



PERCEPTIONS

Policy Brief

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Utilization of Methodology for enhanced Assessment on Best Practices at the EU level

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Executive Summary

The main objective of this policy brief is to provide an overview of the main methodological challenges in the field of best practices assessment in relation to narratives about Europe/the EU. Moreover, it provides policy recommendations as well as a structured approach which is intended to create fertile ground for actors, allowing them to conduct an enhanced Best Practices assessment at the European Union (EU) level. This policy brief also points out outcomes from the collection of measures, good practices, countermeasures, tools, and approaches utilized for assessing misleading narratives, and biased expectations towards the EU whilst examining the perspective of refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers. In conclusion, several best practices and recommendations are identified. The aforementioned practices could potentially be established as feasible and effective approach to enhance the pre-established modus operandi, addressing contemporary methodological challenges within the field of migrants' European narratives and perceptions.

Introduction

One of the main challenges from a methodological standpoint upon assessment of practices in relation to narratives and expectations is that “best” or “good” practices do not have a universal, exhausting definition due to a variety of contributing indicators that shape the term – in particular for the academic realm of humanities. Despite the apparent obstacles, taking into consideration the United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees’ Protection Cluster Working Group interpretation, a “good” or “best” practice is a methodological activity that encompasses the evaluation of practices that simultaneously solidifies the quality of each collected practice and ensures compliance with the legal aspect, human rights, and privacy of each contemporary case.

Based on the aforementioned factors, it is important to underline that this policy brief discusses how “good” practices can evolve into a framework of “best” practices, models, strategies, tools, and measures collection, tailored to stakeholders’ needs of implementation at the European level. Even though practices cannot be exhaustive and the process is interpreted as subjective due to the impending need to tailor the approach according to each stakeholder’s needs, objectives, and scope of activities, nevertheless the proposed methodology sufficiently reduces the impact of subjectivity significantly. This policy brief particularly emphasizes on “best” practices that intend to facilitate the creation of fertile ground for developing mechanisms that best address existing, contemporary, or evolving threats and expectations that correlate with false narratives of migrants’, refugees and asylum-seekers perceptions of Europe and European societies. These narratives hinder integration to the host countries and potentially lead to illegal activities such as trafficking of human beings, radicalisation, and smuggling, as well as generation of negative attitudes towards migrant populations due to stereotypes.

Key Issues:

- *A “best” practice is “An action or a set of actions that, based on quantitative and/or qualitative evidence, has been demonstrated to have had a positive and tangible impact on a given protection issue, problem or challenge, thus resulting in enhanced protection of and respect for the rights of persons of concern.” (UNHCR PCWG (2008).*
- *There is a significant lack of a universal and exhaustive terminology.*
- *A list of “good” or “best” practices cannot be considered ideal for all stakeholders, as criteria ought to be adjusted depending on multiple influencing factors such as context, stakeholders’ needs, and methodological approach.*

The methodology of a “best” practices framework in migration

In the context of the PERCEPTIONS project, 150 “best” practices, approaches, and measures have been identified, constituting a “Best Practice Library” which intends to counteract narratives that may contribute unrealistic expectations and stereotypical views. As mentioned above, the associated risk is to generate a plethora of contemporary societal and economic issues linked with migration, involving asylum seekers, refugees, migrants and host communities. Even though a set of available good practices and techniques have been utilized by a variety of stakeholders, based on each stakeholder’s criteria and tailored to their needs, the scope of their activities was mostly aimed toward integration of migrants rather than actively addressing specific

Key Findings:

- *Pre-existing approaches and lists of best practices, emphasized mostly in migrant integration instead of conducting a organized and structured attempt to respond to various*

perceptions. In order to identify and construct a Best Practices Library, a variety of prioritisation techniques, approaches, and methodologies were examined. These – among others – include the Ice Score Model, RICE Scoring, Weighted Scoring by Own Criteria, European Good Practice Examples of Migration and Development Initiatives (Keusch & Schuster, 2012), guidelines on selecting good practices (European Web Site on Integration, EWSI, n.d.), Criteria to select best practices (Ryan, 2017), a Catalogue of best practices in the field of migrants' access to information (EUC project "Danube Region Information Platform for Economic Integration of Migrants" (Divinský, Bofulin, & DanjaCukutKričić, 2017), a Discussion Note on Collection of Good Practices in Protection (PCWG, 2008), and Dennis Neil Hinkle's theory on construct implications and relative resistance to slot change grid (2010).

○ Turning "good" into "best" practices: a methodology based on qualifier criteria

Examining the literature and pre-existing methodologies, a new methodological approach was developed. It can be distinguished in five steps.

1. *Definition of inclusion criteria.* The criteria examined contemporary good practices relevant to migration and the EU narratives from academic and open sources, similar research projects, grey literature generated by international organizations and governmental entities, electronic databases, and publicly available material.

2. *Enrichment of the initial list of good practices adding specific parameters (e.g., COVID-19).*

3. *Definition of qualifier criteria.* The criteria that these best practices would have to fulfil were based on:

- **Impact** (Practices proven to have impact on immigrants, practitioners and the local community. The efficiency and effectiveness of the practice are two important variables for the measurement of the impact. This can be interpreted as the degree to which a practice was successful and produced a desired result in the expected and/or optimal way. This measurement could provide an accurate estimation depending on the quality, quantity and time a certain practice required in real conditions, at the lowest cost). which the objectives of quantity, quality and time have been met under real conditions at the lowest possible cost.
- **Respecting, and protecting human rights** in accordance with the relevant international legal framework (Humanitarian Law, human rights law, refugee law, etc.).
- **Sustainability** (Long-term practices and measures that utilize available resources and can adapt to the socio-economic and environmental requirements of the context they apply).
- **Transferability** (The ability to systemize, document and transfer the outcomes and lessons learnt from the results of practices and

perceptions revolving migration.

- *The multidimensional methodological framework that supports the approach introduced in this Policy Brief, incorporates five (5) distinct but interconnected steps.*
- *Step 1. Definition of inclusion criteria for practices gathering.*
- *Step 2. Enrichment of the initial list of good practices adding specific parameters (e.g., COVID-19).*
- *Step 3. Definition of qualifier criteria.*
- *Step 4. Development of the evaluation framework. A) Identification of qualifier criteria in terms of importance. B) Evaluation of good practices using the qualifier criteria.*
- *Final list of best practices and analysis.*

Key prioritisation techniques, approaches, and methodologies

- *Ice Score Model.*
- *RICE Scoring.*
- *Weighted Scoring by Own Criteria.*
- *European Good Practice Examples of Migration and Development Initiatives (Keusch, M., Schuster, N., 2012).*

measures in order to apply them on different countries, regions, context, settings and/or to escalate them to a broader target population or geographic context).

- **Intersectional coordination** (Practices and measures with the ability to facilitate collaboration among the different sectors that are involved in the domain of interest such as active cooperation between Law enforcement agencies, border guards, non-governmental organizations etc).

4. Development of the evaluation framework:

- Identification of **qualifier criteria** in terms of importance. In this phase, stakeholders proceed with the identification of criteria that can be prioritized based on their importance, taking into consideration their set objectives and scope. They can be prioritized in accordance with the requirements, objectives, context and scope of stakeholders.
- **Evaluation** of good practices using the qualifier criteria. A group of stakeholders and/or representatives in a joint initiative could conduct an evaluation of the good practices utilizing the identified qualifier criteria, utilizing a qualitative approach. This approach allows involved parties to choose the most important criteria from their perspective, whereas a 3-point Likert scale with 1=Low, 2=Medium, 3=High, could be implemented. The criteria and/or practices that receive the highest rate, can be identified as the most important.

5. *Final list of best practices and analysis.* This step should subsequently allow stakeholders to adopt and if required present with a list of best practices, whereas taking into consideration the data from prior steps, an analysis of the process could be facilitated which would elaborate further the context and the reasoning behind the final list of practices.

The main objective of this approach was the creation of a best practice library consisting of measures, procedures, tools, good practices utilizing pre-existing, efficient practices, and methodologies that can address various perceptions and challenges related to migration. Moreover, a list of threats was included setting relevant parameters, such as: a) Civil Unrest and Economic threats, b) Discrimination (racism, xenophobia, prejudices, domestic violent extremism, minor serious and organised criminal behaviours etc.), c) Health Problems and Disease/Environmental deterioration, d) Human smuggling and Trafficking/Modern Slavery/Corruption, e) Life-threatening situations (death, violence, exploitation and abuse, detention, and deportation), and f) Violent radicalisation and Terrorism. In conclusion, upon evaluation, practitioners identified one hundred and eighty-five (185) best practices.

○ **Contemporary best practices intended to dispel stereotypical perceptions per target country**

The main categories of the identified best practices emphasize on migrant integration, protection of human rights against threats related to migrants, awareness raising on the migrant journey, and the risks associated with

- *Guidelines on selecting good practices (European Web Site on Integration (EWSI, n.d.).*
- *Criteria to select best practices (John F Ryan, 2017).*
- *Catalogue of best practices in the field of migrants' access to information (EUC project "Danube Region Information Platform for Economic Integration of Migrants" (Divinsky, D., Bofulin, M., and DanjaCukutKričić, 2017).*
- *Discussion Note on Collection of Good Practices in Protection (PCWG, 2008).*
- *Dennis Neil Hinkle's theory on construct implications and relative resistance to slot change grid (2010).*

Qualifying Criteria

- Impact.
- Respecting and Protecting Human Rights.
- Sustainability.
- Transferability.
- Intersectional Coordination.

irregular migration routes (human trafficking, migrant smuggling, deaths, etc.). Others focused on addressing negative public perceptions, racism and xenophobia towards migrants, media representations of migrants and fake news, and tackling radicalisation, hate speech, extremist behaviours and/or terrorism. Practices that relate to the respect and protection of Human Rights have been identified to be the most important among the other qualifier criteria for best practice identification.

Some of the best practices that are identified by combining the utilization of the aforementioned criteria, empirical research, and fieldwork analysis include:

Bulgaria – *Mentoring programs* (launched by Caritas, the [Tulip Foundation](#), the Bulgarian Red Cross, and the Cooperation of Voluntary Service (CVS) as well as a *hotline* (The Bulgarian Red Cross) to accommodate the needs of refugees and overcome language barriers, particularly providing information of safety practices, support, and protection towards the COVID-19 pandemic.

Germany – The *Integration through Qualification* network and the *Socio-pedagogical Cologne based Football Fans project*, aiming at assisting migrants with labour market integration, awareness raising that counters stereotypical discriminative working environment and views, and awareness raising through organized sports activities, organized trips, guided tours and relevant discrimination awareness activities.

Italy – A labour integration and entrepreneurial support mechanism (*CREER Project*) that provides assistance to migrants whilst intends to create and promote employment opportunities for young people. *Esshih*, a platform that actively supports young citizens understand and react towards a possible encounter with false news. [UNRWA TV29](#), a Palestinian news platform, part of the UN relief and works agency that provides educational and entertainment support to Palestinian refugees. *CinemArena30*, a cinema travelling project, conducting educational and information campaigns, highlighting the risk of irregular migration.

United Kingdom – [The Traffik Analysis Hub](#), a global data hub on information exchange about human trafficking across all sectors and industries. [Stop the Traffik App](#), a secure mobile app that allows users report suspicious activity via text-based messages, videos and photographs. *Asylum Reform Initiative (ARI)*, a collaboration between six national organizations (Refugee Action, Asylum Matters, Freedom from Torture, British Red Cross, Refugee Council, Scottish Refugee Council), working towards a long-term transformation of Britain's approach towards refugees and asylum seekers.

○ Best practice and countermeasures policy recommendations

As the ever-evolving landscape of migration constantly introduces challenges for both migrants and host communities, this section examines several recommendations, underlining gaps and the limitations of the pre-existing status quo. Based on the research that has been conducted by the EU-funded PERCEPTIONS project, it is important to highlight the need for regular

Key recommendations:

- Regular information exchange and enhanced cooperation on an international scope among governmental and international organizations in cooperation with migrant communities at a local and regional level.
- Targeted information campaigns, educational and labour market events, career forums are necessary tools that can be utilized to establish safe and legal channels for migrants.
- Fostering open dialogue with minority representatives and minority communities would bridge a potential societal and cultural chasm.
- Providing clear and adequate information about migration procedures and legal requirements in multiple languages and formats.
- Policies should aim in creating transcultural education first line practitioners, to address the needs of migrants.
- Educated migrants could be the focal point for a migrant community, as community representative. Host country and minority community cooperation is highly recommended, particularly in awareness raising activities and to share information.

information exchange and enhanced cooperation on an international scope among governmental and international organizations in cooperation with migrant communities at a local and regional level. Moreover, targeted information campaigns, educational and labour market events, as well as career forums appear to be necessary in order to establish safe and legal channels for migrants. It is also equally important to have a safe environment and promote open dialogue about the perceptions that migrants and host countries have, while also communicate with clarity how legal migration is carried out and managed by the relevant host country's stakeholders. Clear information, translated in a variety of targeted languages should be provided to migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees that relate to migration procedures, legal requirements which would also assist in minimizing backlogs to the reception system. It has also been underlined that policies and practices should also emphasize in creating transcultural education and training for first line practitioners, such as psychologists, that address the needs of migrants, whereas skilled migrants could be employed as community representatives or interpreters, thus facilitating a smooth transition and integration to the society while simultaneously dispelling stereotypical views for both ends through systematic discourse, information exchange, and enhanced cooperation.

Further, organizing and conducting workshops, conferences, fora, educational and training sessions, awareness campaigns, dedicated manuals and handbooks, and e-learning are identified as useful tools for stakeholders, since they may be utilized as a form of countermeasures which subsequently ensue with the use of the best practice framework, thus addressing various perceptions and narratives in both the host society and the migrant communities. To increase the effectiveness of these activities, the importance of constant communication at an international, regional, and local level, between these stakeholders should be highlighted. Additional measures such as migrant integration, social-media, art-based and initiatives should be also utilized in order to raise awareness on the risks and threats that are introduced with irregular migration, policies to tackle human trafficking, casualties and smuggling under the umbrella of a structured effort to protect human rights.

Concluding, it is recommended that policy makers and stakeholders aim towards reducing excessive bureaucracy on relevant procedures, pursue a narrative of empathy to reduce the appearance of hateful messages within societies, and establish a concrete mechanism that would address cases of undocumented migration through bilateral and multilateral agreements between countries of origin and host countries. The utilization of the holistic and multidimensional framework of best practices will allow stakeholders, policy and decision makers to address contemporary risks and threats to migrants from perceptions that may raise expectation that do not match reality, while simultaneously provide the opportunity to develop a series of additional tools and contemporary approaches towards the challenges of migration, integration and various perceptions.

- Workshops, conferences, fora, educational and training sessions, awareness campaigns, dedicated manuals and handbooks, and e-learning are identified as useful tools for stakeholders.

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○ Websites

www.perceptions.eu

project.perceptions.eu

○ Deliverables

Perceptions. (2021). Understand the Impact of Novel Technologies, Social Media, and Perceptions in Countries Abroad on Migration Flows and the Security of the EU & Provide Validated Counter Approaches, Tools and Practices - D5.3 Best practice library. Available at <https://project.perceptions.eu/>.

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