

Deep dives

Statelessness in Europe

Insights, evidence needs and
engagement

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This research report is part of the [INNOVATE project](#). INNOVATE aims to bring about *significant changes* in the nature and impact of *migration research on policy* through a series of innovations designed around the needs and interests of researchers, policymakers, and other stakeholders.

The project has established the [Migration Research to Policy Co-Lab](#), which has both a physical and virtual presence and includes a Research Exchange, Engagement Hub, and Training Facility.

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Statelessness in Europe. Insights, evidence needs and engagement

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Executive Summary

- The European Migration Network (EMN) and the Platform on Statelessness are knowledge brokers linking different actors, facilitating information flows, and fostering relationship-building.
- Networking and building interpersonal relationships are key factors for evidence engagement within and through the EMN and the Platform and have been highlighted as a major asset of the EMN by our interview participants.
- The EMN's 'neutral approach' to information exchange can facilitate evidence engagement on sensitive issues.
- We make three recommendations for the Platform on Statelessness
 - 1) **Continue knowledge brokering between different communities.** Ensuring that all voices, in particular those with lived experiences of statelessness, are represented and contribute to the discussions. This was identified as a good practice of evidence engagement by our interviewees, as it raises awareness of the reality of those most impacted by statelessness and enriches the dialogue.
 - 2) **Systematic inclusion of academic researchers at Platform on Statelessness events.** Include academic researchers systematically in events, allowing them to build relationships with policymakers and practitioners, which could increase trust and enhance evidence uptake. Organization of an interactive panel between practitioners and academics at events, for instance, allows researchers and/or academics to present their research to practitioners, receiving feedback on its relevance for those working in the field. Practitioners could also raise issues and contribute to the development of relevant research questions. These interactions could help bridge the gap between research and practice.
 - 3) **Commission relevant research in collaboration with the Platform.** Leveraging the Platform's understanding of practitioners' needs to guide the focus of the research could be achieved via interactive panels between practitioners and academics. The Platform can contribute its excellent data collection capabilities and access to official information, which academic researchers may lack. Commissioned research could, for instance, analyse statelessness determination procedures, which was identified as a knowledge gap by interviewees. Research can then support the development of a common approach among Member States to determine statelessness at the national level.



Part 1: Introduction

This report analyses the role of the **European Migration Network (EMN)** in migration evidence engagement, with a particular focus on the **EMN Platform on Statelessness** (hereafter: the Platform). Initiatives taken around **migration forecasting and preparedness** are dealt with in **D1.3**.

In the context of examining evidence engagement, it is important to note that there is no clear consensus on the **definition of 'evidence' and 'evidence-based policymaking'** beyond the vague concept of information-supported arguments (Cairney, 2017; Godfrey, Funke & Mbizvo, 2010). While some consider evidence to include only scientific research, others believe that it can include a variety of sources and knowledge, including expert knowledge, indigenous knowledge, or even public opinion (Godfrey, Funke & Mbizvo, 2010). As the EMN is not an academic research institution, but a network specialized in facilitating the exchange of information between different stakeholders active in the field of migration and asylum, 'evidence' in the context of this report (unless otherwise specified) does not refer to scientific research, but to knowledge and information generated on migration more broadly, including statistics, legal frameworks, or practitioners' insights.

Given the **EMN's position** as a **key network in information exchange** on migration and asylum-related topics in the EMN Member States and Observer Countries, it is crucial to examine the factors that can incentivize evidence engagement and identify room for potential future development. In addition, the **EMN Platform on Statelessness**, established in 2016 as one of the EMN's expert groups, serves as a forum for exchange of good practices among Member States. While its working methods are largely aligned with those of the broader EMN, the Platform has a distinct mandate: to raise awareness of statelessness and contribute to its reduction, as well as to address related discrimination in EMN Member States (EMN, 2018). As such, its objective goes slightly beyond the EMN's general agenda of mapping and facilitating information exchange. This particular role makes the Platform an interesting case for examining how it deals with evidence, what evidence needs are expressed by its participants, and how it promotes awareness of statelessness. However, given the significant overlap in working methods and staffing between the EMN and the Platform, an understanding of evidence engagement within the EMN as a whole was considered essential to contextualize the role of the Platform.

Accordingly, this report addresses the following **overarching research question**: *How do the EMN and the Platform on Statelessness contribute to evidence engagement?*

Sub-questions guiding the research included:

- *What drives evidence engagement in the EMN and the Platform?*
- *What are the barriers to evidence engagement in the EMN and the Platform?*



- *Are there opportunities for potential future development to improve evidence engagement?*

Overall, the findings show that the EMN in general, as well as the Platform, are acting as a kind of **knowledge broker** between users and producers of evidence. Knowledge brokering is the process by which "intermediaries (knowledge brokers) link producers and users of knowledge to strengthen the generation, dissemination and eventual use of this knowledge" (Bielak et al., 2008, p. 203). The EMN and the Platform, by collecting, synthesizing, and disseminating information, organizing events and conferences, and providing a platform for exchange between different stakeholders, can be defined as knowledge brokers facilitating the flow of information on migration and asylum-related issues, as well as on statelessness.

Knowledge brokering is one approach to improving the uptake of evidence (e.g., Shaxson et al., 2025). Therefore, by identifying how the EMN and the Platform serve as knowledge brokers, what factors enhance evidence engagement, as well as room for potential future development, this report contributes to the objective of the INNOVATE project by highlighting 'good practices' in evidence engagement and suggesting approaches for the EMN to strengthen evidence uptake by policy actors and practitioners.

This report is structured as follows: **Part 1** introduces the EMN and the research methodology. **Part 2** examines evidence engagement within the EMN in general, focusing on factors that incentivize knowledge sharing as well as potential barriers, before concluding and providing recommendations in **Part 3**. **Part 4** focuses on the Platform on Statelessness, examining evidence needs and evidence engagement and **Part 5** summarizes the findings of the Platform and provides recommendations. **Part 6** concludes the report with a future outlook.

1.1 Introduction to the EMN

The EMN is a network designed to facilitate the exchange of information and evidence on migration and asylum across the EMN Member States (EU Member States except Denmark) and EMN Observer Countries ([European Commission, n.d.](#); [EU Commission, n.d.a](#)).

It emerged based on a recognized need to improve the monitoring and analysis of complex migration trends and to enhance practical cooperation and exchange of information between Member States in the context of the development of a common European migration and asylum policy, as emphasized in the Thessaloniki European Council meeting (2003) and the Hague Programme (2004) ([Council of the European Union, 2008](#)).

After an initial preparatory period, stakeholders expressed a desire to strengthen the network and continue its mission ([Council of the European Union, 2008](#)), resulting in the EMN being established as a



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permanent structure in 2008 through Council Decision 2008/381/EC (and amended by Regulation (EU) No 516/2014) ([EU Commission, n.d.a](#)).

The **primary objective** of the EMN is to provide objective, comparable, and policy-relevant information and knowledge on a wide range of topical issues related to migration and asylum, spanning from issues related to legal migration to citizenship and statelessness to return and readmission.

Structure and Operation



Graph 1: The Structure of the EMN (authors' own work)

The EMN is an intergovernmental network consisting of:

- National Contact Points (NCPs) located in each of the 26 Member States (EU Member States except Denmark) and 8 Observer Countries (NO, GE, MD, UA, ME, AM, RS, MK)
- the European Commission, which coordinates the EMN
- and the EMN Service Provider (ICF)

The EMN operates in a multi-level way. On the national level, the NCPs are connected to their **national network**, which is developed by each NCP and consists of partners that are experts in the field of migration and asylum, ranging from the academic research community to NGOs, to civil servants and practitioners employed in government institutions. The national network members play a crucial role in



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providing up-to-date information and data regarding the respective country's situation to the NCPs, which supports the production of various EMN outputs.

Moreover, the NCPs are **linked to the EU level**, where the European Commission's Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME) coordinates the EMN. The Commission, together with the Steering Board provides strategic guidance and oversight, aligning the EMN's outputs with broader EU priorities.

In addition, on the EU level, the NCPs collaborate with **other agencies and institutions**, such as the European Parliament, Eurostat, the European Union Asylum Agency, and Frontex, among others. The EMN also cooperates with international organizations such as the OECD and the IOM.

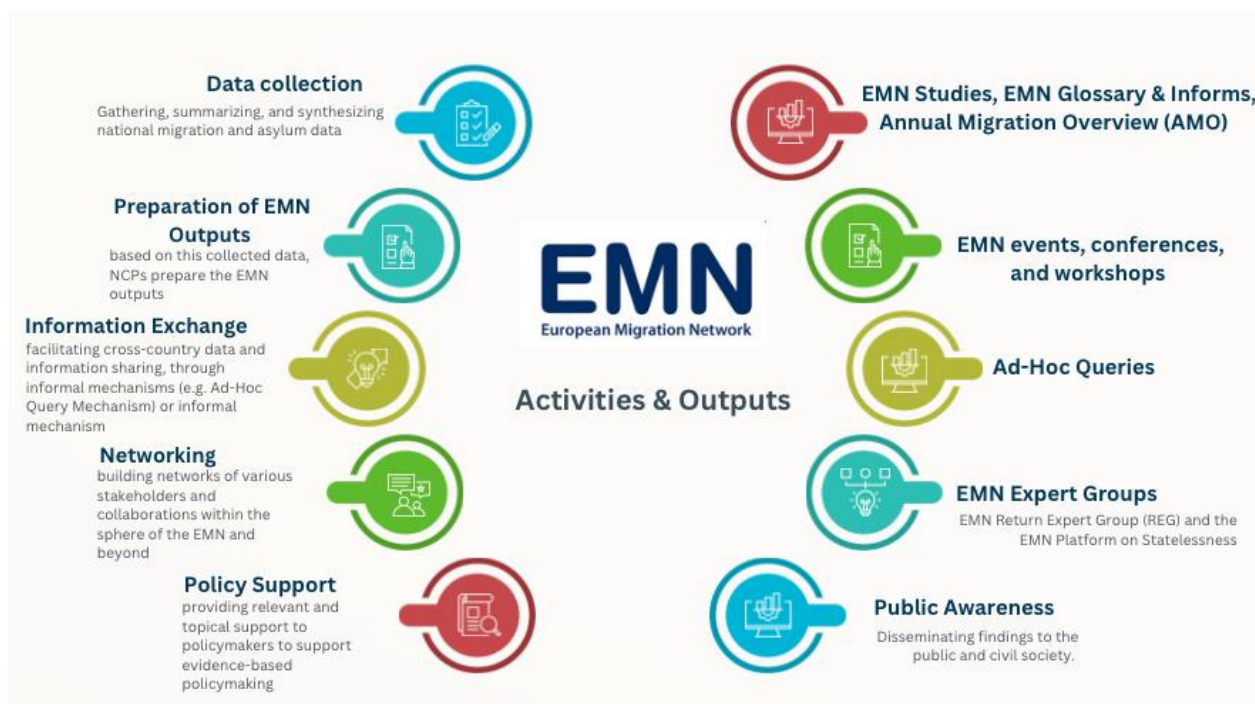
The National Contact Points (NCPs)

The **National Contact Points** are appointed by their respective national governments. While they are typically embedded in government structures, such as the Ministry of Interior or the Ministry of Justice, they can also be placed in research institutions, non-governmental organizations, or national offices of international organizations (IOM).

The role of the National Contact Points

The NCPs aim to understand the information needs of policymakers and the general public and respond to such needs by ensuring and encouraging an exchange of migration-related information. They are tasked with gathering, summarizing, comparing, and synthesizing migration-related data, which they contribute to the network. Thus, they ensure that the national data and perspectives are integrated into the network's outputs, facilitating information exchange, and supporting evidence-based policymaking at both the national and EU level. In this way, the EMN is a **facilitator specialized in information exchange** between a number of national, EU, and international actors active in the field of migration and asylum ([European Commission, n.d.b](#); [EMN Belgium, n.d.](#), [EMN Lëtzebuerg, n.d.](#); [EMN Lëtzebuerg, n.d.a](#); [Hellenic Republic Ministry of Migration & Asylum, n.d.](#)).

The **main tasks** of the NCPs consist of the following:



Graph 2: EMN Activities and Outputs (authors own work).

Outputs and activities

A non-exhaustive list of the EMN outputs and activities include:

- EMN Studies
- Ad-hoc queries (see **Text Box 1**)
- EMN Informs
- Annual Migration Overview (AMO)
- Country Factsheets
- EMN Quarterly Newsletter (Impact Report)
- EMN Glossary
- EMN Expert Groups (EMN Return Expert Group (REG) and the EMN Platform on Statelessness)
- EMN events, conferences, and workshops



1.2 Conceptual Framework: knowledge brokering

Evidence-based policymaking has become a major concern for the academic and policymaking communities over the last few decades (MacKillop & Downe, 2023). However, the increased focus on the impact of research on policymaking has also highlighted the fact that the desired impact does not occur automatically (Knight & Lyall, 2013), and that ensuring the uptake of evidence requires more than simply disseminating evidence and hoping that it is found and used by the right audience (Bielak et al., 2008).

However, some approaches appear to help strengthen evidence uptake. For example, it is known that a strategic approach to knowledge transfer from producers to users, or how evidence is framed and communicated, can help ensure evidence uptake and can have a positive impact on policy and practice (Bielak et al., 2008; Shaxson et al., 2025).

In this regard, **knowledge brokering** can increase evidence engagement and uptake. Although the term knowledge brokering is not clearly defined and is used differently in the literature (MacKillop et al., 2020; Walting Neil et al., 2022), it broadly refers to intermediaries (knowledge brokers) who mediate between users and producers of knowledge to facilitate the creation, exchange and uptake of knowledge (Bielak et al., 2008; Meyer 2010, citing Sverrisson, 2001). However, knowledge brokering is understood differently by different actors and in different spaces (Meyer, 2010).

How do knowledge brokers operate?

Knowledge brokers are said to operate in three ways: as **knowledge managers** (by identifying, synthesizing, formatting, and disseminating information to inform policy and practice, for example), as **linking agents** (by facilitating interaction, coordination, and exchange of ideas among different actors and groups), and as **capacity builders** (by increasing access to knowledge) (Meyer, 2010, citing Oldham & MacLean, 1997; Kislov et al., 2017, citing Bornbaum et al., 2015; Chew et al., 2013; Ward et al., 2009).

Thus, knowledge brokering is concerned with knowledge sharing, facilitating information flow, capacity building, and relationship building between different communities (Bielak et al., 2008; Meyer, 2010; Knight & Lyall, 2013; Walting Neal et al., 2022). This involves a variety of approaches and practices, ranging from communication work to identification work to education work (Meyer, 2010). It may involve facilitating interactions by organizing seminars and meetings (Bielak et al., 2008; Meyer, 2010, citing Sverrisson, 2001), or directing those needing evidence to relevant sources of knowledge (Bielak et al., 2008). In addition, knowledge brokering consists of ensuring that different communities (e.g., practitioners, policymakers, and researchers) understand each other's needs and interests or helping to align knowledge production and needs (Bielak et al., 2008; Gluckman et al., 2021). In general, knowledge brokers do not generate new knowledge (Gluckman et al., 2021), but rather



identify and synthesize existing evidence from different sources and perspectives and disseminate it to audiences in an easily digestible format (Bielak et al., 2008). Therefore, according to Meyer (2010), knowledge brokering goes beyond simply disseminating or "moving" knowledge but also involves transforming it (Meyer, 2010, p.120).

It is important to note, however, that knowledge brokering can look very different between different actors and spaces, as the needs, interests, and expectations of users can vary considerably (Meyer, 2010). Moreover, while the literature often focuses on the interface between science and policy (e.g., Gluckman et al., 2021), knowledge brokering can take place between a variety of actors, including practitioners, companies, the public, charities, engineers, and even countries (Meyer, 2010; Knight & Lyall, 2013). In the case of the EMN, the exchange of information oftentimes takes place between different practitioners (e.g., civil servants, lawyers, case workers, etc.) or between practitioners and policy actors. Therefore, knowledge brokering is not used exclusively in the sense of brokering at the science-policy interface.

1.3 Methodology

The primary data for this research consists of 35 semi-structured interviews. Participants included members of the EMN National Contact Points and other EMN stakeholders (e.g., Steering Board members, policy actors, practitioners, experts, etc.), as well as participants in the Platform on Statelessness events or Forecasting Workshops. However, this report is mainly based on interviews conducted in relation to the EMN in general and the Platform on Statelessness.

It should be noted that some participants were interviewed on the EMN in general, the Platform, and/or on forecasting, due to the overlapping responsibilities of NCPs and stakeholders working on many of the EMN's activities and thematic areas. Therefore, two NCP members participated in two interviews. In addition, some of the interviewees were former NCPs and are now EMN stakeholders (e.g., working as migration experts in agencies), so their positions overlap. The interviews were conducted in English (except one interview in German and one interview in Luxembourgish/French/English) between July 2024 and the end of December 2025.



	Number of interviewees	Interviewed on: Platform on Statelessness	Interviewed on: Forecasting	Interviewed on: the EMN in general
EMN National Contact Point Members (NCPs)	14	5	7	4
Other stakeholders (e.g., national network members, practitioners, policy actors, event participants)	19	6	10	3

In the context of this report, it is important to note that the working methods and staffing of both the EMN in general and the Platform on Statelessness are relatively consistent, so they cannot be clearly distinguished and are analysed together. Furthermore, given this overlap, it was considered relevant to understand evidence engagement in the EMN as a whole in order to make sense of the Platform on Statelessness. However, evidence needs and evidence engagement in relation to the EMN Platform on Statelessness are analysed in **Part 4**.

In addition to interviews, **observations** were conducted at the **EMN & Council of Europe Multistakeholder Meeting “Statelessness and Children”** (June 6, 2024, Luxembourg). The observations provided valuable insights into how evidence engagement is taking place in the context of the Platform.

Sampling

Participants from EMN NCPs and stakeholders were sampled to ensure diversity in roles, organizational structures, and geographic representation. To extend the sample, a snowball sampling approach was employed, with NCP participants referring to additional stakeholders, including national network members. Recruitment for interviews was also conducted by approaching participants at the aforementioned Platform event.

Data analysis

All interviews were transcribed verbatim and then imported into MAXQDA, a qualitative data analysis software, to facilitate systematic coding and organization of the data. However, the quotes used in the deliverable were adapted to proper English for clarity. Content analysis was selected as the analytical method because it provides a systematic approach to identifying, categorizing, and quantifying patterns within qualitative data (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

Limitations



There are several limitations to this study. Firstly, not all potential interviewees who were approached were available for an interview, with 25 potential interviewees declining or not responding to the invitation. In addition, the EMN consists of a wide network of NCPs, national network members, and other stakeholders in EMN Member Countries and Observer Countries, working on a large number of activities and outputs across various themes. It is, therefore, important to bear in mind that the findings of this study do not necessarily reflect the EMN as a whole but the opinions and experiences of the sample of participants.

Part 2: Evidence Engagement in the EMN

Part 2 addresses the following questions:

- *How does the EMN contribute to evidence engagement on migration and asylum?*
- *What factors incentivize evidence engagement in the sphere of the EMN?*
- *How could evidence engagement be potentially further enhanced?*

Overall, an analysis of the interviews revealed three salient aspects: first, interpersonal interactions and relationships play a key role in evidence engagement within and through the EMN; second, the EMN's approach of neutrality can facilitate engagement and access to information with some actors; and third, the EMN acts as a link between the academic research community and practitioners and policymakers, with room for potential further development.



Text Box 1: The EMN Ad-Hoc Query Tool at a Glance:

The EMN's Ad-hoc query (AHQ) mechanism is a tool used by the EMN National Contact Points and the European Commission to rapidly gather information on a wide range of migration and asylum-related topics to support policy at the national and EU level.

How to use the Ad-Hoc Query Tool

- When information is required, national bodies can request their respective EMN NCP to launch an Ad-hoc query. The European Commission will launch it directly when information relevant to the EU level is required.
- The EMN NCP collaborates with the national stakeholders to develop a clear, relevant questionnaire (up to 6 questions per AHQ). The EMN NCP should provide the national answers to the AHQ before launching to guide the answers of the other EMN NCPs.
- Then, the co-chair of the EMN Ad-hoc query Working Group reviews if the AHQ is within the scope of the EMN Council Decision, the EU acquis, and if it is in accordance with the rules approved by the Ad-hoc query Working Group and provides feedback to the requesting EMN NCP. If the EMN NCP agrees with the feedback, the AHQ is directly launched. If the EMN NCP does not agree with the feedback, there is a mediation mechanism in place in which the chair of the EMN will decide on the issue. This decision is final.
- The questionnaire is sent to the network (in exceptional circumstances, it can be directed to a group of Member States) with a normal deadline of 3 weeks. This deadline can be reduced to two weeks according to the urgent requirements and exceptionally can be reduced to 3 working days, but then the number of questions is limited to 2.
- A summary of answers is then compiled by the AHQ tool and can be exported.
- The AHQ can be launched as unrestricted (for public dissemination) or as EMN Sensitive. In the first case, the compilation is available to the wider public. In the second case, it is only available for EMN NCP authorized members.
- Unrestricted EMN AHQ are published on the EMN Website.

The Ad-hoc queries and evidence engagement

The EMN's Ad-hoc query system is a tool for information exchange that helps stakeholders get the evidence they need when they need it. Through this tool, the EMN can act as a kind of **knowledge broker**: it refines the questionnaire (as interviewee 10 puts it, "turning what [stakeholders] need into something that will be comparable"), collects and summarizes information, and disseminates it. In addition, the EMN can link stakeholders across Member States if there is a need for further, more in-depth exchanges beyond the AHQ (e.g., interviewee 10). In this way, the network strengthens evidence engagement by facilitating information exchange and acting as a linking agent (e.g., Meyer, 2010). One interviewed stakeholder, for instance, emphasized the high level of responsiveness and access to information from many states that they would likely not have otherwise as particular assets of the AHQs (interviewee 17).

2.1 Facilitating knowledge exchange: the role of interpersonal relationships and trust

Interpersonal interactions and relationships, especially long-standing ones that create a degree of trust, were identified as key factors in facilitating evidence engagement within the EMN at different levels.

For example, good personal relationships **between NCPs** were identified as crucial for efficient and rapid exchange of information (interviewees 5, 12, 13, 14, 17, 22, & 23). One NCP member emphasized that requesting information through official channels can be a lengthy process, but due to the trust built up over years of active participation in the EMN, NCPs have established a "*direct line*" of communication often characterized by informal interactions, which facilitate rapid information exchanges (interviewee 5).



Similarly, another respondent points out that the EMN is successful in its facilitator role because NCP members created a *"personal bond"* and *"trust"* among each other, which is crucial for helping each other out and exchanging information rapidly (interviewee 13). Lastly, interviewee 22 refers to the *"EMN family"*, describing a sense of belonging among NCPs, which they believe is a key factor in the informal, smooth, and rapid exchange of information among NCPs.

Furthermore, **NCP's good relationships with the national network members** were identified as a crucial factor in enabling them to carry out their work successfully (interviewees 5, 7, 10, 21, & 22). For instance, one NCP explained that the basis of their successful cooperation and rapid data collection from stakeholders is based on a long-standing relationship marked by a certain trustworthiness and regular interactions with national network members (interviewee 21). Similarly, interviewee 7 highlights that the performance of NCPs is linked to the relationships they create with their national network members.

In this regard, one stakeholder explained how good relationships in the wider network facilitate evidence engagement, making the EMN the *"perfect intermediary"* because

"States don't want to share [information] on some topics, but with the EMN, because [...] all people [...] know each other since a long time and work together, they built some trust. And [...] when you go through the EMN, you will receive answers" (interviewee 9).

In addition, the importance of interpersonal relationships and contact in evidence engagement was also highlighted by the stakeholders interviewed (interviewees 9, 11, 16, 17, 31 & 32). For example, some pointed out that having good relationships with their respective NCPs facilitates reaching them to get the information they need (interviewees 16, 17), while others explained that the EMN's network makes it easier for their NCP to put them in touch with actors who have expertise that they know (interviewees 9 & 11). This is echoed by one NCP who stated that *"the experts in the field, they all know us [...] and they know how to approach us and ask [when] they need [to know] the practices of other states"* (interviewee 5).

Lastly, interviews revealed that good relationships and collaboration facilitate **identifying and meeting national stakeholders, such as policymakers, evidence needs** (interviewees 5, 8, 10, 12, 21; 7 & 22 to some extent). As one former NCP, who works in policymaking themselves now, put it, personal contact is the *"cornerstone"* of understanding policymakers' information needs. This is why NCPs should seek as much personal contact and conversation with policymakers as possible (interviewee 8). Another NCP member highlighted that they understand their national authorities' information needs based on the good connections and personal relationships developed over the years, resulting in an easy-going, informal exchange of information needs (interviewees 5).

The interview findings are consistent with research showing that networks tend to facilitate learning and knowledge exchange by encouraging sustained interaction and dialogue among members (Soares, 2024)



and by fostering the creation of trust, which is known to enhance evidence engagement, especially on sensitive topics (Nilsson, 2019) such as migration.

Moreover, interpersonal relationships and contacts seem to **strengthen the EMN's capacity to act as a knowledge broker** in several ways: first, interview results show that they contribute to the rapid gathering of information (e.g. good relationships between NCPs and national network members) and to guiding stakeholders to sources of evidence (e.g. by being approachable for the stakeholders), thus facilitating the flow of information between different actors (e.g. Bielak et al., 2008). Second, as noted by Gluckman et al. (2021), knowledge brokers need to have a good understanding of policymakers' needs to perform their role successfully. The interview findings suggest that personal interactions and building and maintaining relationships are key factors in NCPs' ability to understand the needs of policymakers, thereby allowing them to meet those evidence needs. Finally, through its large network, the EMN can make a significant contribution to relationship building, for instance, by bringing stakeholders together either through events (see **Part 4** as well as **D1.3**) or on an ad hoc basis as the need arises (e.g., interviewee 10). In doing so, the EMN acts as a knowledge broker by taking on the role of a **linking agent**, helping to facilitate interaction, exchange of ideas, and relationship building among actors (e.g., Meyer, 2010, citing Oldham & MacLean, 1997).

Of course, interpersonal relationships are not the only factors influencing evidence engagement within the EMN, and the level of personal connection varies among NCPs and stakeholders. In addition, it is also important to consider how these dynamics **might impact those who are outside of these relationships**. One stakeholder, for instance, mentions that, while they are frequently making use of the EMN as a resource, this is based on their "*good relationships with the EMN*" and that it can be difficult for newcomers to use tools provided by the network (interviewee 17). This participant argues that interactions with their respective NCP are dependent on personal connections and knowing the 'right' NCP members. Therefore, the participant suggests that it would be great to find a way for the NCP to operate that "*is more open for everyone [to] ask a question*", for instance, when it comes to launching Ad-hoc queries.

The importance of interpersonal connections can arguably also manifest through a **relative lack of visibility** of the **EMN for those who are not directly involved in the network**. Christine Boswell (2008) has already noted that the uptake of EMN outputs by Directorate staff is limited, with engagement often confined to those directly involved in the network's coordination. This view was echoed by interviewees who highlighted the EMN's struggle to establish broader visibility (of their outputs) within policy circles (interviewees 8 & 11). For instance, one interviewee who works in policymaking notes that the EMN NCP members are "*not so well known*" in some policy circles and that their own engagement relies on personal connections with one NCP member (interviewee 11). Another policy actor stated to be aware of the EMN's output due to their past of working in an NCP, however, their colleagues are not so aware of



the outputs, as the network does not circulate them sufficiently (interviewee 8). In this context, several interviewees pointed out that one strategy for ensuring visibility among stakeholders and the use of EMN resources is to maintain regular personal contacts and good relations with national network members (interviewees 5, 7, 8, & 21).

2.2 Facilitating knowledge exchange: the EMN outputs and approach of ‘neutrality’

The EMN was often described by respondents as a **neutral actor**. **EMN outputs** are usually produced on the basis of a common questionnaire to which NCPs at the national level respond. It is intended to be as objective as possible and is based on desk research carried out by the NCPs or information received from national network members. Due to the common questionnaire template, it provides a comparative and timely overview of the situation in different EMN Member States and Observer Countries (e.g., interviewee 4), which was described as relevant information by interviewees (e.g., 2, 3, 5, 7, & 17). This is particularly the case given that the information is “*very well structured*” and easily accessible, saving users a lot of time (interviewee 12; echoed to some extent by interviewee 2). In this regard, one respondent stated that the “*EMN, it's something they like a big library [...]. full of very interesting books. And [in] these books, you can find the official legal norms used by member states and the explanation*” (interviewee 3). Another interviewee participant highlighted that the EMN's outputs are highly beneficial, as the information “*is already accumulated and is prepared for digestion [and] analysis*” and added that “*the comparative analysis is already there*”, so the user only has to consult the information and decide how it can serve them in their context (interviewee 12). Thus, the EMN outputs provide a comparative overview of the situation in Member States and Observer countries without drawing critical conclusions or providing policy recommendations (interviewees 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 14, 19, 23 & 33 to some extent). As one NCP member put it, “*I guess [...] in a way you could say we [...] put the information next to each other*” (Interviewee 4).

This approach was highlighted as particularly important in relation to migration being a sensitive issue that requires an objective information provider (e.g., interviewees 7, 8, & 23). For instance, one NCP stated that migration as a topic “*is sensitive as it is, so [...] it's not up to us to really point at anybody [...] I think there is a need for [...] this really objective information on the topic*”, and added, considering that migration can be a very triggering issue, “*you have to just be very calm and just give the neutral information without any suggestions*” (interviewee 7, echoed by interviewee 8). Moreover, considering how polarized migration is, one interviewee stated that “*it's important for EMN to have that role of communicating what is true, and [...] evidence-based knowledge*” (interviewee 23).

In addition, while some respondents felt that EMN outputs could be made more policy relevant by adding more analytical elements, such as policy recommendations (interviewees 23 & 33; 14 to some extent), the EMN's ‘neutral’ and objective approach was also highlighted as a factor that can **facilitate engagement**



with stakeholders, particularly with **policy actors** (interviewees 9, 10, 13, 19, 21, 23, & 33). For instance, one participant explained that while they include the opinions of civil society and other stakeholders in their outputs to present a balanced picture, they do not believe that it would be a good idea for them to make policy recommendations.

"Maybe we can say that we are quite successful with some part of our work because we have a long-term relationship of confidence and trust with national stakeholders", however, "if we include recommendations for the ministry, I'm afraid it will not be the same kind of relationship" (interviewee 21).

Another interviewee explained in relation to the Ad-hoc query mechanism that *"if you put clear [policy] guidelines on what to do with this information or recommendations, it would [...] put restrictions on what you can ask and how you can ask [this], and I think it would create [...] hurdles for those national stakeholders to use that system"* because policy actors would feel pushed to act based on the recommendations. Neutrality therefore *"allows those stakeholders to use those systems more freely"* (interviewee 19).

Thus, the interview data suggest that the 'neutrality' of the EMN may help to remove some barriers to engagement with national authorities, particularly given the sensitivity of some migration issues. In this regard, one NCP member noted that governments feel more comfortable engaging with the EMN because *"we don't do finger-pointing"* (interviewee 13; echoed by interviewee 11). This can make the EMN appear as a trustworthy intermediary to some stakeholders, including policy actors.

Interviewee 8, who works in policymaking, stated that:

"We trust in EMN [...] that we get the real information, [...] the real data [...] the EMN is neutral. They present every Member State on equal grounds. They present the real data that has been given by the Member States. And it is not acceptable to have [...] another agenda apart from the European, apart from what the [...] regulation dictates" (Interview 8).

Thus, the EMN outputs provide a comparative overview of the situation in the Member States and Observer Countries, without providing critical analysis or conclusions, such as policy recommendations. By identifying and synthesizing existing information and formatting and disseminating it in an easily digestible format, the EMN can increase the accessibility of information for users, thereby arguably acting as a kind of knowledge broker (Kislov et al., 2017; Caduff et al., 2023, citing Nutley et al., 2007). In addition, the EMN 'neutral' approach appears to facilitate evidence engagement with some stakeholders, notably policy actors, and can make the network appear to be a trustworthy provider of reliable information to some stakeholders (e.g., interviewees 8 & 17). According to Gluckman et al., being perceived as a neutral intermediary that does not advocate for policy preferences can play an important factor in facilitating knowledge brokering (Gluckman et al., 2021).



However, while the 'neutrality' of the EMN appears to facilitate data collection and engagement with some stakeholders, particularly policy actors, this approach may arguably also limit what evidence is disseminated by the EMN. For example, one interviewee pointed out that there is a lot of discussion about the language that can be used in EMN outputs, as terms around migration can be politically charged. Therefore, there can be a lot of back and forth to ensure neutrality before outputs are finalized (Interviewee 10, echoed by Interviewee 19). In addition, while some respondents perceive EMN outputs to be particularly reliable (e.g., interviewees 2, 12 & 17), another participant noted that some actors can be reluctant to take information from EMN outputs at face value. According to this interviewee, this is due to the proximity of many NCPs to national authorities, which raises the suspicion that the information provided has been 'smoothed out' and does not necessarily reflect the true picture (interviewee 18). This shows that what is considered to be objective and neutral evidence is not uncontroversial.

Thus, while this goes beyond the scope of the research, though the EMN's focus on 'neutrality' can increase engagement with some actors, it also raises the question of what, if any, evidence is marginalized to maintain this neutrality. For example, one perspective not included in the EMN outputs is that of migrants and asylum seekers themselves (interviewee 4), which was also noted in relation to specific events (interviewee 34). In addition, due to the very short timeframe in which the EMN has to produce outputs to meet its mandate, academic research findings cannot usually be integrated into the outputs, according to interviewees (e.g., interviewees 4 & 7, see **Part 2.3**). The latter will be elaborated on in the next section.

2.3 Facilitating knowledge exchange: a bridge between researchers, practitioners, and policymakers

Whereas the previous two sections examined factors that incentivize evidence engagement in general within the EMN, the last section turns to **academic research** specifically.

While the value and importance of academic research have been recognized by interviewees, usage varies among NCPs, with many of the interviewees reporting that they do not regularly use academic research in the creation of the EMN outputs (e.g., interviewee 4, 5, 7, 10, 14, & 33). This has also been linked to the EMN's working method, which is not based on primary research but consists largely of desk research and retrieving information from the national network (interviewee 4; [EMN Luxembourg, n.d.](#)). Furthermore, as the mandate of the EMN is to provide up-to-date information on migration-related development, interviewees explained that academic research is not produced in time to be included in the outputs (e.g., interviewees 4 & 7). Lastly, one NCP member argued that the EMN questionnaires at the basis of the EMN outputs are "*practical to the core*" or "*legal to the core*". The interviewee adds that



"I see that [our work] is actually targeted towards practitioners and policymakers [...] people who are very familiar with the lingo aspects or with the practice or with the monitored, so they are the source of the data [...]" (interviewee 14).

Nevertheless, there are ways in which academic research can be incorporated into the work of the EMN. For example, academic researchers or research institutions may be part of the NCP's national network (European Commission, n.d.b). NCPs also refer to academic publications in some EMN outputs such as the Annual Migration Report (e.g., interviewee 5). In addition, academics will be invited to EMN events and conferences (e.g., interviewee 14), and NCPs may collaborate with universities or research institutions or commission research on specific topics (e.g., interviewee 23). Finally, one NCP member mentioned that they occasionally share academic work among their network members to increase their visibility or share the results of research with the wider EMN network to increase the visibility of the research (interviewee 5).

In this way, the EMN can act as an **intermediary** between the academic community and other audiences. One NCP member, who has worked as a practitioner and in academia, highlighted the importance of finding proactive ways to bridge between academic research and practitioners and policymakers, and points out how the EMN can take on this role:

"Having this bridge or middleman [...] between academia and practitioners is very much needed and unfortunately, so far, there has not been an actor identified [...] who can fill in this gap. And I think that naturally the EMN really filled up this gap and can play a key role in furthering the dialogue between practitioners and academics. [...] It can be through getting to know the needs of academics [...] and the needs and state of play of practitioners, but also through joint conferences or discussions or round tables [...] or panel discussions, where those needs might be very well addressed" (interviewee 12).

In addition, another NCP member explained how the EMN can bridge between the academic and policy community. They do this, for instance, by providing data and statistics or other information collected by the EMN to researchers (interviewee 23). In addition, this interviewee stressed the important role the EMN can play in supporting academic research through its large network of contacts, for instance, to get in touch with research environments or government officials in other EMN Member Countries. In this regard, they also highlight the importance of easy-going exchange based on interpersonal connections, elaborated on in **Part 2.1**.

"It has been so valuable [for researchers] to contact people through the network [...] so that our researcher can, for example, get access to interview someone in that organization. We've just done that on some research we're doing on Ukraine, and I contacted other countries and they've been super helpful and because we're quite a tight network and meet regularly. So, I think there are a lot of informal aspects of the network that [are] really helpful" (interviewee 23).



Thus, when it comes to **brokering at the science-policy-practice interface**, the EMN generally acts more as a **linking agent** that can bring different communities together and enhance the exchange of ideas (e.g., Kislov et al., 2017). To date, there appear to be limits to the EMN's function as a knowledge broker at the science-policy-practice interface. Gluckman et al. (2021) write that successful knowledge brokerage between the scientific community and policy actors requires, among other things, a strategic and thorough synthesis of different sources of research evidence to provide policy actors with well-informed options for policy design. In addition, they argue that it involves an alignment between the information needs of the policy community and the research evidence synthesis provided.

While the EMN arguably takes on some of the characteristics described by Gluckman et al. (2021) through the **Ad-hoc query tool** (see **Text Box 1**), the network does not currently broker scientific knowledge by collecting, synthesizing, transforming, and disseminating scientific research. This limitation is also due to the working method of the EMN. As explained above, it is often based on answering common questionnaire templates within relatively short time delays, largely based on input from national network members, without drawing analytical conclusions or synthesizing scientific research.

2.3.1 Room for further development in engaging with academic research

While scientific research currently does not play a key role in the EMN outputs, a couple of interviewees suggested that it would be interesting to incorporate more academic research in the EMN outputs, which could also possibly enhance their quality (interviewees 8, 23, & 33; 14 to some extent). One participant, for instance, noted that it would add value if academic researchers collaborated with NCPs to provide more explanatory and analytical conclusions to the national reports. However, they stressed that this should be done at the national level to avoid critical comparisons between Member States, focusing rather on key issues that need more attention at the national level (interviewee 8). Another NCP member believed that it would provide added value to academically analyse the information provided by the NCPs at the EU level, as this would make the analysis sharper and to some extent more policy-relevant (interviewee 33). However, some doubted the feasibility of this, as the EMN's approach of neutrality without providing sharper analysis or recommendations has been pointed out as one factor that can facilitate engagement with stakeholders (see **Part 2.2**).

In addition, some respondents believed that the EMN could play a bigger role in **fostering collaboration** between **scientific researchers** and **practitioners or policymakers**, especially considering its strategic intermediary position (interviewees 12, 17, 23, & 34). For instance, one stakeholder suggested that it would be great for the EMN to foster collaboration between practitioners, who have expertise from the field, and academics "*who are sometimes far removed from real life*" to produce a useful, practice-oriented outcome



(interviewee 17). Another respondent, an academic, maintained that *"I think the dialogue between the European Migration Networks and academicians must be improved"*. While there is already a good relationship, they see value in strengthening the dialogue, collaboration, and exchange of points of view between academia and the EMN, which, according to them, could benefit policy design and discussions (interviewee 34).

In summary, to date the EMN's role as a knowledge broker between scientific research and policymakers and/or practitioners has mostly been limited to that of a facilitator, bringing together different communities through different events or establishing links between scientists and other stakeholders when needed. However, interviewees indicated that there is some interest in the EMN playing a stronger role in fostering collaboration between researchers, practitioners, and policymakers.

Part 3: Conclusion and Recommendations: EMN in general

Part 2 addressed the questions of how the EMN contributes to evidence engagement on migration and asylum, as well as what factors incentivize or hinder evidence engagement.

In general, the interview findings showed that:

- Interpersonal relationships and connections are key assets in evidence engagement within and through the EMN, facilitating rapid information exchange and meeting policymakers' needs.
- On the flipside of this, there can be somewhat limited visibility of the EMN and its tools for those not personally involved with the network, which can be an obstacle to evidence engagement.
- The EMN's 'neutral approach' of information mapping can facilitate evidence engagement and access to information from some actors, notably policy actors, especially on sensitive topics such as migration. However, this may marginalize some types of evidence, such as more critical voices.
- While the EMN can be an intermediary between academic researchers and other audiences, notably by acting as a linking agent, there appears to be some room and desire for future development in this regard.

The interviews suggested that the EMN can contribute to evidence engagement by partly assuming the role of knowledge broker between different actors. On the one hand, as pointed out in **Part 2.1** (more in **D1.3**), the EMN acts as a **linking agent**, contributing to networking and relationship building, or connecting those who need evidence with experts (e.g. Meyer, 2010, **Text Box 1**). This was described by interviewees as a clear added value and a key factor in evidence engagement.

In addition, as discussed in **Part 2.2**, the EMN can broker knowledge by taking on the position of an **information manager** that maps, formats, and disseminates evidence to inform knowledge users (e.g.



Kislov et al., 2017). The EMN's neutral approach can, in addition to facilitating access to data and engagement with some actors, make the network appear as a trustworthy knowledge broker with no agenda other than information exchange (Gluckman et al., 2021), which can be particularly important in a polarized field such as migration.

Finally, with regard to academic research, **Part 2.3** has shown that the EMN is mostly acting as a knowledge broker by linking academic researchers and other actors, or by disseminating academic work to its network members to increase visibility. However, due to the working methods and mandate of the EMN, there are limits to how much the network can broker academic research, especially when it comes to its outputs.

However, some interviewees expressed an interest in strengthening the engagement between the network and academia. The EMN could potentially enhance its position as a knowledge broker and contribute to greater evidence engagement by fostering collaboration between different communities or ensuring that research questions and evidence production are aligned with the needs of policymakers and practitioners (e.g. Bielak et al., 2008). This could be achieved, for example, by the EMN using its wide network of well-established contacts to gain insight into the needs of practitioners and policymakers and to help academic researchers address the right research questions. In this context, the EMN could also use its capacity and expertise in organizing different types of events to organize specific workshops between policy actors/practitioners and researchers to ensure that the communities can understand each other and their needs.

In addition, in order to facilitate relevant knowledge production, whenever a need for evidence arises among EMN network members that require a more in-depth, analytical perspective, it could be interesting to organize a "call for action" for researchers to research this topic, which could be supported by the NCPs (e.g. the NCP could play a supporting role in providing data and statistics as well as relevant contacts through its network, as mentioned by interviewee 23). However, there are also limitations to this approach, as policymakers often require very rapid input, which is difficult to reconcile with the timeframe of academic research (e.g. interviewees 8 and 11).

Based on this, the following recommendations are proposed:

Recommendations for the EMN in general

1. Cooperate with academic researchers to produce policy and practice-relevant outputs

- The EMN could seek to engage with academic researchers at the national level to co-create relevant policy outputs. By leveraging the EMN's wide network and insights into policymakers and practitioners' information needs, its network of stakeholders across Member States, and its data-



gathering capabilities the EMN could assist researchers in defining relevant research questions and creating timely, policy and practice-relevant research (i.e. by supporting the researchers with data or access to stakeholders through its network, as mentioned by interviewee 23).

- This could, for instance, be achieved by commissioning research through a "call for action" whenever policy needs arise that would benefit from deeper analysis.

2. Continue networking and outreach:

- The EMN could prioritize outreach work and networking, as these have been highlighted to be key assets of the EMN in enhancing evidence engagement.
- Outreach and networking could also increase the network's visibility among stakeholders.
- A 'good practice' for outreach, identified through the interviews, is for the NCPs to hold annual meetings to introduce the EMN and its resources to newly arrived policy officers. This includes presentations from experienced members on their use of the network, such as their experiences with Ad-hoc queries (interviewee 21).



Part 4: Evidence Engagement and Evidence Needs in the EMN Platform on Statelessness

4.1 Introduction to statelessness

The **1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons** defines a stateless person as a “person who is not considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law” ([UN Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, 1954](#)). Statelessness is a legal anomaly that denies individuals to “legally exist” ([European Network on Statelessness, n.d.](#)). Stateless individuals face difficulties in accessing fundamental rights, including human, civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights ([EMN, 2023](#)). This often results in prolonged marginalization and discrimination, with significant challenges such as lack of access to healthcare, education, property ownership, legal employment, marriage, or banking services (European Network on Statelessness, n.d.; EMN, 2023).

Common causes of statelessness include state succession, discriminatory nationality laws, arbitrary deprivation of nationality, forced displacement, migration, and difficulties in obtaining civil registration documents like birth certificates (European Network on Statelessness, n.d.; EMN, 2023). In the EU, statelessness often stems from the dissolution of the Soviet Union or Yugoslavia, where redrawn borders left individuals without nationality. Minority groups, such as Romani, face barriers in acquiring documents to confirm their nationality. In addition, thousands of children are estimated to be born stateless in Europe annually due to inadequate safeguards, and migrants or asylum seekers sometimes arrive without nationality, getting stuck in legal limbo because they are missing the means to prove their statelessness (European Network on Statelessness, n.d.).

The UNHCR estimated approximately 400,000 stateless individuals and people with undetermined nationality in Europe and Norway at the end of 2018. However, there is no reliable way of knowing, as not all individuals are reflected in the official statistics of EU Member States (EMN, 2023).

4.2 The EMN Platform on Statelessness

In 2015, the issue of statelessness gained political attention due to the increase in the number of stateless individuals in Europe during the so-called migration crisis. As a result, addressing statelessness became a priority during the Luxembourgish Presidency of the European Union in 2015 (EMN, 2018).

The Justice and Home Affairs Council Conclusion of the 4th December 2015 tasked the EMN with the creation of a platform for exchanging good practices between Member States to address the complex issue of statelessness in the European Union (EMN, 2023), resulting in the establishment of the EMN Platform on Statelessness in May 2016 under the joint coordination of the EMN LU NCP and the European Commission (EMN, 2018). The **objectives** of the Platform include raising awareness of the issue of statelessness and fostering dialogue between all relevant stakeholders in the field with the intention to **1)** reduce the number of stateless people, **2)** enhance their protection, **3)** reduce the risk of discrimination (EMN, 2018).



What the Platform does:

Publications on statelessness: The platform collects and analyses information to determine the state of play on statelessness via the EMN Ad-hoc query system that are disseminated as Informs. So far, the following Informs have been published:

- EMN Inform: Statelessness in the EU (2016)
- EMN Inform: Statelessness in the European Union (2020)
- EMN Inform: Measuring Progress to address statelessness in the EU and Georgia (2021)
- EMN Inform: Statelessness in the European Union, Norway, and Georgia (2023)

Events and Conferences:

The Platform organizes and participates in a variety of events and conferences on statelessness, bringing together representatives of international organizations, EU institutions, and national governments, as well as NGOs and academics. A non-exhaustive list of events organized by the Platform on Statelessness include:

- EMN LU Conference "Tackling Statelessness: Exchange of Experiences and Good Practices" (Luxembourg, April 15, 2016)
- EMN Platform on Statelessness, UNHCR, and ENS joint conference ["Addressing Statelessness in the European Union: One year on from the adoption of European Council Conclusions"](#) (Brussels, January 18, 2017)
- **EMN Statelessness Retreat: three-day intensive training, awareness raising, and capacity building on statelessness (Athens, July 4-6, 2018)**
- EMN LU & EMN IE joint Technical Meeting "Exploring the interrelationship between recognition of statelessness, residence permits, an associated rights in EU Member States and Norway" (Dublin, May 7, 2019)
- EMN EE & EMN LU joint Technical Meeting "Children's Rights to Nationality" (Tallinn, December 7, 2022).
- EMN LU & Council of Europe joint Technical Meeting "Access to Nationality of Stateless persons" (Luxembourg, June 22, 2023).
- EMN LU & Council of Europe joint Multistakeholder Meeting "Statelessness and Children" (Luxembourg, June 6, 2024).

4.3 Evidence needs and engagement in the Platform on Statelessness



Given the multiple objectives of the Platform and the different approaches to achieving them, ranging from the production of outputs on statelessness to the organization of events and trainings, it is relevant to identify the evidence needs and gaps of Platform participants, as well as the factors that incentivize evidence engagement. Therefore, the following sections are addressed:

- *What are evidence needs and gaps in knowledge expressed by stakeholders?*
- *How does the Platform contribute to evidence engagement on statelessness?*

4.3.1 Evidence Needs in the Platform on Statelessness

To begin with, this section addresses the question of what evidence needs and gaps in knowledge remain around statelessness. It has been observed that there was no uniformity in the **gaps in knowledge and evidence** expressed by interview participants. A key knowledge gap frequently mentioned is reliable data on the number of stateless people in Europe (interviewees 1, 10 & 13). One challenge regarding this is that there is no harmonized way of determining statelessness across EU Member States, for instance, due to diverging definitions of statelessness (interviewees 1, 10 & 13). A further gap in knowledge that was identified was understanding how statelessness determination procedures work in practice, especially during the asylum procedure. Knowledge of this is largely based on desk research, however, actors miss insights into the practical aspects of it (interviewee 1).

A recurrent theme across the majority of interviews was a predominant interest in **practical insights** as opposed to more theoretical academic work. For instance, when asked what they would commission research on regarding statelessness, many responded with very practical information needs (interviewees 1, 2, 10, 11, & 15). One NCP member, for example, stated that:

***"Well, I'd focus on practical things [...] for example, what are [...] practical experiences with establishing [...] the burden of proof, [...] the practical constraints that are there at proving that somebody is stateless [...]. The practical side. I mean, I think that's the most important thing. [...] You could have potential theories about vulnerability and psychological trauma and so on and so forth. We know all this. What we're looking for here is practically to encourage the establishment of statelessness determination procedures. So, it's a very nuts and bolts thing."** (interviewee 10)*

Another interviewee stated that academic research is relevant if it has a "pragmatical" and "technical approach" that can be applied in practice, however, if academic researchers "begin talking about the philosophy of statelessness, that will not help anybody" (interviewee 13). However, this interviewee added that they would be interested in research on the mental health impacts of statelessness, but according to



them, they were not able to identify academics working on this yet. Thus, interview data revealed that evidence needs are largely practical and pragmatic, with less interest in theoretical insights.

The role of expert knowledge

The importance of practical insights from the field was also highlighted regarding the **Platform on Statelessness events**. One interviewee explained, for instance, that inviting academics to the Platform events provides an added value to the conference, for instance, as keynote speakers, because it *"allows practitioners to know what the academic research has said"*, however, practitioner's knowledge is preferred in the technical discussions (interviewee 13).

Similarly, another interviewee stated that while their organization is working closely with academics, which can be beneficial, it depends on how the research is done, and that *"sometimes academics are not in the field, and this is also sometimes very problematic"*. While they agree that academics produce important knowledge on statelessness and bring valuable insights, *"it's not the same thing [as practitioners' expertise]"*. In addition, the knowledge of practitioners is seen as more relevant when it comes to identifying challenges and good practices in the field, while the knowledge of academic researchers comes in at the next step to work on issues related to standard setting and monitoring. Nevertheless, this respondent expressed interest in academic researchers participating in future events (interviewee 15).

In addition, it has been mentioned that receiving insights on good practices and challenges from the field can also be easier without academic researchers around, as interviews revealed some **mistrust towards academic researchers**, which can be a hurdle for engagement. For instance, interviewee 15 mentioned that

"This kind of informal platform [for] sharing of experience between technical experts is sometimes [...] easier for them to speak [...] out with one of their colleagues as well for other colleagues than to say it out loud in front of academics, because you never know how academics are going to use it" (interviewee 15).

Similarly, one practitioner working on statelessness explains that they do fully trust academics working on statelessness, particularly because they worry about their intentions and potential Russian propaganda (interviewee 16).

To sum up, although the value of academic research was recognized by interviewees, the findings suggest that evidence needs are quite practically driven by an interest in insights from the field. This resonates with research showing that academic research no longer holds the dominant position in knowledge production, with the expertise of practitioners and other experts becoming increasingly influential (Natter & Welfens, 2024).



4.3.2 Evidence Engagement in the Platform on Statelessness

While the previous section examined evidence needs expressed by the Platform participants, this section turns to evidence engagement by analysing how **the EMN contributes to evidence engagement on statelessness**. Firstly, the Platform **raises awareness** on this issue, among others through its events and outputs. Secondly, the Platform can, together with partners such as the Council of Europe, efficiently act as a sort of **knowledge broker** between practitioners and policy actors. This will be elaborated in the following, illustrated through the example of the most recent joint **EMN and Council of Europe Multistakeholder Meeting: “Children in Statelessness”**, which was held on the 6th of June 2024 in Luxembourg.

The Platform of Statelessness and awareness raising

A key factor distinguishing the Platform from the rest of the EMN is that its agenda goes beyond information mapping and sharing. Specifically, it includes raising awareness about statelessness and reducing statelessness and related discrimination in Europe (interviewees 10 & 13; EMN, 2018). The Platform can enhance evidence engagement at the policy level by raising awareness of this issue (interviewees 13 & 15), which is crucial, since statelessness is not a political priority, making it challenging to place on the political agenda (interviewees 11, 13, & 15).

Awareness raising can be achieved through Platform events (interviewees 1, 13, & 15) or by disseminating Informs (interviewees 13 & 15). For example, one interviewee mentioned that the EMN Informs on statelessness, were used by their organization to identify key issues to be brought to the attention of governments in Member States (interviewee 15).

In addition, the Platform collaborates with various international partners, including the Council of Europe, UNICEF, UNHCR, and the European Network on Statelessness (ENS), to enhance its capacity for raising awareness and strengthening its impact (interviewees 13 & 15; EMN, 2018). Interviewed members of international organizations also stated that cooperation with the Platform is valuable for their own advocacy efforts (interviewees 1 & 15). For example, one participant emphasized that the Platform can be a crucial partner in advocacy and awareness-raising. Given that the Platform is driven by Member States and with NCPs often maintaining close relationships with governments, it can play a significant role in gathering information and carrying out advocacy work on issues of statelessness with national authorities (interviewee 1). Additionally, actors mentioned that participating in Platform events enhances their awareness-raising capabilities by increasing their organizations' visibility in the field (interviewee 15) and by strengthening their networks (interviewee 1).



One good practice of awareness raising identified by interviewees was to **invite speakers with lived experience** of statelessness to the events, which served as a reminder to policymakers of the real struggles that statelessness individuals face (interviewees 1, 9, 13, & 15). In this context, interviewee 15 mentioned that it would be a good idea to include more stateless people in events to raise awareness with policymakers, as it can serve as a real reminder of what is at stake.

To sum up, the Platform on Statelessness has the potential to contribute to evidence engagement by drawing attention to the issue of statelessness. Participants considered this to be of particular importance, given that statelessness is not a priority on the political agenda (interviewees 11, 13, & 15), and "*stateless individuals are completely forgotten within the system*" (interviewee 15).

The Platform as a knowledge broker

Besides the promotion of awareness, the Platform assumes the role of knowledge broker, thereby facilitating evidence engagement on statelessness. This is achieved, for instance, through the EMN Informs on statelessness. In this context, interviewee 15 mentioned that the EMN informs have been very instructive for actors to identify gaps and challenges around statelessness, and to figure out where to turn one's attention to. Thus, similarly to what has been discussed in **Part 2.2**, the Platform brokers knowledge by acting as an **information manager** that collects, synthesizes, identifies gaps, and disseminates information in an accessible format for actors in need of information (e.g. Kislov et al., 2017).

In addition, by collaborating with actors such as the Council of Europe, the Platform can bring evidence from practitioners working in the field on statelessness to the policy level. The latter will be exemplified through the case of the EMN and COE **Multistakeholder Meeting: "Children in Statelessness"** held on the 6th of June 2024 in Luxembourg.

The **EMN and the COE jointly act as knowledge brokers** by bringing insights from experts to the policy level through the following approach: first, the EMN and the COE organize technical meetings on statelessness, which are described to be not meant to be public but aim for a "*free exchange of ideas between practitioners, be they in the NGO sector or in the government sector*" (interviewee 10, echoed by interviewee 13).

These offer a space for networking, exchanging, and fostering personal interactions between actors in the field, which has been pointed out as highly valuable by participants (interviewees 1, 13, 15, & 16). In this context, interviewees pointed out that personal interactions at such events facilitate information sharing, especially on sensitive issues such as statelessness, by allowing participants to discuss them more freely (interviewees 13, 15, & 16). According to one stakeholder, for instance, while there is a tendency to only share superficial and vague information on cases and practices due to data protection and sensitivities around the subject, personal, face-to-face interactions can help circumvent this, and enable them to share information that they would, for instance, not be willing to share via email.



"I think in the future, from my point of view [...] if you want to know the real situation or the real deal, you need to go personally and ask it" [...] if you want to know the real answer you need to have the connection" (interviewee 16).

Therefore, in line with what has been found for the EMN in general (**see Part 2.1**), the Platform can foster knowledge exchange by bringing actors together, for instance by incentivizing them to participate in network meetings and activities (Soares, 2024). Thereby, the Platform is also taking on the role of a knowledge broker that acts as a sort of **linking agent** and engages in information exchange and relationship building (Knight & Lyall, 2013; Meyer, 2010). The personal relationships fostered through the events facilitate evidence engagement, as they enable participants to exchange more freely, which is particularly relevant considering that statelessness is a *"delicate issue in some Member States"* (11), which complicates data-sharing efforts (interviewees 1, 10, 15, & 16).

In addition, the events **do not necessarily target high-level officials** (interviewees 13 & 15), which has been identified as a fruitful approach by interviewees, mainly for two reasons. On the one hand, policymakers are often not familiar with the specificities and technical details, and challenges related to statelessness, making an exchange with them less productive (interviewees 13, 15, & 16). On the other hand, discussions are said to be more productive if they are limited to practitioners only, as they can be reluctant to share information and challenges with policymakers or academic researchers in the room (interviewees 15 & 16), while policymakers themselves can also be reluctant to reveal any challenges or difficulties that their country may be facing (interviewees 15 & 16, reiterated by 31). Therefore, the events create an opportunity for a rich exchange of practical insights on the expert level (interviewees 10, 13, & 15). This has been identified to really allow practitioners to exchange on the challenges and best practices in the field, as well as to gather these insights (interviewee 15).

Next, in a second step, the Council of Europe, as well as the Platform, bring the evidence gathered at the event to the policy level, for instance through the Committee on Legal Cooperation (CDCJ) (interviewee 15). This is achieved, for example, through a rapporteur of the Platform events that provides a summary of the practical insights gathered to the policymakers (interviewee 15). Another benefit of this approach, according to one interviewee, is that issues related to statelessness are sometimes *"really policy problems"* and very sensitive topics for Member States to discuss, which is why this approach can help reduce tensions around the issue (interviewee 15).

Lastly, while the Council of Europe has the policy connection, it was stressed how valuable it is for them to get *"information on the real practices in the field"* through the EMN Platform and its wide network of practitioners (interviewee 15). This is information that the COE does not always receive, but that is crucial to monitor statelessness and determine which issues to bring up at the policy level (interviewee 15). Thus, the EMN and the COE can together collect and translate knowledge emerging from the field to the policy level, thereby arguably enhancing evidence engagement and acting as a type of knowledge broker.



In conclusion, the findings suggest that the Platform and the Council can jointly act as sort of knowledge brokers. On the one hand, by organizing events, they can act as linking agents between experts working on statelessness, thereby facilitating the flow of information and the exchange of ideas (e.g. Kislov et al., 2017). On the other hand, they can serve as crucial intermediaries between experts specializing in the field, who have deep and technical insights, and policymakers, who need expert evidence to inform decision-making processes. The expert knowledge is gathered by the EMN and COE and transformed into easily understandable evidence that is presented to policymakers. However, it was also noted that the Platform's impact on policymaking remains limited, beyond raising awareness and showcasing good practices in the hope that Member States will be inspired, as statelessness is not an EU competence and the EMN's mandate on statelessness is limited to data collection and exchange (interviewee 11).

Part 5: Conclusion and Recommendations: EMN Platform on Statelessness

Part 4 addressed the questions of

- *What are evidence needs and gaps in knowledge expressed by stakeholders?*
- *How does the Platform contribute to evidence engagement on statelessness?*

Interview findings showed that **evidence needs** and **gaps in knowledge** were not uniform across stakeholders. However, interviewees expressed a certain need for expert knowledge over, for instance, theoretical academic insights on statelessness. In addition, one gap in knowledge identified in the interviews is the need to have better data on the number of stateless people residing in Europe, which would require, among others, to have standardized statelessness determination procedures in Member States. Lastly, regarding evidence needs, a slight gap between academic research and practice could be identified, which appears to be based on the perception that academic research is not always as relevant to advance the efforts of actors working in the field.

In terms of **evidence engagement**, the Platform can, oftentimes in collaboration with other stakeholders, raise awareness of the issue of statelessness, which is an issue that is frequently under politicians' radar. In addition, in line with what has been found for the EMN in general, the Platform acts as a knowledge broker, facilitating information exchange by collecting, synthesizing, and disseminating information on statelessness, as well as providing a platform for exchange and networking among stakeholders (e.g., Kislov et al., 2017). Moreover, interviews showed that the EMN, in cooperation with actors such as the Council of Europe, can bridge the gap between experts in the field and policymakers by transferring knowledge between the two communities. This seems to be a promising approach to bringing evidence to the policy level.



Given that academic research was perceived by some interviewees as less relevant evidence on statelessness than practitioners' expertise, the Platform is arguably in a strong position to foster greater collaboration between practitioners and academic researchers (see **Part 2.3**) and facilitate the production of relevant, practical research on statelessness.

For instance, by leveraging its network of connections and good insights from experts working in the field, the EMN could help academic researchers understand the needs and interests of policymakers and practitioners. This could arguably lead to aligning the research questions with evidence needs and contribute to the production of more relevant research for those working on statelessness (e.g. Bielak et al., 2008). In addition, knowledge brokers can positively impact evidence uptake by involving target audiences in the development of research questions, giving a sense of ownership in the outcome (Bielak et al., 2008). Fostering collaboration between researchers and policymakers/practitioners is also known to facilitate evidence use (Oliver et al., 2014). Thus, the Platform could use its extensive expertise in organizing events and workshops to facilitate an interactive discourse between academics, practitioners, and policymakers. This could provide an opportunity to exchange their needs and interests, further contributing to aligning research production and needs. Finally, the Platform could strengthen its position as an intermediary by systematically involving academic researchers in Platform events to foster relationship-building between the academic research community and practitioners/policymakers. This could have a positive impact on research evidence uptake by, as personal contacts and relationships play a major role in evidence use (Oliver et al., 2014).

Based on this, the following recommendations are proposed:

Recommendations on the Platform on Statelessness

4) Continue knowledge brokering between different communities.

- Ensuring that all voices, in particular those with lived experiences of statelessness, are represented and contribute to discussions. This enriches the dialogue and raises awareness of the reality of those most impacted by statelessness.

5) Systematic inclusion of academic researchers at events

- Include academic researchers systematically in events, allowing them to build relationships with policymakers and practitioners, which can enhance evidence uptake (Oliver et al., 2014). This could also increase trust between practitioners and researchers.
- Organization of an interactive panel between practitioners and academics at events. For instance, researchers and/or academics could present their research to practitioners, receiving feedback from the latter on its relevance for those working in the field. Practitioners could also raise issues



and contribute to the development of relevant research questions. These interactions could help bridge the gap between research and practice. In addition, research shows that collaboration increases evidence uptake, particularly when facilitated by knowledge brokers who foster dialogue between these communities (Godfrey, Funke, & Mbizvo, 2010, citing Bialek et al., 2008).

6) Commission relevant research in collaboration with the Platform

- Leveraging the Platform's understanding of practitioners' needs to guide the focus on the research. This could also be gathered from the above-mentioned interactive panels between practitioners and academics.
- The Platform can contribute its excellent data collection capabilities and access to official information, which academic researchers may lack. For instance, information can be gathered through Ad-hoc queries.
- Commissioned research could, for instance, analyse statelessness determination procedures, which was identified as a knowledge gap by interviewees. This research can support the development of a common approach among Member States to determine statelessness at the national level.

Facilitating more interaction between academic research and policymakers/practitioners, as well as contributing directly to the production of more practice-relevant research, would arguably allow the Platform to strengthen its knowledge brokering position and, therefore, contribute to evidence engagement, notably in relation to research evidence.

Part 6: Way Forward

This report explored how the EMN and the Platform contribute to evidence engagement, revealing that both function as sort of knowledge brokers between the 'users' and 'producers' of evidence. Their role is twofold: first, as linking agents, they facilitate connections between stakeholders, either through structured channels or by rapidly linking those in need of evidence with experts on an ad hoc basis—an aspect highlighted as a key strength of the EMN. Second, they broker knowledge by identifying, synthesizing, and disseminating migration-related information in accessible formats for their target audiences. However, due to the EMN's working methods and mandate, the scope of evidence included in these outputs remains somewhat constrained, limiting its impact at the science-policy-practitioner interface compared to other actors in the field.

While this report introduces the concept of knowledge brokerage, further research is needed to refine the understanding of the EMN's specific role in this process. Future studies could examine the types of



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knowledge brokered through its various tools and how stakeholders perceive its effectiveness. Additionally, investigating which actors benefit most from the EMN's brokered knowledge, how effectively the network fosters evidence uptake in policymaking, and the extent to which its outputs influence decision-making could provide valuable insights.

Given that knowledge brokering appears to be a promising approach to increasing evidence uptake and considering the EMN's extensive network dedicated to facilitating information exchange, further research on optimizing its role as a knowledge broker could be highly beneficial. Strengthening this function could help bridge the gap between research and policy more effectively, ultimately contributing to more informed and evidence-based decision-making on issues related to migration and statelessness.



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