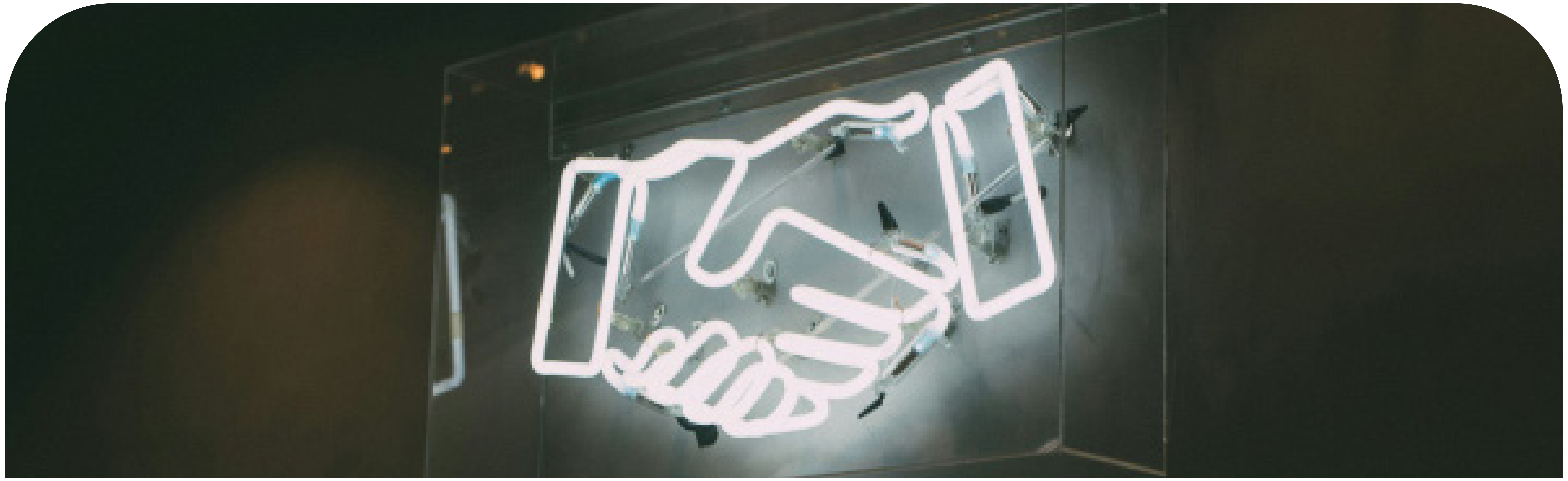
Good practices

2

Building relationships and trust



Building sustained relationships with policymakers

Contributing INNOVATE partner: CMR UW Centre of Migration Research, University of Warsaw

Objectives, basic principles & potential impact

There is increasing recognition of the complex nature of policy developments and the limited use of scientific evidence in forging them. In particular, migration scholars experience problems in impacting migration policymaking, among others, due to the political salience of the topic and difficulties in building evidence-based migration policies in highly ideological and polarised environments (Natter and Welfens 2024). Often, what migration scholars interested in social impact may experience is policy-based evidence-making, where research is sought to substantiate existing policy choices (Geddes 2014). It may put researchers whose main principle is to conduct research out of curiosity and for the needs of society in a situation of discomfort and high reputational risks.

In that situation, also where there are no immediate policy opportunities for evidence-based policy, researchers may invest in building sustainable relationships with the policymakers.

By building long-term relationships that do not necessarily lead to particular, tangible effects, researchers may find a platform for sharing the knowledge produced within their research.

On the other hand, by investing in regular dialogue with researchers, policymakers may better comprehend the principles of scientific knowledge production and issues related to scientific independence and integrity. Moreover, both sides may get acquainted with each other's perspective on knowledge generation and its utilisation, as well as the values that guide this process.

By regular interactions, both sides socialise with each other. Researchers no longer perceive policymakers solely as instrumentally using knowledge for policy ends but also understand the complexity of the policy-making process, such as the instability of organizational environments. On the other hand, policymakers and practitioners may start valuing the way scientific knowledge is produced, for instance that research is not quick and asks different questions than policy practice.

As a result, practitioners and researchers may create a relationship that is more respectful to each other. Finally, personal interactions are also significant. They allow the building of trust and the development of operational modes for crisis situations or situations that raise ethical questions (for instance, how to deal with data obtained due to common interaction or whether there are limits to public critique of policy solutions by scientists).

Policy impact in the case of sustained relationships with policymakers is not always straightforward. It takes forms that are more dispersed and difficult to grasp, where both sides learn to listen to each other, and policymakers are more experienced in working with scientific research. One of its effects is the establishment of a position where policymakers reach out to researchers as information brokers if the need arises. It is also more likely that if policymakers decide to commission a study, the cooperation will be less risky in terms of expected outcomes and more comfortable. It is also more likely that the results of the report will be used in policy practice.

Example

Building long-term, reciprocal and fair relationships with policymakers

This practice presents the overview of the long-term reciprocal relationship between a research institute and a national migration agency, namely between the Centre of Migration Research of the University of Warsaw (CMR UW) and the Office for Foreigners (OF), which is the main central authority of Poland competent for matters related to the foreigners.

Cooperation in the form of ad hoc data exchange, co-organised events, and working meetings has continued for many years. To boost it further and facilitate targeted collaboration between CMR UW and a newly established initiative within the OF, the Migration Analytical Centre (MCA), a framework cooperation agreement was concluded in 2019. Since then, the CMR UW and MCA have started co-organising seminars together. Also, MCA regularly distributes via its channels updates about CMR research (as well as that of other research centres), prioritising studies it finds particularly relevant to its analytical interests. Finally, based on that mechanism, CMR has been issuing requests to receive migration statistical data regarding the situation in Poland, collected by the OF.

Engagement steps

The Office for Foreigners, initially Office for Foreigners and Repatriation, was created in 2001 as a modern state institution in charge of regulating immigration and asylum and documenting foreigners arriving in Poland. Since its launch, the Office for Foreigners has been open to dialogue with research and analytical institutions. On the other hand, CMR UW, being the oldest and the biggest migration research centre in Poland, quickly established working contacts with the OF, particularly with its analytical unit. Regular access to the statistical data on foreigners provided by the OF was also a critical factor in CMR's ability in conducting research on migration trends.

If, at the beginning, data exchange and working contacts were rather based on occasional personal interactions during some events, the gradual change of Poland's migration status into a new immigrant destination country resulted in the expansion of the Office for Foreigners, but foremost of the community of migration researchers in Poland. In this context, the MCA took on the role of knowledge broker on the side of the state administration of Poland, facilitating contacts between the academic and research community and other state administration institutions.

Since 2019, when the agreement was signed, MCA has organised several online seminars open to the research community and state and local administration. CMR researchers were often invited to present the results of their research at those seminars. Also, upon request, in several cases, MCA participated but also actively distributed information about CMR events. A good example of CMR-MCA cooperation was a seminar on the challenges of growing migration from Belarus that was held in February 2024. Active MCA involvement allowed to acquaint the research community with the newest statistical trends and the latest legal regulations on the one hand, and the still scarce research on that topic on the other hand. Moreover, the seminar created a safe platform to discuss migration that arises in highly sensitive contexts.

In the case of migration from Belarus, due to the potential interest of adverse foreign regimes, an organisation of usual public events with the usage of typical dissemination techniques bears many risks, in particular safety-related concerns for political migrants. Another important event was organised in early spring 2022, soon after the Russian full-scale aggression against Ukraine and the mass inflow of forced migration from Ukraine. It allowed both sides to receive a quick update on their perspectives on the situation on the ground.

Finally, the newest example of OF cooperation with the CMR UW is the involvement of its representatives in the work of the Stakeholder Expert Panel (SEP) Poland, which operates within the Horizon Europe project on 'De-centring the Study of Migrant Returns and Readmission Policies in Europe and Beyond' (GAPs). SEP Poland is conceived as a platform for cross-sectoral discussions during closed and open meetings between experts in the field of return.

An important element of the CMR UW/OF collaboration is the presence of the Office for Foreigners representatives as lecturers at the Postgraduate Studies in International Migration Processes implemented by CMR UW.

Success factors

This practice does not entail any pre-planned need for quick practical gains, neither on the side of the research community nor on the side of policymakers and practitioners. It acquaints both sides with their working cultures and allows researchers to present their studies directly in a straight dialogue with policymakers. Also, policymakers may familiarise themselves with the scientific research on migration, allowing them to widen their usual cognitive perspective on how migration should be analysed and governed (both more traditional and critical research is being presented at those events).

Apart from creating the opportunity for widening the cognitive perspectives of both sides, regular meetings allow for establishing some personal contact and creating at least a basic level of trust. Certain levels of institutionalisation of the meetings guarantee that new researchers and policymakers coming to the field will also have the opportunity to gain this collaboration experience.

Finally, this engagement practice is particularly relevant to agenda setting, namely identifying certain policy issues or new migration trends before they become a topic of public debate. This situation provides researchers with the opportunity to influence framing in the initial stages of problem definition, e.g., when more policy options are still on the table.

> **Building sustained relationships with policymakers**

> Trust as key to long-term engagement

> Nurturing relationships and trust in a regional context

> Training using peer learning methods

> The power of media in bridging science and policy

Literature

Geddes A. (2014), Relationships between Research and Policy on Migration in the European Union: A Practice-Based Analysis, EUI Working Papers, RCCAS 2015/06.

Natter, K., & Welfens, N. (2024). Why Has Migration Research So Little Impact? Examining Knowledge Practices in Migration Policy Making and Migration Studies. International Migration Review, 58(4), 1669-1700.

Trust as Key to Long-Term Engagement

Contributing INNOVATE partner: SDU Süleyman Demirel University

Objectives, basic principles & potential impact

The objective of this practice is to establish sustained, trust-based relationships with policymakers, positioning the researcher as a dependable expert over time. This approach transforms research from episodic outputs to ongoing influence, ensuring insights are actively sought, particularly on complex topics requiring specialised knowledge.

This process begins with identifying topics that align with the institution's evolving priorities and are likely to remain relevant for years. By selecting subjects that are both impactful and relatively underexplored, the researcher positions herself as a unique resource. Initially, her focus is on producing rigorous, high-quality outputs, such as articles and working papers, and refining her work based on early feedback.

This iterative approach keeps her research relevant to policy needs, even before direct engagement intensifies.

As the relationship deepens, the researcher engages policymakers more frequently through conferences, training sessions, and informal gatherings. These interactions allow her to better understand institutional priorities and build rapport. Informal settings—like training new recruits or participating in sector events—create opportunities to foster trust and familiarity gradually. Over time, she becomes attuned to the institution's dynamics, learns departmental goals, and tailors her insights to align with their vision.

The potential impact of this approach is significant. Through consistent, relevant engagement, the researcher evolves from an outside observer to a trusted partner in policy discussions.

Example

Creating long-term relationships with policymakers through repeated engagement

This example demonstrates how a researcher developed a sustained relationship with an institution over the course of her career. Initially, the researcher faced challenges due to her early-career status and limited network, with minimal interaction or feedback from policymakers. Over time, she identified topics of growing importance to the institution such as complex migration issues with policy implications, and positioned herself as an expert in areas where few others had specialised knowledge. Through numerous projects, conferences, and engagements, she built her network, strengthened her expertise, and became a trusted resource for junior as well as senior policymakers.

Engagement steps

The researcher begins by identifying subjects that align with the institution's evolving needs. She looks for areas where there is a high likelihood of policy focus in the coming years. She also selects aspects of these topics that are original, relevant, and capable of influencing policy, creating a niche for herself as a subject-matter expert. For instance, given the trends within the EU, topics like return (especially readmission and voluntary return) and detention (particularly within the scope of border procedures) are areas where expertise will be in demand next 5 years.

With the subject selected, the researcher conducts in-depth studies, leveraging her unique perspective and academic background. Early on, she focuses on producing articles and working papers, recognising that, as an early-career researcher, building a portfolio of quality work is crucial. She remains attentive to feedback, refining her approach to align with policymakers' needs, even though initially her role does not involve direct presentations or substantial interaction.

Over time, the researcher participates in more conferences, training sessions, and international events. By regularly interacting with institution officials and learning their specific objectives, she becomes more familiar with their perspectives and long-term goals. Through years of consistent contributions, she begins to answer policymakers' questions directly, showing a deep understanding of their challenges and needs. By engaging in these informal discussions, the researcher gradually builds trust and overcomes initial barriers related to age, gender, or lack of seniority.

As her knowledge of the institution and its key figures deepens, she increasingly tailors her outputs to policymakers' specific needs. This ongoing relationship makes her insights relevant and impactful, placing her in a position where policymakers actively seek her expertise for future projects.

Success factors

Success in developing sustained relationships with policymakers depends heavily on establishing trust. This involves consistent engagement, reliability, and delivering high-quality, relevant research that policymakers can depend on. Identifying areas where policymakers need expertise—such as current policy challenges or emerging trends—is crucial. Choosing topics that not only interest the researcher but also align with policy priorities ensures the research will be both original and impactful.

Success is amplified by growing a network of policymakers and other influential figures within the sector. Attending conferences, training sessions, and informal gatherings contributes to visibility and helps establish the researcher as a recognised expert.

Do's:

- position yourself as an expert by focusing on unique and complex topics that few others are covering.
- engage in open, regular communication to build trust and maintain alignment with policymakers' objectives.
- be proactive in identifying knowledge gaps that policymakers may have and provide insights that fill those gaps.
- seek to understand institutional dynamics by learning about the policymakers' priorities, goals, and long-term vision.
- approach relationships as long-term investments rather than one-off interactions.

Don't:

- rush the process; building sustained relationships takes time, and early impatience can undermine trust.
- dismiss the importance of informal interactions; casual discussions often provide valuable insights into policymakers' needs.
- overpromise; be realistic about what you can deliver, and if certain requests are unfeasible, communicate this transparently.

Nurturing relationships for practice- and community-oriented research

Contributing INNOVATE partner: Chemnitz University of Technology

Objectives, basic principles & potential impact

Relationships and trust are the basis for successful cooperation between scientists, political decision-makers and practitioners. This good practice provides hints of how to successfully build trust with stakeholders and maintain established relationships in a regional context.

It is crucial to consider the role of relationships especially for practice- and community-oriented research projects, as they can significantly influence the success of such endeavours. The relationship between researchers and relevant stakeholders on the ground is an important factor in determining access to the field, the quality of data collection, the joint development of locally adapted solutions and, ultimately, their implementation. Maintaining contacts with political decision-makers and practitioners can further facilitate the dissemination of research results and open opportunities for future research projects. Long-term, mutually enriching relationships between stakeholders from science, practice and politics can prove highly beneficial for each group.

Example

Becoming deeply engaged in a regional policy context in Germany

Since the arrival of roughly 900.000 asylum seeking migrants in Germany during 2015/16, the topic is high on the agenda of local, regional and national stakeholders. Early in 2015, our research team already started to direct part of our research resources on the pressing question of managing reception processes in municipalities that had few experiences with hosting arrival of refugees. We started with three small municipal case studies in 2015 and presented first results already in September 2015 to a regional development forum.

We continued with a commissioned study for the Saxon Ministry of Education on the integration of young adult refugees in schools. In the following years, we succeeded in acquiring larger third-party funded projects, enabling us to build up longitudinal expertise on local refugee reception and their long-term integration process over the years. For pragmatic research reasons, we tend to choose local case studies in our region. This helps us, to build and maintain relationships to stakeholders.

Although the topic of migration and asylum was politically very controversial and there was little expertise available in our research region in particular back then, we were able to establish contacts with relevant stakeholders from politics and administration at an early stage and we managed to consolidate these contacts over the years.

This was possible, among other things, by the fact that we constantly carried out research projects with a regional focus and therefore also had resources (financial, staff) to do public relation work and communicate research findings. To this day, we see that there is no automatism how good contacts between science and politics evolve, but that they must be continuously cultivated. To achieve this, it is necessary that you plan sufficient resources for the transfer of research results and create opportunities for dialogue with stakeholders right from the conception of the research project.

Steps of engagement

Identify key stakeholders: First, it is important to identify key stakeholders relevant to the topic. Particularly when it comes to setting up research projects, it is usually possible to acquire relevant partners. Don´t underestimate the high level of manpower required for task.

Attract stakeholders already during empirical research: Often the best and sometimes only opportunity to attract key stakeholders to you and your research is while you conduct an expert interview with them. Often, key stakeholders not only react to your interview questions, but start engaging and asking questions related to the ongoing research. Make sure to secure communication streams in this moment and give stakeholder a perspective when you can come back with research results.

Build a trustful relationship: To build up relationship and trust, it is necessary to be able to meet at equal footing, where both parties are open to the unexpected, willing to listen and learn from each other. As scientists, we are well advised to adapt to the context by seriously and respectfully familiarising ourselves with the local situation, e.g. of our case study. Places and situations of dialogue with stakeholders should be chosen in such a way that all partners feel safe to share their knowledge and opinions. To build trust it is essential for scientists to rigorously adhere to scientific standards and ensure the integrity of research. Policymakers and practitioners must be assured that they can freely express their expertise and knowledge without suffering negative consequences from the research process. Furthermore, trust in the research process can be gained if the inputs of stakeholders involved are reflected in the products of the research project.

Make relationships sustainable by building links between temporary projects: Building relationships with policymakers requires long-term embeddedness in a regional policy context. A continuous stream of research projects can help to break down the limitations of isolated, short-term project logics and to integrate scientific work into a broader policy framework. The constant involvement of political decision-makers and practitioners in various research projects can further strengthen trust in the scientific work and help to overcome thinking in isolated political silos.

Whom to address: Which actors should be addressed at which governance level strongly depends on the research topic and the specific (decision making) competences of the political levels in your field of research. While each case is unique, it is often effective to target mid-level policymakers.

They can act as mediators between different political levels, helping to address your messages to higher levels as well as facilitating a wider adoption of developed solutions and share of knowledge on a lower (local) level.

Make sure to continue relationships even after personnel changes: You always should be aware that personnel responsibilities can change. People retire, are voted out of office or change their field of activity. It is important to make sure that your relationship survives those alterations. Stay in close contact with stakeholders so that you identify upcoming changes. Make sure that the established contact is transferred to those people who move in the vacant position. Offer introductory research material to them so that they are becoming aware of your expertise in the field.

Find the crucial moment to place your findings: Policymakers are more likely to engage with topics that are currently high on the political agenda. It is not uncommon for research findings to become relevant long after the actual project has been completed and for them to be incorporated into political decision-making processes. Therefore, keep actively disseminating your findings, ensure that your work stays visible and nurture your relationships.

Success factors

- **Create an attractive product**: Make sure that you have a relevant and well-founded "product", for example relevant research results, that can deliver concrete insights and recommendation for the field or region of interest.
- **Flag your outstanding expertise**: Make sure that stakeholders understand how your scholarly expertise can create an added benefit for them. While they usually stay in a specific topic and region of engagement, you as a scholar can zoom out of the situation and give contextualised information, which creates added benefit for policy makers.
- **Build bridges across communication gaps**: Make sure that you stay in continued contact so that you find out when personnel changes occur. Make sure that your contact is transferred to the new person in charge.
- **Ground your communication on sustainable, empirical engagement**: Make sure that you develop a sustainable research strategy so that you can provide updated empirical results which are relevant for local or regional stakeholders, even though you might eventually have gaps between research projects.

Training using peer learning methods

Contributing INNOVATE partner: MPC Migration Policy Centre, European University Institute

Objectives, basic principles & potential impact

Training is widely recognized as a key pathway to personal and professional development and, if it is carefully organised, can reinforce links between migration researchers, policymakers and practitioners. Of proven value are peer learning methods that place emphasise a 'flat' learning environment based on high levels of interaction between participants that already bring with them professional experience of the issues addressed by the training.

Peer learning is not a form of training where participants remain relatively passive while instructors provide them with relevant information. Instead, peer learning has five key elements that are central to the promotion of interactions that can build stronger relations between migration research, policies and practices.

1 **Gaining new perspectives**: The role of instructors is very important through the provision of focused insight reflecting state-of-the-art developments in relevant fields. This can be further enhanced by the provision of online resources to reinforce the acquisition of new perspectives with participants also encouraged to add their own resources and insights to supplement these resources.

2 **Building networks**: Peer learning is a 'flat' approach to training that assumes that the training is occurring among equals with similar professional concerns and responsibilities. Post-training, participants can be encouraged to remain in touch through creation of alumni networks facilitated by the training organiser.

3 **Increasing engagement**: This requires highly interactive sessions within which participants engage with the trainer and with each other. To support this requires preparation by both the trainer and participants to make material available before the session and to encourage debate and discussion during the training as well as interactions such as group exercises to encourage engagement with evidence and with the perspectives of fellow participants.

4 **Improving communication skills** is a vital skill for researchers, policymakers and practitioners. One way to address this is to ask participants to bring with them a piece of their own work that they are encouraged to share with other participants and to acquire feedback and guidance from their peers. This could be a short communication targeted at a general audience or could be a specific policy brief aimed at a specific audience. The aim is for the peer learning process to support guidance and feedback.

5 **Creating feedback loops** enables the successful attainment of a training's objectives. Participants can be encouraged during the training to reflect on their learning experience and to feed their ideas into the training so that approaches can be adjusted during the training if necessary.

6 **A focused training can be a way to accelerate learning**: Training events can, of course, take many forms. They may be on-line or in person or hybrid. They might be relatively short lasting for a morning or afternoon or might be longer residential courses. Peer learning offers scope for an intense and accelerated learning process because of the high level of interaction it promotes and the sustained engagement that it can encourage.

Example

Training events and activities of the Migration Policy Centre

Many organisations provide training that uses peer learning methods. One such organisation is the Migration Policy Centre (MPC) at the European University Institute (EUI), which has developed and led a wide range of training events and activities. These include the flagship Migration Summer School, which is a two-week residential training held each summer since 2002. Since 2023, the MPC has also offered a five-day, residential Winter Academy. The difference between the two is that the Summer School is broadly focused while the Winter Academy addresses a specific theme.

Importantly, both have a wide diversity among participants both in terms of professional role and geographically. This means that the experiences of people working in academia, for governments, for regional/international organisations and for civil society organisations are all present in the room. Geographical diversity also encourages much deeper reflection on migration issues as people are present from lower and higher income countries with very different relations to global migration.

In addition to the Summer School and Winter Academy, the MPC also cooperates with the EUI's Florence School of Transnational Governance to organise two executive trainings on effective Migration Management and Migration Communication Strategies. A common aspect of all these trainings is their focus on peer learning to support the gaining of new perspectives, the building of networks, increasing engagement with the issues and with other participants, improving communication skills, creating feedback loops and accelerating learning.

Success Factors

Three 'dos'

Do ensure that the training space encourages interactions between participants. This can be done by using smaller tables at which four or five participants sit and work together. It can also be useful to move participants around the tables and/or room after each session or each day so that they work with different participants during the training.

Do pay attention to the composition of the group. So far as possible, it is important to have a mix of professional experiences so that the perspectives and viewpoints of participants can be both complemented and, at times, challenged.

Do ensure that the training is based on equality between participants and the active encouragement of the sharing of perspectives. Discussions should always be polite and respectful, but viewpoints may differ and, indeed, it is essential that perspectives are questioned and debated if professional development is to occur.

Three 'don't

Don't organize the training space like it is a school classroom with the instructor at the front and with participants sitting in rows. This does not encourage the interaction that is essential to peer learning.

Don't overwhelm participants with information. Instructors should focus on communicating relevant insights in relatively short sessions that provide input to other sessions in which the participants work together on, for example, case studies or simulations that deepen engagement with the ideas shared by the instructor.

Don't assume the session is about you and the need to communicate your own ideas and insights. Migration is a field of study, research and practice that requires the gathering of perspectives and insights by people with different professional and geographical backgrounds. To be a successful experience, it is essential that peer learning cultivates a sense of a group of people working together to build a stronger collective understanding informed by a variety of perspectives. This means that there will be disagreements, but this is healthy.

Above all, **be prepared**! Instructors should make information available prior to and during the training, ideally using web-based platforms. This doesn't mean a deluge of information that would be impossible to read and absorb, but, rather, key readings as well as documents that explain the teaching methods and purposes of the training. Participants should invest some time in preparing for the training by reading the preparatory material and thinking about their own needs and what they aim to get out of the training.

These dos and don'ts are not guarantees of success, but, if attention is paid to them, peer learning as a training method can enhance engagement between migration research, policy and practice.

The power of media in bridging science and policy

Contributing INNOVATE partner: Chemnitz University of Technology, Prof. Birgit Glorius

Objectives, basic principles & potential impact

Engaging with the media can be a powerful tool for scientists to contribute to public policy and debates. By appearing in the media, researchers can raise awareness of certain research findings and attract the attention of policymakers. Often, these public appearances in the media lead to direct follow-up conversations with decision-makers or co-participants. In some cases, policymakers may even reach out after seeing experts present in media. This good practice provides advice for the communication of scientific based information in the media.

However, the benefits of using the media to participate in public debates by placing research findings goes beyond simply gaining attention. Developing contacts with journalists can help to better understand where your expertise as scientist is needed and what type of information can contribute to public debates. This collaborative dynamic between scientists and media professionals can lead to more broad communication of scientific findings and increase the impact of research projects.

Yet, researchers must be aware that media engagement comes with its own set of challenges. On the one hand, there is a risk that the news and facts conveyed can be decontextualised or even misused to support a different, possibly contrary political argument.

Additionally, appearing in the public can sometimes lead to backlash, especially on social media. Researchers need to be prepared for potential exposure to criticism or even hostility. In such cases, it is important to know what marks unlawful behaviour, how to report it and where to get support from your institution in such cases.

Engaging with the media can be a double-edged sword, but if used correctly, it offers researchers a significant opportunity to place central messages about research results and engage in public debates.

Example

How participation in a TV talk show can lead to tangible output in terms of stakeholder contact

As a migration researcher at an East German university, I am relatively frequently approached by East German regional television to comment on current developments around refugee admission policy with a view to the regional characteristics of East Germany. At one point, I was invited to a talk show that discussed the topic of refugee migration and refugee admission on a relatively broad basis. The occasion was a political decision to implemented border controls on Saxony's border with Poland and the Czech Republic in order to regulate irregular migration flows. I was joined in the discussion by two members of the national parliament, a representative of the federal police, who are responsible for border controls, and a county commissioner from the region.

I always see it as my role in such contexts to classify information in an unagitated manner and to point out larger contexts of phenomena. I also like to use concrete examples from our empirical research to get as direct as possible. I do not have specific political actors in mind, because a TV talk show tends to address the broad mass of the TV audience, i.e. people who are interested in a topic but do not usually have any specialist knowledge. However, time and time again, I find that this type of communication, which tends to be aimed at the general public, also generates attention among political players. This attention can be used to arrange follow-up appointments and engage in direct knowledge transfer.

Engagement steps

Preparatory conversation to clarify one's role: After I received the request to take part in the talk show, I first arranged a brief preliminary conversation with the responsible editor. This is important to find out the content of the planned TV format, to get information about the other talk show guests and to clarify expectations regarding one's own role. My role in such formats is clear: I am the voice of science. In contrast to the political actors, I am not partisan, I am not passionate, and I contribute to the factual classification of narratives.

Prepare your communication strategy: As a rule, I don't need any more intensive preparation, because the questions I am asked can be answered well from my general academic background and my knowledge of the topic. Nevertheless, I feel better if I prepare a short script. I write down possible discussion questions and then outline my argument in bullet points. It is particularly important for me to note down basic figures and data that could be important to support the argument, as I am personally very week to memorize dates and numbers. It helps me to double-check on that just before I enter the TV studio.

Anticipate the situation in your mind: Actually, I never use those preparatory manuscripts in the talk show. But it helps to anticipate how the discussion could develop and to pre-structure your own contributions to the discussion. After all, you have perhaps 10-12 minutes of speaking time for 3-4 discussion questions. This means that when it comes down to it, you should be able to get to the point quickly and make the argument that in your mind is the most important one.

Acting behind the scenes: You usually have to arrive some time before the talk show starts. After make-up, the panellists gather in a preparation room. Here you can use the time to warm up and get to know the other participants personally. By this, it will be easier to engage during and after the show.

During the show: While the camera is active, you should stay focused and listen carefully to what the other panellists are saying. You should not only speak when you are asked, but also take the opportunity to make a spontaneous contribution. However, you should not interrupt anyone. Your own contributions should remain factual and friendly. After all, we scientists are not fighting for votes or discourse sovereignty.

After the show: After the end of the talk show, the panellists gather again in the preparation room, usually there is a small buffet and a drink, the moderator joins them, and all talk guests usually stay for a while. This time is extremely important in order to speak directly to the participants again, exchange contact details and arrange further discussions or material deliveries.

Sustainable effects: The impact of such TV appearances on political and other stakeholders cannot always be measured directly. However, as these formats have a large audience, there is definitely a chance of getting follow-up appointments for talks, keynotes or consultations. I often receive emails from a wide variety of people for some time after a talk show. In the case described here, there was also a mayor who came to me for advice on how she could constructively discuss the issue of refugee admission in her community. I followed up with a lengthy telephone appointment to advise her on possible communication strategies and also sent her some of our research briefs. You should definitely keep a time buffer for this.

Success Factors

- **Preparation**: Invest some time for preparing a TV-event. Even though you have the general expertise, you need to anticipate the most recent developments in the field of interest to focus your argumentation.
- **Keep it simple**: You are the expert and know about the complexity of the issue. However, in a TV format you are communicating to a much less informed audience, and you don't have a lot of time for articulating your argument. Therefore, keep it simple, and prepare communicative strategies to transport the most crucial information in a simple and clear manner.
- **Stay neutral**: Even if the discussion becomes passionate and the participating politicians in particular fall into the usual party-political polemics: Remain objective and friendly. Of course you can also take a position yourself, but this should be based on factual and scientific information, not on personal partisanship.
- **Use the chance for follow-ups**: Take the opportunity to get very close to political players. Speak to them directly before or even better after the appointment, respond

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to their arguments again, offer follow-up appointments. Have a business card ready and get in touch by email the next day if you have promised to send additional information such as your research results or policy briefs.

Impact and Lessons Learned

As a rule, it is not possible to measure the effects of TV contributions on political decision-making processes. But my general experience shows that the talk show as a public discourse format with a broad audience is also getting strong attention by politicians and their staff. This attention for talk show participants, combined with the expertise conveyed, can be used to conduct research communication. If you do this more often and take the time to respond personally to individual reactions, you will generate effects over time.

Learn more

If you are planning to engage in TV communication, I would recommend attending a media communication training.

Here is one example of a podcast program to which I was invited.

> Go to next *Good Practice Section*

> Go back to the *Toolkit Recommendations*

Migration Research to Policy

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