lifespan, there is a risk of under-representation by certain stakeholders (e.g., migrant communities, ethnic groups, host society, etc.). The fact that the IMMERSE platform aimed to be accessible and sensitive to vulnerable groups was stressed out. However, the difficulty in engaging specific communities with special needs, was another limitation that should be taken into consideration for future iterations of the project, underlining the fact that this approach should be adopted by all relevant projects that have a co-creative aspect in their design and development. Thus diversity is a major factor that should be included in the policy making process, as well as entailing a gender dimension when considering the provision of ICT related services. **Functional diversity** must be taken into consideration because both the participation of organizations working on these issues and migrants as individuals could add interesting and really necessary opinions, thoughts, and feedback. Furthermore, existing technological solutions should be accessible to **persons with disabilities** (e.g. hearing or visual disabilities) and these vulnerable groups are usually invisible in migration policies. In addition to that, cultural change and digital transformation cannot be directly achieved on a national level, but it relies mostly on **the involvement of local communities and citizens**. Co-creation and participatory approaches along with ICT solutions and platform implementation should not only be customisable according to the needs of migrants, refugees, public authorities, and service providers; they should take into consideration the community as a whole. The latter plays a pivotal role in the long-term integration of migrants and sustainability of proposed solutions. Local communities can also underline the message of importance on digitalization, pushing forward the need for **cultural change at different levels of society**.

**Focus on the way existing technological solutions (e.g., translation services etc.) could evolve to support multi-faceted ICT solutions that respect cultural diversity among end users.**

Innovation, research, and development are the main areas of focus by EU funded projects under this call. Following up from the previous MIICT specific recommendation, the need to zoom in to more practical aspects of the platform was underlined. For example, taking into consideration language differences issues, by deploying technology tools for translation to support a greater variety of migrants and other stakeholders enhances the user-friendliness and comprehensiveness of ICT solutions / platforms by making them available in different languages. This will enhance further migrants' integration.

**Capitalise on the momentum of digitization of public services related to COVID-19 pandemic and invest further in digital transformation and relevant targeted training to certain stakeholders with a governmental background.**

EU projects such as MIICT, taking into serious consideration the EU digitization agenda, as well as the *virtual situation COVID-19 pandemic has created*, should focus on *investing in the digital transformation* that has happened even to countries that were not so ICT advanced. Technical aspects and e-government and e-access priorities need to be merged with service provision. The right technical personnel and particularly those who create the systems in every country are to be sufficiently trained to effectively implement ICT solutions and ensure their interoperability with existing systems. Recruiting and integration of certain stakeholders from a governmental background is also an imperative recommendation in similar EU projects, as governmental systems are complex and pose challenges in integrating a novel solution/feature into them. Thus, it is essential to continuously train public administrations and service providers and raise their digital skills and literacy, as without this, digital instruments like the ones promoted by MIICT would not find fruitful ground. The fact that the EC could *introduce Directives to the Member States to incorporate new technologies and display their affinity to innovation through incentives* such as an "innovation badge" as a certificate or similar that the authorities can use for self-marketing was fully supported.

**Capitalize on funding and sustainability issues related to ICT proposed solutions, where EC can play a pivotal role of support.**

Funding is a critical factor that must be tackled appropriately during and after the end of EU funded projects related to migration and ICT solutions. Long discussions have been held during consortium meetings, as well as during the Second Internal policy Roundtable, to address the issue of funding and the future exploitability of the project outcomes and the sustainability of the IMMERSE platform, underlining the inherent characteristics of the final users of such ICT tools. It is proposed that the launch of information campaigns, that would act as an additional catalyst to the publicity of the proposed technical solutions, could also facilitate potential future funding opportunities among interested parties. In addition to that, the EC can play an important role towards and beyond the **sustainability and further exploitation** of the proposed solutions by providing additional funding opportunities for relevant actions that aim to ensure the continuity of such novel solutions. The EC could also support the *outreach activities* of the projects, through the active participation of *experts* to project events, through *tools* and dedicated websites within the Commission that are being set up for this purpose, as well as by drawing the attention of certain *societies and institutes* (e.g., the European Institute of Public Administration) that could boost the visibility of the project results.

## PROJECT IDENTITY

<b>PROJECT NAME</b>	MIICT - ICT Enabled Public Services for Migration
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	SHEFFIELD HALLAM UNIVERSITY, Centre of Excellence in Terrorism, Resilience, Intelligence and Organised Crime Research (CENTRIC), United Kingdom, United Kingdom
<b>PARTNERS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• SYNNO GmbH, Austria</li><li>• ADITESS LTD, Cyprus</li><li>• AGENFOR INTERNATIONAL, Italy</li><li>• ASSOCIATION DES AGENCES DE LA DEMOCRATIE LOCALE, France.</li><li>• CENTRE FOR RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY HELLAS (CERTH), Greece</li><li>• CENTER FOR SECURITY STUDIES, Greece</li><li>• CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF DEMOCRACY, Bulgaria</li><li>• ASSOCIATION OF CITIZENS FOR RESEARCH, ANALYSIS AND PUBLIC POLICY DEVELOPMENT, Republic of North Macedonia</li><li>• FUNDACION EUROARABE DE ALTOS ESTUDIOS, Spain</li><li>• KOINONIA CARITAS CYPRUS, Cyprus</li><li>• LAUREA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES Ltd, Finland</li><li>• LAW AND INTERNET FOUNDATION, Bulgaria</li><li>• MINISTERIO DELLA GIUSTIZIA, Italy</li><li>• MUNICIPALITY OF ENGOMI, Cyprus</li></ul>
<b>FUNDING SCHEME</b>	Horizon 2020 Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2014-2020) “Societal Challenge 6 – Europe in a changing world: Inclusive, innovative and reflective societies”; Call: MIGRATION-2018; Topic: “Addressing the challenge of migrant integration through ICT-enabled solutions”
<b>DURATION</b>	November 2018 – October 2021
<b>WEBSITE</b>	<a href="http://www.miict.eu">www.miict.eu</a>
<b>FOR MORE INFORMATION</b>	Sheffield Hallam University (CENTRIC), <a href="mailto:miict@shu.ac.uk">miict@shu.ac.uk</a>
<b>FURTHER READING</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Legal and Ethical Analysis Report</li><li>– MIICT Inclusivity Handbook</li><li>– ICTs for Social and Public Sector Service Transformation &amp; Policy Review Report</li><li>– Integrated Report of the 1<sup>st</sup> Policy Briefing and Roundtable &amp; Project</li><li>– Communication and Dissemination Report</li><li>– Integrated Report of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Policy Briefing</li><li>– Joint Migration Policy Whitepaper: Towards ICT-Enabled integration of migrants</li></ul>



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