



SPANISH MEIC STRATEGIC PLAN

Migrants' Economic Integration Cluster: a working definition.

LIME Project – Labour Integration for Migrants' Employment



1. Introduction

Migration is not a new phenomenon since «human beings have always moved in search of new opportunities, or to escape poverty, conflict or environmental degradation»ⁱ. However, this *Age of Migration*ⁱⁱ has an important socio-economic impact on the destination countries' welfare policies because of its global dimensionⁱⁱⁱ.

In the last few years, the growing migration flows from North Africa and Middle-East countries to European Union Member States have highlighted the most complex and politically sensitive issue of international migration, namely the socio-economic inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers^{iv}. Indeed, the “refugee crisis”^v has shown the paradox of the global society wherein borders seem to disappear for goods, services and capital but they are strengthened for people who leave their own countries forced by the *push-factors* of poverty, conflicts, oppressive regimes, persecution of minorities, and environmental disasters.

Furthermore, the crisis revealed the unclear European migration policy based on the implementation of Member States' measures to contain refugees' mobility. Hence, in 2015 the European Commission began rethinking a shared action in order to «bring together European and national efforts to address migration, to meet our international and ethical obligations and to work together in an effective way, in accordance with the principles of solidarity and shared responsibility. No Member State can effectively address migration alone. It is clear that we need a new, more European approach»^{vi}.

The Commission calls the attention to the shared responsibility involving all actors, Member States, EU institutions, International Organisations, civil society, local authorities and third countries in the definition of an effective integration policy through the implementation of *cluster network*^{vii} looking at refugee as a "third country national"^{viii}, i.e. a holder of rights and obligations comparable to those of citizens.

The LIME Project – *Labour Integration for Migrants' Employment* – moves from the interest of promoters (CIES Onlus, LUMSA University, ALDA, Guarani ONG, CNOS-FAP, Confocooperative Roma, and Pinardi) to respond to the European Commission call. The project promotes the swift integration of young third country nationals (aged 18-29) in the labour market, by fostering the *cluster network* methodology at the local level. The core of the project are two pilot actions implemented in Rome (Italy) and in Madrid (Spain) which allow to develop the *Migrants Economic Integration Cluster* – MEIC among socio-economic key actors (associations of employers, vocational training providers, employment services, local authorities, companies) aimed at identifying more adequate tools to increase the effectiveness of existing labour market integration policies.

This position paper refers both to economic and sociological literature on networks^{ix} and integration policies^x and to the analysis of best practices already experienced in Madrid. It aims to draw up a strategic action plan through which partners are guided in the implementation of actions for the labour integration of third-country nationals – hereafter TCNs (refugees, asylum seekers, beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, and ex unaccompanied minors) paying particular attention to women.

2. Theoretical Background

The complexity of social phenomena highlights the need to develop organizational models more adequate to plan and to implement sustainable socio-economic development policies. Networks become, therefore, the main tool of cooperation among public-private actors of the society and they seem to offer effective and sustainable solutions to wicked problems such as human capital development, environmental protection policies and global health policies. Actually, wicked problems are characterized by interconnected causal factors that cannot be broken up into different parts in order to outline clear and punctual political-economic strategies^{xi}.

Nowadays, one of the major wicked problems affecting society is the dynamic and multidimensional phenomenon of migration^{xii}. It is part of the structural change that brings policymakers to rethink the concept of integration not only as an individual process but also as networks of formal and informal relationships involving migrants and local communities^{xiii}. In this context, the multi-level governance plays a key role because it allows activating collaboration between public and private actors of the society.

A vast literature has examined networks highlighting their evolution from public governance and regulatory economics as well as a valid alternative to top-down organisational models^{xiv}. According to Provan and Kenis (2007), networks are «groups of three or more legally autonomous organizations that work together to achieve not only their own goals but also a collective goal»^{xv}. The significant interdependence among members does not depend on formal agreements but on networks' tasks^{xvi} because no members, either public or private, have adequate knowledge, information or power to solve complex, dynamic and multifaceted problems^{xvii}. Nevertheless, interdependence is not a sufficient condition, even though necessary, to form a network. Members have to be aware of their own interdependence and of the added value produced by the collaboration^{xviii}.

Networks are therefore horizontal models wherein members define rules and share resources to achieve a common goal through continuous interactions^{xix}. It is possible to identify three types of networks, each with its own peculiarities^{xx}. More specifically:

- **Cooperative networks** focused on the exchange of information and/or expertise. They are based on informal and short-term relationships.
- **Coordinated networks**, focused on the integration of services for solving complex problems. Its participants take substantial risks, also because of the high interdependence. They, therefore, develop a shared action plan to which all members are committed to.
- **Collaborative networks**, formed not so much to provide services, but to find innovative solutions that lead to change the way services are delivered. They are long term, risky and involve systemic changes.

Each type of networks can activate a *cluster*. The concept of cluster network finds its roots in the phenomenon of "industrial district"^{xxi} which can be defined as the geographical concentration of business activities that facilitate the flows of knowledge relying upon the trust established among members. Hence, the elements making up the cluster are similar to those present in industrial districts: a production network connected to a multiplicity of members (institutions, research bodies and third sector associations) in a geographical and relational dimension of proximity. The core element of a cluster network is the mutual collaboration among members, through which cluster is able to adapt

to the society that is constantly changing sharing knowledge and good practices and even anticipating risks.

The LIME project applies the cluster methodology to the labour integration policy of TCNs so that *Migrants' Economic Integration Cluster* – MEIC – could support social territorial responsibility involving the society as a whole (public administration, enterprises, representative organizations, third sector and research institutes) in the definition of labour integration actions.

3. The Spanish Context

The population of Spain has been in decline for many years and was projected to decrease by nearly one million by 2023. However, even though Spain is continually losing its nationals, the migration phenomenon saw an increase over the last few years, ceasing the country's ongoing downward trend in population in 2016 when almost 314,000 migrants arrived in the country. In 2017 there was a slight increase with 340,000 new migrants on a long-term or permanent basis with Morocco, Colombia and Venezuela still as the top three nationalities of newcomers^{xxii}.

In 2018 the European migration inflow dropped with approximately 117,000 migrants arrived by sea. There has also been a shift in the routes taken by most irregular maritime migrants. Meanwhile the majority of irregular maritime arrivals from Africa who entered Europe in 2016 and 2017 used the Central Mediterranean route (from Libya, mainly to Italy), most irregular maritime arrivals to Europe in 2018 took the Western Mediterranean route (from Morocco, mainly to Spain). In fact, since 2017, the western Mediterranean route to Spain has been used much more than in previous years. Consequently, there were close to 59,000 sea arrivals in Spain, as opposed to around 23,000 in Italy.

The change in major routes, from the Central to the Western Mediterranean, is linked to several factors such as a closer cooperation between the European Union (EU) and countries of origin and transit, counter smuggling efforts, as well as increased maritime security patrols off the Libyan coast. Migrants from sub-Saharan African countries comprised the majority of irregular maritime arrivals in Spain, followed by Moroccans. Unfortunately, in the five years (2014–2018) approximately 30,900 women, men and children lost their lives while trying to reach other countries. During that time, the Mediterranean Sea has seen the highest number of deaths, at least 17,919 people lost their lives in the sea, as it has been claimed. A total of 813 deaths were recorded on this sea crossing from the coast of Northern Africa to Spain in 2018, compared with 272 in 2017.

In 2019 Spain was still the sixth most popular destination in Europe. Moreover, it has experienced a slight increase in the number of foreign-born migrants since 2015^{xxiii}. As the government changed in June 2018, the Spanish migration policy changed accordingly. More specifically, it has been based on the promotion of orderly, regular and safe migration through the construction of legal migration pathways. In addition, integration is another important pillar of the migration policy while combatting irregular migration, through the implementation of parallel actions on boarder control and surveillance and the co-operation with third countries, still remains a key priority.

4. Spanish Territorial Cluster Working Group: Comunidad de Madrid

The LIME project takes place in the context of Comunidad de Madrid aiming to promote the swift integration of young TCNs (aged 18-29) in the labour market, by fostering the application of the *cluster* methodology to solve the vulnerability of the current organizational structure and to strengthen the approach of territorial social responsibility. According to the Office of Asylum and Refugee, Madrid welcomes 20,731 asylum seekers, so that it is the autonomous region with the highest number of international protection seekers, followed by Catalonia and Andalusia. The data indicates that 51.6 per cent of the asylum seekers ages between 18 and 34 years: they are young people in working age^{xxiv}. In this framework, labour integration process becomes a priority for the inclusion of TCNs in the receiving society.

Since the local dimension of Comunidad de Madrid, the specific sector of the labour integration policies for TCNs, and the defined structure of cluster, the present strategic plan used qualitative methodology, i.e. in-depth interviews, with the partners of Spanish territorial cluster, Pinardi and Guarani, in order to explore the structure of each organisation and their cluster's activities in the local community.

During the implementation of the LIME Project, the Spanish Territorial Cluster Working Group (hereafter, TCWG) has experienced several changes showing the importance of trust in network for achieving sharing goals.

According to the LIME proposal, TCWG was composed by Federación de Plataformas Sociales Pinardi (Pinardi), Association Guarani (Guarani) and Grupo VIPS (VIPS), three key actors of Madrid. Since 2008, indeed, Guarani has been managing one of the public participation and integration centres for migrants and since 2014 Pinardi and VIPS have been working together on the definition of the "First Professional Experience", a training program for the economic integration of vulnerable people in the Community of Madrid.

Drawing from these experiences, TCWG decided to work on the LIME project offering the opportunities to test the effectiveness of the "First Professional Experience" programme on the vulnerable target of young TCNs (aged 18-29) and to monitor and evaluate its impact on two levels of analysis:

- The impact of vocational and training programme on social integration of beneficiaries;
- The impact of network dynamics on territorial cluster itself.

Hence, they have activated a *coordinated network* focused on the integration of services for solving the wicked problem of TCNs' economic integration.

In January 2019, several changes occurred in VIPS Company so that it could no longer be an official partner of the LIME project, but it remains a strategical one; actually, VIPS decided to participate in the pilot action without any budget allocated.

The different role of VIPS in the LIME project confirmed that territorial network becomes stronger and stronger if it experiences sharing of knowledge, purposes, and trust such as developed over the years among Pinardi, Guarani and VIPS.

4.1 Organisations

The Spanish territorial cluster could be described as a spreading network whose core is made up of Pinardi and Guarani.

Federación de Plataformas Sociales Pinardi, born in 2001, is a national federation of Salesian organisations involved in vocational training and labour integration actions. It finds its roots in more than 25 years of experience in the social context of Madrid, where it supports and spreads projects aimed at promoting economic integration of vulnerable people. Pinardi works as a “Platform for action” since the deep belief that networking and sharing could be an adequate strategy of action to make society more inclusive.

According to the holistic approach, Pinardi works for

the integral promotion, the development of children, adolescents, young people, families and other adults in a vulnerable situation, through programs and services of prevention, education, social protection, socio-educational compensation, training, emancipation and socio-labour integration.

Pinardi works with people, favouring the development of all their abilities, involving them in a project of continuous human growth and inclusion in society. (Pinardi)

In the area of migration, the federation has developed several projects that aim to facilitate the social and labour integration of immigrants (Barrio Abierto, since 2004) and to improve the social cohesion (Barrios: Desarrollo Comunitario, since 2015) through the implementation of local network among institutions, organisations and private sector.

The second core partner of Spanish TCWG is Guarani, a non-governmental organisation working in the field of social inclusion of vulnerable people, particularly migrants. Since 2006, the organisation has been involved in several project on local, national and European levels, guided by the mission to promote a comprehensive approach to social inclusion based on people’s specific needs and on the respect to autonomy and freedom. In this framework, Guarani follows a multi-level methodology that entails individual (individual interviews, orientation and follow up) and social (empowerment of social skills) dimensions of each beneficiary.

Furthermore, over the years, Guarani has built a strong collaboration with the municipality of Madrid: it guides a project, funded by Comunidad de Madrid, aimed to improve the integration of family at risk of exclusion, focusing on all family members and family as a whole; and it manages a public “Participation and Integration Centre” (CEPI Madrid Chamartin) funded by Comunidad de Madrid and the European Social Fund, aimed to develop multidisciplinary programme in labour, social, cultural, psychological and legal areas.

Despite the changed role of Grupo VIPS in the TCWG, it remains a strategic partner for the pilot. Actually, VIPS, has confirmed its commitments to social challenges that *go beyond their business*. VIPS is a multi-brand and multi-format group with more than 50 years of experience in the restaurant sector. It has developed a network of relations with different actors of society (private, public and third sector)^{xxv}, being aware of the opportunities it can offer to find solutions to social problems, such as unemployment of vulnerable people and sustainability. The *coordinated network* formed by Pinardi and VIPS to guide the “First Professional Experience” programme has become a *collaborative network* in LIME project: it provides not only services (training courses), but tries to find innovative solutions that lead to change the way services are delivered, beyond the official role recognised to the partner in the network.

By the first analysis of values and commitments, it is possible to highlight that partners share the objective “to promote social inclusion of people at risk” and the person-centred methodology based on the empowerment of individual as person and social actor. Furthermore, they work together, managing their different expertise in order to offer a tailored and individualized empowerment programme to foster the effective integration of TCNs in the social context.

4.2 First Spanish Pilot Action

The Spanish pilot action has been organised according to multidimensional approach and multilevel action. The main objective of the pilot is to increase employability and economic integration of 50 young TCNs through the empowerment of soft skills, the education for inclusion and citizenship, and the training in basic technical skills. TCWG has decided to divide beneficiaries in 4 groups of 10/15 persons in order to offer a person-centred inclusion path, but even to work on critical issues emerging during each pilot cycle and so to improve adequate solutions in the following groups.

The action has been developed in three phases.

- Pre-recruitment: the profile of beneficiaries (aged 18-29, having an asylum renovation request opened) was shared with Pinardi’s platforms and other organisations^{xxvi} in order to spread the call in the community of Madrid.
- Vocational guidance: Pinardi and Guarani have defined two informative paths, one aimed to orientate beneficiaries towards market trends and active labour market policies, the other aimed to introduce beneficiaries to the labour rights and duties.
- Training programmes: during each cycle, Pinardi, Guarani and VIPS activate training programmes, according to the assessment of skills and training needs and their matching with labour market needs analysis.

In June 2019, the first pilot group started: nine candidates were interviewed and seven finally joined the project. They have been guided by an educational tutor who has followed them during the whole programme, monitoring their personal and social development. During the evolution of the first cycle of the pilot action, TCWG has paid particular attention to content and time dedicated to training sessions. Since the specific profile of beneficiaries, it has decided to make it as dynamic as possible to maintain high the motivation; thus, soft skills as well as the professional and profiled L2 learning programme have been developed in simulated work environment (training course) in order to make beneficiaries able to better understand the significance and the use of the specialised vocabulary.

The first cycle of the Spanish pilot action reveals the importance to make group even smaller due to the heterogeneity of target (young immigrant, experienced physical and psychological violence, high qualified, emotionally vulnerable) in order to make the participants able to know each other and to work closely with the training mentor. As the dynamic of TCWG, the changed geography of the cluster has confirmed that the clear definition of expertise and services each partner offers in a network allows to overcome structural changes without losing trust.

5. Conclusion

Migration is a complex system of social, political and economic relations involving different actors at different levels. This is proven by the analysis of labour integration of migrants wherein the meeting of labour supply with labour demand is promoted by a variety of social actors which continually activate network of integration among public authorities, business and civil society organisations. Hence, it is important to define the added-value of *cluster* as an adequate model to meet the changing issues of society because it is able to connect a multiplicity of actors, with same objective and different expertise, in a coordinated action strengthening by the sharing of knowledge and good practices as well as by geographical and relational dimensions of proximity.

Taking into consideration the heterogeneity of migration phenomenon and the general purpose of the LIME project, namely promoting a social network model aimed to integrate TCNs into the labour market, it is important to define some principles to follow for achieving a successful coordinated action for the economic integration of migrants:

- Promote a multi-stakeholder approach, being aware that it is essential a coordinated effort to meet TCNs' needs;
- Improve exchange of information and training courses on the evolution of migration phenomenon to make civil society organisations able to offer adequate services to TCNs;
- Encourage dialogue with local governments to provide feedback on specific challenges faced in the economic integration process of TCNs.

This strategic plan will facilitate the cluster management process and will accompany it during the last cycles of the pilot that is carried out in Comunidad de Madrid.

ⁱ Castles, S., de Hass, H. and Miller, M.J (2014) *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. Fifth edition, p.5.

ⁱⁱ *Ibid.*

ⁱⁱⁱ Massey, D.S., Arango, J., Hugo, G., Kouaouci, A. and Pellegrino, A. (1998) *Worlds in Motion: Understanding International Migration at the End of the Millennium*. Wotton-under-Edge (UK) Clarendon Press.

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^v In 2014/2015 one million of refugees and migrants risked their lives crossing the Mediterranean Sea and unfortunately over 3'700 of them lost their lives.

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^{vi} European Commission (2015) *European Agenda on Migration*. COM 240 final (p.1)

^{vii} European Commission (2008) *The Concept of Clusters and Cluster Policies and Their Role for Competitiveness and Innovation: Main Statistical Results and Lessons Learned*. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

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^{xxvi} Asociación Candelita; Centro de Encuentro e Integración San Lorenzo; Asociación Realidades para la Integración Social; Cáritas; Servicios Sociales; Asociación AMED; Fundación TRABE; Oficina de empleo de Atocha; Oficina de empleo de Legazpi; CEPI Centro – Arganzuela; Federación de Mujeres progresistas; RAIS; Red Araña; CEAR; Fundación Diagrama; Rescate; La Merced Migraciones.