



Good practices

3

Tailoring research to policymakers' needs



Developing research questions based on policymakers' needs and related stakeholder selection

Contributing INNOVATE partner: ICMPD International Centre for Migration Policy Development

Objectives, basic principles & potential impact

Linking research to policy can already start at the stage of defining research questions – particularly in cases that are timely sensitive. In some cases, such as commissioned studies or consultancy work, questions are developed collaboratively with policymakers, ensuring alignment with their priorities from the outset. In projects funded through open calls (e.g. Horizon Europe), research questions are typically defined early by researchers, with minimal input from policymakers. While this provides a solid academic foundation, it may result in questions that do not fully address the specific needs of policy actors or other stakeholders.

Developing research questions that resonate with both academic and policy audiences requires balancing academic rigor, relevance, and responsiveness to current challenges that policymakers are facing.

This involves understanding the policy environment, engaging with relevant stakeholders, and framing questions in ways that bridge research outputs and practical policy applications.

Developing research questions that cater to policymakers' needs therefore involves several important steps:

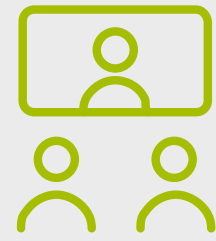
- **Situating research within the socio-political context:** Research questions should be grounded in the broader socio-political context, considering both academic developments and policy-relevant institutional frameworks. This includes understanding the roles and interests of various stakeholders and staying informed about emerging developments. By staying connect to public and political concerns, research remains relevant, and when needed, also timely.
- **Understanding overarching policy dynamics:** Research questions should be framed within the broader political context, considering political dynamics, key actors, and their priorities and positioning. Recognising constraints and opportunities in the policy environment allows researchers to align research questions with policy needs. This helps formulating questions that are actionable and impactful, by at the same time determining what research can realistically achieve.
- **Looping in and drawing the lines of consultation with experts and stakeholders:** Engaging with experts and stakeholders early in the process helps ensure that research questions accurately reflect the field and are relevant to practice. However, while stakeholder input is valuable, it is important for researchers to maintain autonomy once the research questions are established. Policymakers and stakeholders can offer insights into the priorities and challenges, but continuous involvement should not compromise academic integrity or methodological rigor.
- **Balancing Scope and Focus:** drafting research questions involves striking a balance between addressing broader systemic challenges and maintaining a focus on specific, actionable outcomes. Questions that are too broad may fail to provide concrete solutions to policymakers, while overly narrow questions might miss the larger systemic issues that shape the problem. Research questions must be specific enough to allow for practical policy applications but broad enough to capture the complexity of the issue at hand.



Example

Conditions for labour market participation of refugee women in Austria

The example provided is about a research study that focused on understanding and improving conditions for labour market participation of refugee women in Austria. The study aimed to identify the barriers for women, explore best practices that support participation from different countries, and propose actionable policy recommendations for improving refugee women's participation in the workforce in Austria. The policymakers and stakeholders targeted included national and regional authorities as well as NGOs and target group representatives working on integration, social affairs and employment specifically focusing on refugee matters and gender equality.



Engagement steps

Recognising the relevance of the topic: An in-depth engagement on the topic started upon realising from preceding research that refugee women faced distinct challenges in accessing employment opportunities. This brought a sharp focus on the subject matter requiring targeted policy attention and action.

Building on existing expertise: As a starting point prior research and insights into integration, migration, and gender disparities in the labour market impacted the framing of the research approach. It ensured a well-informed and nuanced understanding of the topic in the context of investigation but also in other contexts where the situation was either similar or very different to eventually learn from.

Linking with political priorities and frameworks: An additional source to identifying the policy relevance of the research question was drawn from ongoing public and political debates as well as assessing existing EU and national policy frameworks on the labour market integration of refugees more broadly and women in particular. This involved examining strategic policy documents, action plans and legislative priorities to ensure the topic aligns with and contributes to national or regional goals. More concretely this step included assessing frameworks like National Action Plans and funding priorities.

Consulting experts for practical insights: Further impetus provided informal discussions with practitioners, target group representatives and other experts to ground the research questions in practical realities. This step was critical for understanding

the day-to-day challenges and opportunities in the field for e.g. from employment agencies, NGOs and integration specialists. It helped us refine our understanding of the barriers faced by refugee women and the solutions already being tested.

Developing a comprehensive understanding of the issue at hand: Further background research allowed then to formulate research questions that were both scientifically sound and aligned with political goals. The goal here was to ensure that the questions addressed both gaps in existing knowledge while also being actionable within the current policy environment.

Drafting research questions with practical relevance: Based on the previous steps we developed key research questions, ensuring to address both theoretical and policy-oriented objectives providing a clear link already to practical application such as: What are the main barriers to labour market participation for refugee women? What are the most effective strategies and programs to improve their participation? How can international best practices be adapted for the national context at hand?

Refining research questions after approval: Once the project was approved and funded, the research questions were refined during a meeting that formally kicked-off the research project. This step ensured that stakeholders were aligned and to ensure that the final research questions reflected both donor priorities and the practical needs identified in earlier steps.

This process created a well-rounded foundation for tackling the topic, ensuring relevance to both academic inquiry, target group relevance and policy development. The research aimed to provide a comprehensive foundation for future policymaking on the topic.



Success factors

The following critical factors for success were identified:

- **Evidence foundations:** building on a solid base of existing data and literature was crucial to ensure the research questions were grounded in current knowledge, while also identifying specific gaps that needed to be addressed. Failing to build questions on a strong evidence foundation can lead to research that is speculative or detached from real-world challenges. To simply come up with a relevant idea is not enough. By grounding the research in existing evidence, researchers are better equipped to create questions that contribute to both scientific and practical knowledge.
- **Engagement with experts:** insights from individuals with practical experience in the field ensured the questions reflect practical concerns and policy needs and helped refine questions to maximise their usefulness for decision-making and implementation. This engagement helped ensure that the research questions were not just theoretically sound but also applicable to the challenges faced by those concerned on the ground. It also helps spot gaps or nuances that may not be immediately apparent from a purely scientific perspective. Rather than working in isolation, feedback from those with practical experience can be invaluable for refining research questions.
- **Window of Opportunity:** Formulating the questions at a time when the topic was gaining momentum in political discourse allowed the research to address timely issues. Research that is timely and aligned with current debates increases the likelihood to be noticed and impactful.

In conclusion, developing impactful research questions involves careful attention to alignment with policy frameworks, strong evidence foundations, engagement with experts, and an awareness of the window of opportunity. By considering these factors, researchers can draft research questions that are both scientifically rigorous and practically relevant, leading to successful outcomes that contribute to real-world challenges.



Impact and lessons learned

The research questions proposed were positively received by policymakers, key stakeholders, and representatives of the target group. They sparked constructive exchanges, as they were directly oriented towards addressing tangible challenges. The approach helped to present a more comprehensive picture and shift the discussion to a more multifaceted understanding by incorporating the realities of those directly impacted by the policies and programs under consideration. This contributed to a more nuanced and informed debate, with a greater emphasis on specific challenges and solutions.

The engagement as described above also had an additional synergy: by jointly shaping research questions, both, researchers, representatives of the target group, and stakeholders better got to know each other, each other's work environment, and particular insights into ongoing academic and policy/practice discussions.

It ultimately profoundly helped the research to remain policy-relevant, at the same time keeping its independence.



Learn more

Study available in German: [FARIM: Female beneficiaries of asylum and subsidiary protection on the labour market – Information, mobilisation and integration in Austria, Germany, Norway.](#)



A collaborative approach to commissioned studies

Contributing INNOVATE partner: SDU Süleyman Demirel University

Objectives, basic principles & potential impact

The primary objective is to bridge the gap between research and policymaking by fostering a collaborative framework for commissioned studies. This approach aims to produce research outcomes that are relevant, impactful, and aligned with policymakers' specific needs, increasing the likelihood of real-world impact.

This practice begins by understanding the intentions and interests driving the commissioned work. Recognising the policymakers' priorities allows the researcher to align the study's objectives with practical policy applications, enhancing relevance and potential impact. Engaging policymakers early in the research process is essential, enabling the researcher to identify expectations and determine what policymakers are most eager to understand. By clarifying how policymakers intend to use the findings, the researcher can ensure the study supports these goals effectively.

Establishing a dialogue with policymakers is a core principle of this approach. Open communication allows the researcher to balance fulfilling policymakers' requests while meeting the formal objectives of the consultancy. This two-way exchange fosters ownership, making policymakers more invested in the process and more likely to apply the findings. If certain expectations are unfeasible, the researcher provides clear explanations, helping to manage expectations and keeping the project focused and realistic.

Provided that the primary audience consists of senior officials with expertise in the field, as is the case below, the researcher tailors the research design and outcomes accordingly. This allows for technical language and advanced concepts to be used without needing to explain foundational ideas, making the presentation of research both efficient and impactful. The findings are presented in a closed-door meeting, followed by a Q&A session that encourages policymakers to engage with the content, ask clarifying questions, and discuss its practical applications. By aligning academic insights with policymakers' needs, this approach increases the likelihood of impactful outcomes, particularly in complex areas such as migration and displacement.



Example

Bridging research and policy on large-scale displacement

This example involved a commissioned research project on large-scale displacement and potential durable solutions, designed to provide targeted insights for senior policymakers within a national migration agency. These high-level officials were directly responsible for shaping policies to address complex migration challenges.



Engagement steps

The researcher approached this project by creating an inclusive and interactive process, engaging policymakers early to foster a sense of shared ownership. By involving them from the outset, the researcher ensured that the study remained aligned with their specific needs, increasing the relevance and potential impact of the findings.

To start, the researcher assessed the policymakers' education, expertise, and familiarity with the topic. This initial evaluation was essential for adjusting the language, level of detail, and presentation style accordingly. Given that the audience consisted of ex-

perenced senior officials, the researcher tailored the research design and outcomes to be more technical, allowing for the use of specialised language without the need to explain foundational concepts. This approach made the presentation more efficient and focused.

At the beginning of the engagement, the researcher asked policymakers to outline their main goals and what they expected to gain from the research. Aligning expectations from the start allowed for a tailored approach that precisely addressed their needs, setting a productive tone for the sessions.

Throughout the project, the researcher carefully evaluated whether the policymakers' expectations were practical and achievable. If expectations were realistic, they were confirmed and prioritised. For any unrealistic or unfeasible requests, the researcher communicated these limitations clearly, providing transparent reasoning to manage expectations and avoid misunderstandings.

When collaboration was feasible, the researcher involved policymakers in shaping the direction of the study. Based on the initial assessment of the audience's background and specific objectives, the researcher adjusted the research approach, terminology, and presentation style to resonate with their perspectives. Remaining flexible, the researcher responded to any specific concerns or objections raised during the engagement.

The outcomes were presented in a closed-door event, which proved to be the most effective format, as it enabled a focused, in-depth presentation of findings. This was followed by a Q&A session, allowing policymakers to clarify points, discuss specific concerns, and engage in meaningful dialogue with the researcher. This structured approach maximised the likelihood of informed and impactful decision-making, creating a foundation for actionable policy solutions.



Success factors

During the engagement, the researcher felt that their research and perspectives were genuinely considered by the policymakers. In the closed-door event, a high-profile bureaucrat actively engaged with the researcher, sharing both points of agreement and areas where he held differing views. This feedback was invaluable, as the researcher could address critiques directly, fostering a productive dialogue that clarified and strengthened the points presented.

The Q&A session allowed for a deep, meaningful exchange, reinforcing the collaborative nature of the engagement. While there was no immediate evidence of direct policy change, the researcher believes that the meeting served as an essential starting point. The insights shared have the potential to influence policy decisions that could impact thousands of displaced persons, laying the groundwork for future actions.



Making use of the engagement potential of commissioned research

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

Objectives

Commissioned research appears to be one of the most efficient tools for the advancement of knowledge, by virtue of it being conducted at the request of public bodies who have in mind specific policy aims and require deeper knowledge about certain topics (Hodges & Rahman 2022). Policy bodies and governments usually commission research to help them lead or influence upcoming or already ongoing policy-making processes (ICPA 2014). It means that policymakers usually tend to be deeply involved in the research and are more likely to collaborate by providing researchers with access to data, regular meetings, and detailed feedback. They are also more likely to use the research further in policy and programme development, agenda-setting, and communicating information to stakeholders (Moore et al. 2018).

However, as in the case of other tools for policy engagement, commissioned research may not be satisfactory for both the researchers and the policymakers/practitioners. Such a situation usually stems from a failure to align both sides' expectations, epistemological and methodological divergences, and differences in working styles.

Basic principles

Despite the common conviction that policymakers commission research to solve a specific problem, they may also turn to researchers for conceptual reasons (to get deeper knowledge or understanding about an issue, without necessarily planning to pursue specific political changes) or for symbolic reasons, such as to justify political decisions taken (Boswell 2009; Moore et al. 2018.). Researchers need to be aware of those risks and attempt to get as much information as possible about the political and institutional context in which research will function, for instance, whether it will be exploited by political groups in public debate or the topic of the research remains more technocratic and outside the public realm.

As the presented case suggests, it is important that both sides have previous experience of cooperation, respect their own values and limitations, and also that policymakers understand the main principles of scientific research. Policymakers do not always have a precise understanding of their specific research needs, particularly in terms of research outcomes rather than operational results, and it is important that researchers put some effort into explaining the logic of their work to policymakers. Both sides should reserve adequate time for discussing the study's aims and scope, as well as its limitations.

Sometimes, it is good practice to carry out pilot research, particularly when a new problem needs to be solved that requires a specific methodology. Both sides should also be ready for any new issues that may arise in the course of the study, such as a pandemic or an unexpected wave of migration, and they should be able to find ways to address them.

Potential impact

A critical factor of relative success or failure is the political salience of the topic the research deals with. In the case of migration research, less politically salient research that is conducted in the optimal moment of the policy cycle is more likely to succeed and bring about a tangible impact. Also, researchers, funding bodies, and universities should not focus on achieving immediate policy impact – sometimes a small change in a policy may lead to future policy change. Finally, there is the aspect of the sustainability of the obtained results. As is true in the case described below, a practice of conducting pilot research or repetitive studies to better align their aims and methodology with both the needs of the contracting authority and the changing situation on the ground seems to have a positive impact in terms of making the results of the research more long-lasting.



Example

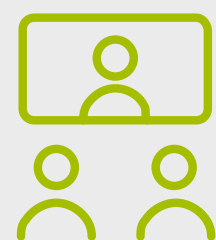
Developing a methodology for the study of working migrants in Poland

A history of commissioned research and cooperation between researchers at the Centre of Migration Research, University of Warsaw (CMR UW), and the National Bank of Poland (NBP) in 2012-2019.

Commissioned by the NBP, CMR UW researchers have developed a methodology for surveying migrants working in Poland, with a particular focus on their labour income and the level of funds transferred abroad. The commissioned research fitted into a new research direction of NBP. Since 2007 the NBP has carried out unique surveys among Polish migrants residing abroad, which are the basis for estimates of the scale of money transfers to the country and the consequences of migration for the Polish labour market. These surveys significantly supplemented information available from other data sources and allowed better understanding of structural changes in the Polish economy which was important for monetary policy. The research study carried out by UW had been part of this new research strategy but related to the situation of immigrants in Poland.

The data collected in the study were used to develop a method for estimating the

magnitude of migrants' earnings and transfers and thus their correct inclusion in the country's balance of payments, and also to assess their impact on the Polish economy. In the balance of payments statistics, information on income earned from work in another country is included in two items: compensation of employees (the "primary income" item) and workers' remittances (the "secondary income" item). The study additionally provided rich material on demographic characteristics, migration patterns and strategies or the social networks of immigrants in Poland, as well as models of their participation in the Polish labour market.



Engagement steps

The cooperation between NBP and CMR UW initially concerned better understanding of the motives behind the post-EU accession emigration from Poland. In 2012, CMR UW entered into discussions with NBP and accepted an invitation to a bid regarding collecting information about labour market outcomes of immigrants in Poland. Before being commissioned, a survey research, CMR UW and NBP mapped crucial gaps that could hamper the research, namely: data gaps on the size and structure of the population surveyed, possible reluctance among respondents to participate in the survey due to the unofficial nature of their stay and work, problems in reaching respondents and the sensitivity of the research topic itself. In this context, NBP decided to commission two pilot studies to test its methods and find the one that addressed those gaps as fully as possible. A subcontractor/market research company had coordinated and

conducted classic stratified-target sampling, while the CMR UW team undertook a Respondent Driven Sampling (RDS).

At the client's request, the results of the first pilot survey were presented at a seminar at the client's premises. During the discussions some differences between the research methods adopted in the pilot research were identified, related to building trust with the respondents, research coordination, and the level and extent of control of the interviewers' work. Finally, the ordering party took a decision in favour of the RDS method, as this research approach allows us to reach out to the 'hidden' migrant population, obtain a broader cross-section of the population and is based on social networks (trust), making it is easier to obtain high quality data on sensitive topics.

This successful cooperation resulted in another commission in 2015. Building on the experience of 2012, the commissioned research relied on the RDS survey of migrants from Ukraine and the development of a survey method for migrants in the agricultural sector. Some items in the questionnaire were carried over from the 2012 survey. Following the survey, extensive methodological recommendations were made on the topic of subsequent research, sample size and data verification.

These recommendations were used in the design of another commissioned study in 2016, when migrant employment in agriculture in the Płońsk and Grójec districts was investigated and the situation of Ukrainian migrants in Lublin as a new direction of migration to Poland. The study in Lublin showed different local characteristics of the migrant population compared to the study in the capital and the need to divide the study group into sub-samples of students and labour migrants.

As a result of 2012-2016 cooperation, a long-term contract between NBP and CMR UW was concluded in 2018 to study the characteristics of migration to Poland in small,

medium and large cities. However, towards the end of the contract period, pandemic issues arose. Pandemic constraints necessitated a change in methodology, resulting in the first longitudinal study (CATI among participants in the 2019 study, instead of RDS on the new sample).

The following surveys were completed as part of the contract:

- Wrocław RDS 2018
- Bydgoszcz RDS 2018
- Warsaw RDS migrants 2019
- Warsaw RDS students 2019
- Wrocław RDS 2020
- Warsaw CATI 2020 (longitudinal study)

The 2018 contract included not only a pure research component but also a training programme for employees of NBP Regional Branches (OO NBP) located in 16 provincial cities. The training programme focused on migration survey methodology and the use of various data sources. The first part covered formal and legal issues and changes in regulations from 2018 and discusses central and local data sources. Subsequent modules of the training dealt with research methodology – sampling in surveys, the use of qualitative and quantitative tools, and analysis of the scale and spread of migration in recent years.

Particular emphasis was placed on discussing the results of pilot surveys carried out by OO NBP staff and drawing conclusions for the implementation of future surveys and the analysis of the data obtained. Issues related to financial transfers (remittances), the impact of immigration on the social system and the state budget, and the

wage gap between immigrants and citizens are addressed. Participants from the OO NBP also took part in a methodological workshop on the interview set-up. The whole event concluded with a discussion on research tools and their optimisation.

The CATI 2020 survey was the last survey carried out by UW researchers on behalf of the NBP. From 2019 onwards, OO NBP staff began conducting the surveys themselves. At the same time, the contracting authority has agreed to license the use of the unique collected data in UW scientific publications.



Success factors

- Employees of the NBP also had considerable scientific achievements and experience in the area of migration research. Due to the significant impact of post-EU accession emigration from Poland on Poland's labour market, the analyses of migration became an important part of the scientific agenda of the team of labour market economists employed in the analytical department of NBP. NBP continues to expand the scope of the collected data while working on further development of methods of their acquisition, processing and publication.
- The need for new specific data to fulfil one of the basic statistical tasks of the NBP, which is the collection, processing and ongoing analysis of data on the country balance of payments. Lack of a proper data infrastructure provided by Statistics Poland and in particular lack of good quality register data presented a serious challenge for analytical tasks of the NBP. The scope of the surveys was beyond the competence of the average market research company.

- Representatives of the contracting authority were actively involved in the preparation of the contract terms and conditions and the development of the research tools.
- The study was built on previous extensive CMR UW knowledge and research experience. For example, CMR UW was able to identify the characteristics of migrants that make them difficult to recruit for research and the methods to overcome this limitation.
- Modifications were made to the Respondent Driven Sampling method to ensure better representativeness of the results. Importantly, the NBP team was genuinely interested in the methodology and deeply involved in its development.
- Repeatability of questionnaire sections have allowed for the comparisons between years and observation of trends.
- Following the implementation of the 2015 survey, a list of comments on questions raised by interviewers and respondents was compiled, which was useful for subsequent surveys and interviewer training.
- In locations other than Warsaw, cooperation with NGOs supporting or founded by migrants was key. In Wrocław and Lublin the Ukraine Foundation and the Homo Faber Association were involved in survey coordination, respectively. The greatest problems were encountered in the implementation of the study in Bydgoszcz, where no such organisation was active at the time.
- Willingness of researchers to share their know-how with NBP staff. Regardless of the form of collaboration (commissioned research), in practice it was research collaboration and not typical subcontracting.

- Friendly relationship between UW and NBP researchers from previous meetings and research collaborations.
- The intention of the contracting authority (NBP) to become independent in conducting migrant surveys.



Impact and lessons learned

- The data collected in the study were used to develop a method for estimating the size of migrants' earnings and financial transfers. Consequently, these data could be correctly included in the country's balance of payments. This made it possible to assess the impact of migrants' earnings and transfers on the Polish economy. In the balance of payments statistics, information on income earned from working in another country is included in two items: compensation of employees ('primary income' item) and workers' remittances ('secondary income' item).
- Data from the surveys was used to develop the NBP's reports published on the bank's website.
- Based on the data from the commissioned research, valuable academic publications were published by NBP and CMR researchers.
- The project implementation unexpectedly prepared OO NBP staff to study mass migration from Ukraine, which resulted in widely cited NBP reports on the situation of Ukrainian refugees in Poland. The results obtained by the NBP are of a high-quality, converging with other research and reports.

- The methodology developed on the basis of the cooperation described above to study Ukrainian migrants is currently being used by the NBP to study the growing population of migrants from Belarus too.



Learn more

Methodological approach:

Hodges D. & Syahirah A. R. (2022). "Commissioned research", in: T. Vorley & S. Abdul Rahman & Lauren Tuckerman & Phil Wallace (ed.), *How to Engage Policy Makers with Your Research*, p. 175-183, Edward Elgar Publishing.

ICPA (2014). *Who produces and commissions policy research?*, available at <https://advocacyguide.icpolicyadvocacy.org/232-who-produces-and-commissions-policy-research>

Moore, G., Redman, S., Rudge, S. et al. (2018). "Do policy-makers find commissioned rapid reviews useful?", *Health Res Policy Sys* 16 (17), <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12961-018-0293-1>

Boswell Ch. (2009). *The Political Uses of Expert Knowledge*. Cambridge University Press.

Scientific publications:

Górny, A. (2017). All circular but different: Variation in patterns of Ukraine-to-Poland migration. *Population, Space and Place*, 23(8). Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.2074>

Górny, A., & Kaczmarczyk, P. (2018). A known but uncertain path: The role of foreign labour in Polish agriculture. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 64, 177–188. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2017.12.015>

Górny, A., & Kaczmarczyk, P. (2020). Temporary workers and migration transition: On a changing role of the agricultural sector in international migration to Poland. In *International Labour Migration to Europe's Rural Regions*. Routledge.

Górny, A., & Napierała, J. (2016). Comparing the effectiveness of respondent-driven sampling and quota sampling in migration research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 19(6), 645–661. Scopus. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2015.1077614>

Kaczmarczyk, P. (2015). Burden or Relief? Fiscal Impacts of Recent Ukrainian Migration to Poland (IZA Discussion Paper No. 8779). IZA. <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=2558358>

Kaczmarczyk, P. (2023). COVID-19 and labour market adjustments: Policies, foreign labour and structural shifts. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2023.2279745>

Strzelecki, P., Growiec, J., & Wyszynski, R. (2022). The contribution of immigration from Ukraine to economic growth in Poland. *Review of World Economics*, 158(2), 365–399.

Main website of the National Bank of Poland with reports (written not only in cooperation with UW): <https://nbp.pl/en/publications/other/migration/>

Reports in Polish based on the research:

<https://nbp.pl/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/17i2014.pdf>

<https://nbp.pl/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/obywatele-Ukrainy-pracujacy-w-Polsce-raport-2015.pdf>

<https://nbp.pl/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/obywatele-Ukrainy-pracujacy-w-Polsce-raport-2017.pdf>

https://nbp.pl/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/raport_imigranci_Bydgoszcz_Wroclaw_2019.pdf

<https://www.migracje.uw.edu.pl/publikacje/nowe-obszary-docelowe-w-migracji-z-ukrainy-do-polski-przypadek-bydgoszczy-i-wroclawia-na-tle-innych-miast-2/>

https://nbp.pl/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/raport_imigranci_Bydgoszcz_Wroclaw_2019.pdf

<https://www.migracje.uw.edu.pl/publikacje/ewolucja-czy-rewolucja-imigracja-z-ukrainy-do-aglomeracji-warszawskiej-z-perspektywy-lat-2015-2019-2/>

<https://www.migracje.uw.edu.pl/publikacje/imigranci-z-ukrainy-w-polsce-w-aglomeracji-wroclawskiej-w-czasie-pandemii-covid-19-2/>

<https://www.migracje.uw.edu.pl/publikacje/imigranci-z-ukrainy-w-aglomeracji-warszawskiej-w-czasie-pandemii-covid-19-wyniki-badania-panelowego-2/>



Helping policymakers to monitor their integration policies

Contributing INNOVATE partner: MPG Migration Policy Group

Objectives, basic principles & potential impact

Policymakers usually want to identify what can and should be done to arrive at effective policies in their area of responsibility. Regular policy monitoring is an instrument attracting particularly those policymakers who are committed to comprehensive integration and long-term inclusion of migrants.

A structured, evidence-based assessment of policies across relevant areas – such as employment, education or housing – can show what works, where gaps exist, and how practices compare across countries. If embedded in a research-to-policy engagement process, it can spark practical, impactful policy dialogue. Even where political commitment is lacking, regular monitoring is a valuable approach. It allows setting benchmarks and mobilising actors who will be able to point out gaps and current deficiencies in policy debate.

Monitoring is research that is geared towards facilitating policy change. As such, it is inherently linked to engaging with policymakers and policy stakeholders. Scientists who are embarking on this particular type of applied research should be aware that it is all about the right research and process design.



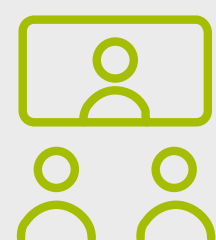
Example

The National Integration Evaluation Mechanism (NIEM) to monitor refugee integration policies

For more than two decades, the Migration Policy Group (MPG) has worked on indicator-based, international comparative monitoring of integration policies. Systems like the well-known and much-used MIPEX Migrant Integration Policy Index (see section 5, practice 'Effective communication of indicator-based research'), the REGIN regional-level MIPEX-R, or the WholeComm local-level assessment situate the state of development in a cross-country comparison.

The National Integration Evaluation Mechanism (NIEM) has provided evidence on the quality of refugee integration policies in 14 EU countries and a roadmap for governments to improve the framework in place. The project was led and coordinated by the Warsaw-based Institute for Public Affairs (IPA). MPG contributed as research coordinator to this policy index, which saw three rounds of monitoring taking place in 2017, 2019 and 2021. The index assessed national policies, legal frameworks and collaborative implementation with sub-national levels of government and civil society in 12 dimensions: mainstreaming, residency, family reunification, access to citizenship, housing, employment, vocational training and employment-related education, health, social security, education, language learning and social orientation, and building bridges.

Across these dimensions, analysis was conducted along overall 120 indicators which scored policies on a scale from 0 to 100. The questionnaire was differentiated to allow for separate analysis of policies in place for different groups of beneficiaries of international protection, such as recognised refugees and persons under subsidiary protection. Results revealed a wide variation among the assessed EU countries, with overall country scores ranging from 33 (Hungary) to 73 (Sweden) in the 2021 evaluation round.



Engagement steps

Comparative research design to encourage policy change: First, monitoring is most useful when comparative within or across countries. Policy monitors which analyse only one country, region or city are good at pointing out developments over time but lack the illuminating view on similar contexts. Simultaneous monitoring of the legal and policy framework in different countries, regions and municipalities is adding much value for policymakers. The method of contrasting instantly shows the models that can inspire action, as well as the needs for improvement in a neutral way. The normative benchmarks informing the indicators can create common points of reference for policy debates spanning across countries. These benchmarks are either identified from evidence on what works to improve integration outcomes (by correlating policies with outcome indicators) or can be derived from international legal standards. Comparative, cross-country policy monitoring thus implies creating a universal normative framework for effective integration policies.

→ While not comprising all EU countries, the NIEM project included a sample of 14 geographically balanced member states, bringing together traditional and more recent destination countries as well as different integration policy traditions. Altogether, this sample was representative of the EU as a whole. The benchmarks informing the indicators were explicitly based on the integration standards enshrined in the Geneva Convention, international human rights treaties, EU asylum directives and EU soft law on Common Basic Principles on migrant integration (i.e., the norms the assessed countries have agreed on).

Collaborative research, collaborative engagement: Secondly, cross-country comparative monitoring and the related engagement is an inherently collaborative effort. This concerns the research process which relies on the expertise, insights and relationships of research partners in the compared countries, regions or cities who are most familiar with the specific context. They not only apply a set of indicators but have a crucial role in testing the viability of the monitoring instruments and in providing feedback for further development. In addition, collaboration is the hallmark of all dissemination activities. To reach the target audience of policymakers and policy stakeholders, the coordinating lead researchers – who come up with the scored results and comparative reports – again rely on the outreach and engagement skills of the local partners. To maximise impact and attention, the launch of a comparative report or country-specific results is a carefully orchestrated moment within the research network, supported by professional communications efforts.

→ The NIEM project brought together a partnership of 15 research- and advocacy-oriented civil society organisation, think tanks, and universities in the involved countries, including MPG as the coordinating lead research partner. In a collaborative effort, indicators were further developed from a preceding pilot project, starting with a joint

workshop, and further refined throughout the three rounds of monitoring. The MPG-authored comparative European reports were launched either in international policy conferences or online through transnational webinars, always featuring specific country experiences next to the comparative results. Multi-stakeholder country launches organised by the partners presented tailored country reports authored by the national experts, using the comparative insights.

Sustained policy dialogue: Thirdly, regular monitoring results should be the hook for sustained policy dialogue. Showing different results across various policy domains will lead to a debate about policy gaps and deficiencies. Showing the progress (or lack thereof) since the last round of monitoring will foster a debate about the political priority given to migrant integration, but also about evaluation and impact. Showing results for countries (regions, cities) that are comparable in size, migration history, socio-economic context etc. will result in a lively debate about what could be achieved. Pointing out best practices and top-scoring locations will trigger a discussion about models to draw inspiration from and how to adapt them to the own context. Letting comparative scores which reveal the laggards speak for themselves may result in a debate with distressed policymakers – which nevertheless can be seized as an opportunity for awareness-raising, and maybe even for shaming decision-makers into action.

➔ In the NIEM project, the launch of the reports marked key moments in so-called National Coalition Building. Project partners had the necessary resources to implement sustained engagement with policymakers and policy stakeholders, with a special emphasis on refugee-led organisations. In this process, research partners build long-term relationships with key actors, deepened exchange around the gaps and priorities identified, advocated for policy change, nurtured media contacts, and were able to make themselves heard in policy debates. In several cases, the multi-annual

project provided critical means to amplify the pre-existing research-to-policy efforts of partners; or even created a first framework for structured dialogue between civil society, researchers and policymakers on refugee integration.



Success factors

Giving space to engagement in project designs: Ideally, research-to-policy engagement should include multi-stakeholder events and closed-door meetings with policymakers alike, in a sustained effort leading to structured and meaningful policy dialogue. The NIEM project design allowed for this and included several elements which proved absolutely critical for success:

- The project dedicated up to 50% of the available resources to policy dialogue and advocacy ('coalition building') in the 14 involved countries.
- In addition, the project provided the means to 'translate' the international comparative results into specific country reports written in country language.
- Not least, NIEM spanned six years which allowed three rounds of monitoring, with all the related advantages for sustained engagement and building long-term relationships.



Impact

There is evidence that the strong engagement and advocacy element of the project provided for significant impact on policy debates and even policy changes in several of the involved countries. Some significant examples:

- In Lithuania, NIEM national coalition members consulted with public agencies in the preparation of the National Integration Action Plan 2018-2020 and were later included in a state commission coordinating its implementation.
- In Latvia, NIEM advocacy led to the elimination of inequality between recognised refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection in their eligibility to state social benefits. Later, the NGO coalition got BIPs recognised as a separate target group for more integration measures in an 2022-2023 Action Plan.
- In Bulgaria, policy dialogue on refugee integration was greatly enhanced through the project and led to local-level sensitisation and involvement of refugee-led structures in particular.
- In France, NIEM activities contributed to the advocacy efforts of the partner France Terre d'Asile, with recommendations taken up to introduce more reception places and employment programmes for young refugees; and in a 2021 Vulnerability Action Plan.

Lessons learned

Funding, however, is the Achilles heel of all indicator-based, cross-country comparative policy monitoring. NIEM was exceptional, in that a six-year transnational EU AMIF project allowed for several rounds of monitoring and related engagement. Usually, this type of research does not fit easily into research funding schemes, as it involves the 'mere' creation of indicators and update of existing datasets, and not exactly the cutting-edge ambition which normally is a precondition for winning projects. In addition, while dissemination and related resources still are secondary in most research calls, research-to-policy engagement takes centre-stage in effective comparative policy monitoring.

Funding bodies at national and European level should take note that an authoritative instrument like MIPEX – with its track record of influencing policy debates and more than 500 citations annually – for all of its 20-year history has depended on a jumble of constantly changing philanthropic, EU and national public funding sources, with all the negative consequences for frequency and geographical scope of the research. This lesson learnt also applies to NIEM, which has not seen a follow-up funding opportunity even after the renewed arrival of millions of displaced persons in the EU.



Learn more

[NIEM project website](#)

[NIEM news & coalition building](#)

[NIEM publications](#) (incl. national reports and project summary with impact section)

NIEM comparative reports:

[The European benchmark for refugee integration: A comparative analysis of the National Integration Evaluation Mechanism in 14 EU countries. Evaluation 2](#)

[The European benchmark for refugee integration: A comparative analysis of the National Integration Evaluation Mechanism in 14 EU countries. Evaluation 1](#)

[The European benchmark for refugee integration: A comparative analysis of the National Integration Evaluation Mechanism in 14 EU countries. Baseline](#)

Other comparative policy indices developed or co-developed by MPG:

[MIPEX Migrant Integration Policy Index](#)

[REGIN/MIPEX-R migrant integration governance at the regional level](#)

[Whole-COMM/MIPEX-L pilot local-level integration policy index](#)

[New Europeans Initiative Political Participation Policy Index](#)

