



Toolkit for Evidence-Informed Policymaking in Migrant Integration

Section 6 Engaging Stakeholders in Evidence- Informed Integration Policymaking

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The full toolkit can be found at:
www.migrationpolicy.org/research/toolkit-evidence-policymaking



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SPRING is a EU-funded project focusing on the integration of recently arrived migrants in the context of the large-scale arrivals of refugees and other migrants since 2014. It aims to develop a toolbox to improve the innovation, effectiveness and sustainability of the work done by Europe's integration stakeholders at national, regional and local levels. The project mobilises significant research, networks and communications capacity and gathers, summarises and shares the best available research and evidence on the effectiveness, innovation, transferability, sustainability and evaluation methods for integration policies and practice.

The SPRING Platform integrationpractices.eu is the main hub to make the project results available to practitioners as well as to the general public.

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6. Engaging Stakeholders in Evidence-Informed Integration Policymaking

Key takeaways

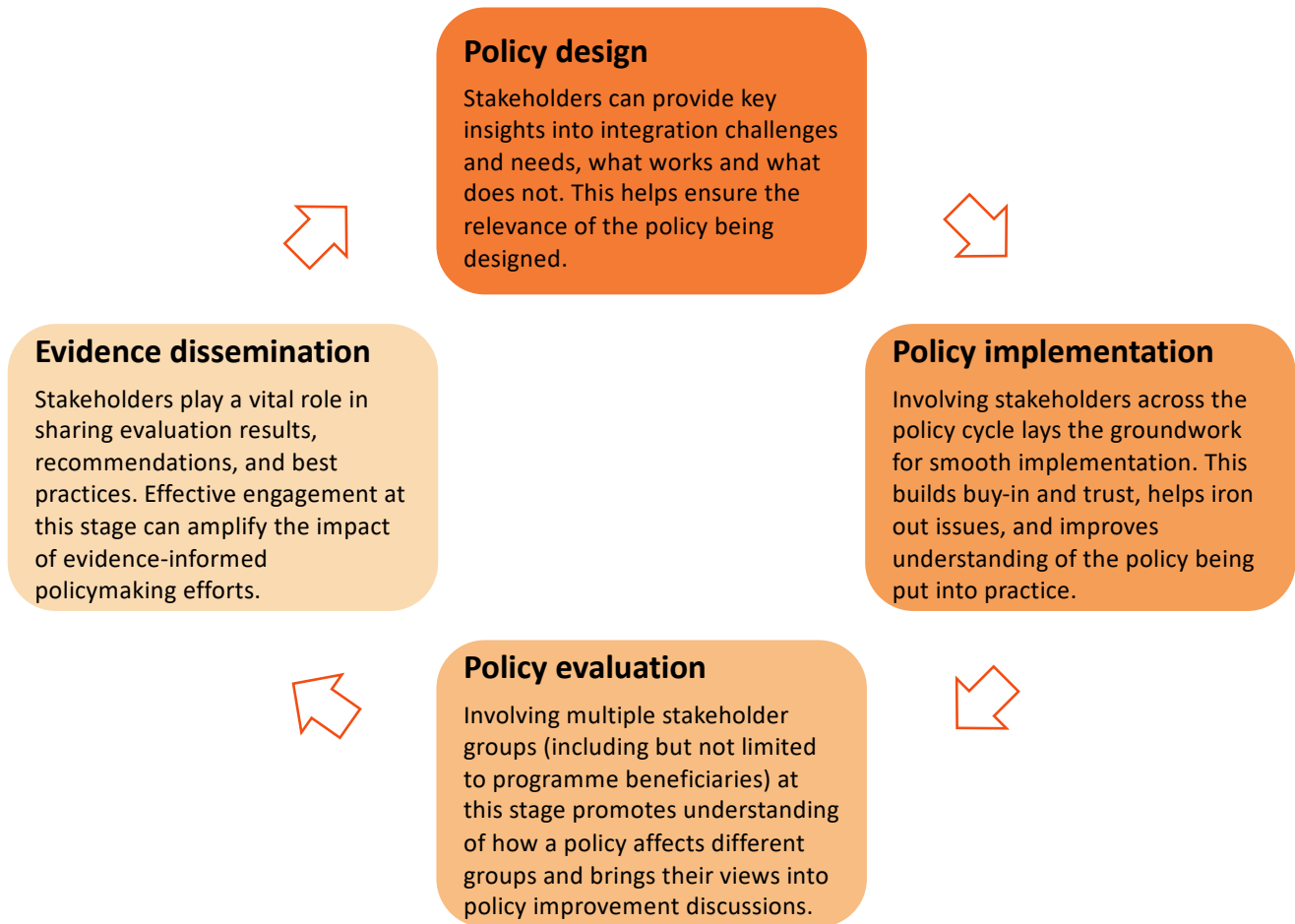
- ★ Stakeholder inclusion can have a wide range of benefits. It can help policymakers learn about and more effectively address migrants’ and refugees’ needs, ensure policy recommendations match the reality on the ground, and facilitate effective policy implementation by building trust and transparency between actors. Meaningful involvement also fosters stakeholders’ greater ownership over and commitment to a project, and it supports the collection, sharing, and use of evaluation results.
- ★ Stakeholder mapping is a good starting point. It can help you identify who should be involved in the policy cycle, determine how much and how to engage, and understand what considerations should be built into the process (including expectations management).
- ★ Diversify your key stakeholders. Those selected for engagement should include not only policymakers and researchers but also programme beneficiaries (migrants and refugees) and practitioners. Doing so can give you access to a broader range of (lived) experiences and expertise, more buy-in on policies, a wider set of funding opportunities, and a broader network for evidence dissemination, all of which contribute to better policies and better policy outcomes.
- ★ Stakeholder engagement should be more than a box-ticking exercise. Key stakeholders should be involved in a meaningful way throughout the entire policy cycle. This can be achieved by setting clear guidelines on how input from stakeholders will be used and by developing modes of engagement that go beyond simply inviting stakeholders to provide information.

A variety of stakeholders, both organisations and individuals, have a significant and specific stake in any given policy and its outcomes. Engaging these stakeholders effectively can contribute to the improved use of evidence at each stage of the policymaking cycle (see Figure 6.1). All too often, however, policymakers do not involve stakeholders when designing, implementing, and evaluating policies and when disseminating the evidence gathered.

In this section, you will learn...

- what the benefits are of stakeholder involvement and how it can make migrant integration policies more effective;
- why a variety of stakeholders should be involved in the policy cycle;
- who should be considered a key stakeholder; and
- what steps you can take to promote stakeholder involvement.

FIGURE 6.1
The importance of stakeholder involvement throughout the policy cycle



6.1 Why invest in stakeholder engagement?

Involving stakeholders throughout the evidence-informed policy cycle is essential to ensure the effectiveness and relevance of migrant integration policies. Stakeholder engagement throughout the policymaking cycle contributes to:³⁴

- Facilitating a deeper and more holistic understanding of the needs and experiences of the population a policy targets (such as migrants and refugees), which can be used to improve the policy’s design, implementation, and evaluation as well as dissemination of evidence collected about it.
- Ensuring that new policies or recommendations to improve existing ones match the reality on the ground by taking into account factors such as service provider capacity, resources, and obstacles; this makes it easier to translate policies and recommendations from paper into practice.
- Increasing the legitimacy of policies, as it helps build broader consensus around them and earn stakeholder buy-in.
- Strengthen implementation of new policies by building trust and transparency between actors, and fostering greater ownership over and commitment to the process among engaged stakeholders.
- Promoting the uptake of recommendations and better dissemination of evidence across different audiences, which can amplify the impact of evidence-informed policymaking.

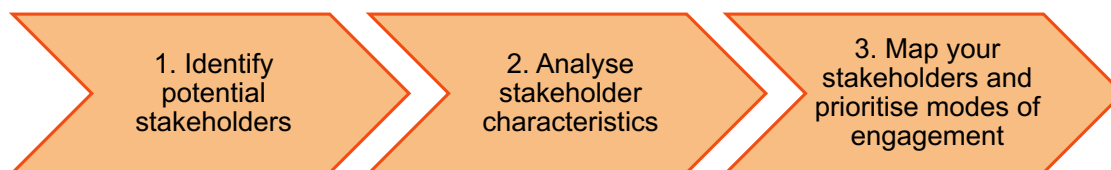
6.2 Identifying your key stakeholders

So stakeholder engagement is important, but which actors should be involved? To answer this question, you can conduct a **stakeholder mapping**. This activity facilitates the identification of relevant stakeholders who should be involved in the policy cycle and how. It will help you decide how much is the right amount of engagement, what modes of communication will work best, and what other factors it is important to consider when planning this process (such as the need to manage stakeholders’ expectations about what their role will be).

A stakeholder mapping consists of the three steps shown in Figure 6.2. You can use the questions that follow to begin your own stakeholder mapping.

FIGURE 6.2

Stakeholder mapping steps



34 Brian W. Head, ‘Reconsidering Evidence-Based Policy: Key Issues and Challenges’, *Policy and Society* 29, no. 2 (May 1, 2010): 77–94.

Step 1. Identify potential stakeholders

To identify the potential stakeholders for a policy or project, consider:

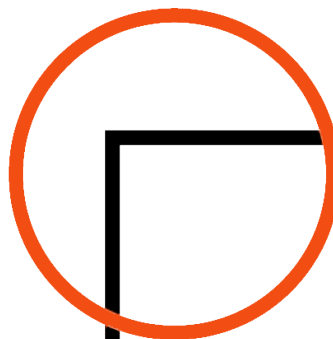
Who will be affected by the policy?

Who will be involved in implementing the policy?

Who will influence the policy's design, implementation, evaluation, or evidence dissemination process?

Who has a positive interest in the development of the policy and who may oppose it?

Who may (fully or partially) fund the policy?



Step 2. Analyse stakeholder characteristics

Next, you will need to develop a better understanding of what perspective each of these potential stakeholders brings to the policymaking process. This involves analysing stakeholders’ profiles and potential roles. Based on your answers to the question above, consider:

How would you group the organisations and individuals you have identified into different categories? Are there any gaps in your list of potential stakeholders (e.g., practitioners or beneficiaries of the policy)?

How much do you think each stakeholder might be willing to contribute or commit to engaging with the policy cycle?

How much influence do these stakeholders have on different parts of the policy cycle?

What purpose should engagement with each stakeholder have? And how should they be involved in the policy cycle?



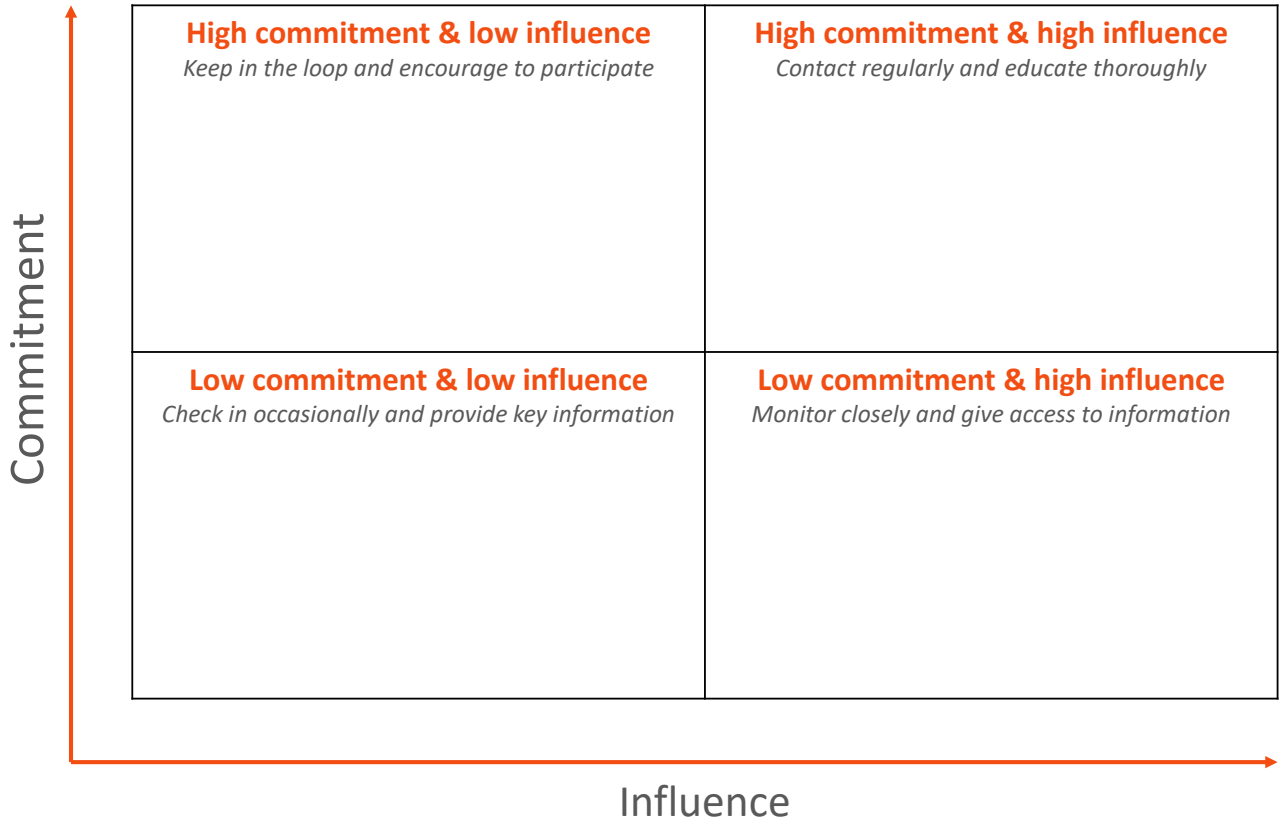
Step 3. Map your stakeholders and prioritise modes of engagement

Finally, you may find it helpful to create a visual map that organises the stakeholders you have identified based on their commitment to and influence in the policymaking process. This exercise can help you decide how to engage with different stakeholders.

You can use your answers from Step 2 to sort your different potential stakeholders into the categories in the chart below in Figure 6.3.

FIGURE 6.3

Stakeholder mapping template



Want to learn more about stakeholder mapping? Check out:

- ★ The World Health Organisation’s [Stakeholder Mapping Guide](#) walks you through the process in easy steps and provides a more detailed stakeholder mapping grid than the template above.
- ★ The article [Involving and Engaging Stakeholders in Perception Studies](#) provides an example of how stakeholder mapping was used in the PERCEPTIONS project, which analysed how Europe and the European Union are seen by people who have immigrated or intend to immigrate there.

6.3 Setting up a stakeholder engagement plan

The best way to engage and communicate with stakeholders will depend on the type of stakeholder, their interest in the policy, and the purpose of the engagement. Creating a stakeholder engagement plan, based on the stakeholder mapping exercise in the Section 6.2, can help you to determine how to engage key stakeholders throughout the policy cycle. Promoting and coordinating stakeholder engagement can be resource intensive, but creating a plan can help you do this in the most effective way while taking resource constraints into account.

To kickstart the planning process, it can be helpful to organise the information you gathered in the stakeholder mapping into a table like the one below. Section 6.4 discusses different modes of engagement and may help you answer some of these questions.

TABLE 6.1
Key questions for a stakeholder engagement plan

Type of stakeholder	What level of commitment & influence do they have?	What type of information should be shared?	What is the best mode of engagement?	What is the ideal frequency of engagement?



Want to learn more about creating a stakeholder engagement plan? Check out:

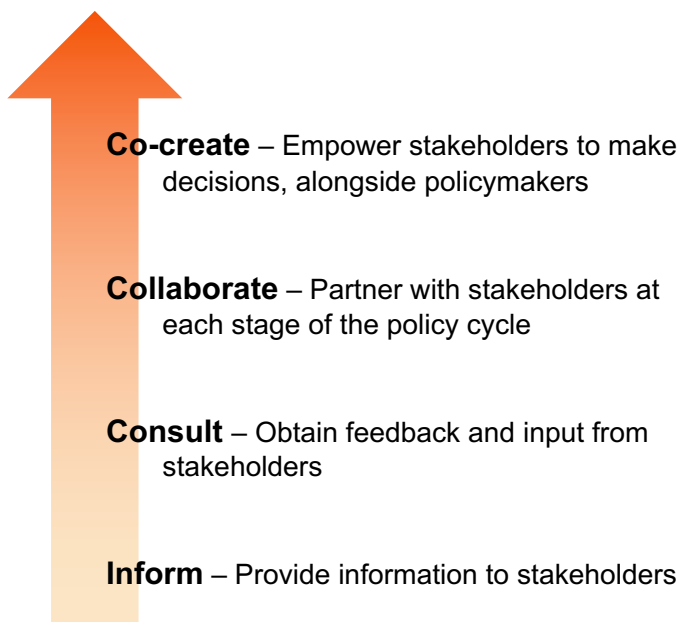
- ★ The World Bank’s [stakeholder engagement guidance](#) walks users through each step of the stakeholder mapping process and helps them create an engagement plan by using guiding questions.
- ★ The UK National Health Service’s [Stakeholder Engagement Strategy Template](#) asks users to consider who their stakeholders are, what current engagement is like, and what it should look like going forward.
- ★ The working paper [Engaging Communities of Practice with a Participative Approach](#), published by the SPRING Consortium, offers examples of how these tools can be applied in the integration field.

6.4 Different models of stakeholder engagement

Engagement of key stakeholders occurs at the different stages of the policy cycle and for different purposes (see Figure 6.1), depending on the expected level of engagement (see Figure 6.4). Policymakers should seek to involve stakeholders as much as possible throughout the cycle to reap the full benefits of stakeholder engagement. This section explores several models and examples of stakeholder engagement from the field of migrant integration.

FIGURE 6.4

Level of stakeholder engagement



Stakeholder consultation through workshops

Consultations give stakeholders the opportunity to share input and feedback, whether to support identification of community needs, to understand how they view the impact of a specific policy, or even to gauge how they could further contribute to its implementation. Continued and structured dialogue can build trust, lead to better results, and ensure ownership over and acceptance of the policy.³⁵ To reap these benefits, this engagement generally works best when it starts early in the policy cycle (i.e., during the design stage).³⁶ It is also good practice to explain to stakeholders how their input will be used and to follow up with them after receiving the input, as this can help build trust and buy-in in the process.

BOX 6.1

Case study: The Quality Sponsorship Network's multistakeholder transnational workshops

The Quality Sponsorship Network (QSN), a project by the SHARE Network, brings together actors running community sponsorship programmes for refugees in Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom, with the goal of supporting pilot and ad hoc sponsorship initiatives and turning them into sustainable, community-driven programmes. Its work is co-funded by the European Union's Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund (AMIF) and coordinated by the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) Europe.

QSN uses a variety of strategies to foreground multistakeholder approaches and grassroots voices at the EU level, including organising transnational workshops. These workshops bring relevant stakeholders together to discuss cross-country challenges and identify best practices to address them, while accounting for contextual differences. In addition, these workshops make it possible to capture rich, community-level evidence in a short amount of time.

Beyond the workshops, the SHARE Network also promotes the engagement of newcomers and local actors in creating, implementing, and evaluating integration policies at the local, national, and EU level through a variety of methods, including the Refugee Sponsorship Mobilisation Platform. The SHARE Network is thus an excellent example of how meaningful stakeholder engagement, pursued using different strategies, can be achieved in the field of migrant integration.

Sources: Share Network, '[Participation: Refugees and Local Actors](#)', accessed 20 December 2022; Share Network, '[Share Refugee Advisor Programme for Community Sponsorship](#)', accessed 15 January 2023; Share Network, '[Refugee Sponsorship Mobilisation Platform](#)', accessed 15 January 2023.

35 Daria Huss, '[The Migration Policy Cycle: Making the Case for Evidence-Informed and Inclusive Policy-Making](#)', International Centre for Migration Policy Development, 17 October 2019.

36 Reidar Kvam, '[Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement: A Joint Publication of the Multilateral Financial Institutions Group on Environmental and Social Standards](#)' (Washington, DC: Inter-American Development Bank, 2019).

Systematic and high-level collaboration through advisory groups

Advisory groups can be an effective mode of collaboration and means of ensuring key stakeholders have a say in decisionmaking processes. Setting up an advisory group requires carefully selecting a few stakeholders to participate and to work closely with a project’s managers and lead decisionmakers. Typically, such groups are made up of external stakeholders who represent a broad variety of actors, such as experienced practitioners, academic experts, representatives of migrant and refugee groups with lived experience, and others capable of providing valuable insights at different stages of the policy cycle. Advisory groups should ideally be established at the beginning of the project or policy cycle to ensure members have a chance to offer suggestions and recommendations to improve its design. The advisory group’s organiser should then provide members with information regularly throughout the policy cycle to ensure they can actively participate in subsequent steps as well.

BOX 6.2

Case study: Engaging immigrants and refugees in policymaking through the European Migrant Advisory Board and in Larissa, Greece

The European Migrant Advisory Board, established by the Urban Agenda Partnership on Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees, is a self-led group of advisors with refugee and immigrant backgrounds. As board member Namarig Abkr noted, ‘The people who are actually affected by migration policies need to be invited to the table and included in the structure.’ The board’s four objectives are:

- to represent the interests of refugees and immigrants through participation in policy debates and processes at the local, national, and European level;
- to ensure refugees’ and immigrants’ access to rights;
- to contribute to building a positive narrative on immigration and asylum; and
- to advise policymakers on refugee- and immigrant-related policies.

Similar efforts to include immigrants in policymaking can also be found at the local level. In 2021, the Municipality of Larissa, Greece, introduced the Immigrant and Refugee Integration Council, an advisory group composed of six government officials and five migrants. The group aims to strengthen the integration of migrants and refugees in the municipality and has the following three main goals:

- mapping barriers to the integration process;
- providing a space where migrants and refugees themselves can make recommendations; and
- organising awareness-raising events to strengthen social cohesion in the local population.

The Integration Council introduced a formal platform for migrants and refugees to be part of the solution to migrant integration challenges and to secure their involvement in the integration process.

Sources: Urban Agenda for the EU, ‘[European Migrant Advisory Board](#)’, accessed 9 January 2023; Konstantinos Vlachopoulos, ‘[Greece: Immigrant and Refugee Integration Council Established in Larissa](#)’, European Website on Integration, 23 March 2021.

Participatory collaboration through co-design

Co-design or co-creation is a collaborative approach that uses creative and participatory methods to engage stakeholders actively in the design process. There is no standard co-design process, but the central philosophy is that stakeholders, as co-designers, not only provide suggestions but are also included in decisionmaking. It is a way to empower stakeholders individually and collectively to design part of a project or policy, while creating opportunities for synergy between different groups or teams that sometimes work in silos. Throughout the process, ideas are continually tested, evaluated, and reshaped by the people involved.³⁷

BOX 6.3

Case study: The Share SIRA project's participatory approaches to engaging newcomers and local community members

The Strengthening and Expanding Social Orientation and Integration for Newcomers in Rural Areas (SIRA) project, run by the SHARE Network and co-funded by the Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund (AMIF), aims to improve migrants' social integration in ten rural areas in France, Greece, Poland, and Spain.

The project employs participatory approaches that involve both locals and newcomers. For example, the Rural Ambassadors for Inclusive Territories project in France works with refugees, migrants, and locally elected representatives from small and rural communities who have direct experience with integration. Ambassadors are involved in the design, implementation, and evaluation of integration initiatives and in advocacy at the local, regional, national, and EU levels.

Taking a participatory approach can not only improve the design, implementation, and evaluation of integration policies, it has advantages for everyone involved:

- Refugees and migrants can share their knowledge and challenges and develop new skills that support their integration in local communities.
- Organisations and government authorities can improve their integration programmes and better engage migrants.
- Policymakers and decisionmakers can develop a stronger understanding of the needs of refugees, migrants, and receiving communities that enables them to better tailor their policies and funding frameworks.
- The European Commission, indirectly the funder through AMIF, benefits by advancing one of the main goals of the EU Action Plan for Integration and Inclusion (2021–27): fostering civil-society participation in integration.

Sources: Share Network, 'Better Policy, Stronger Communities, Improved Integration: Exploring Meaningful Participation for the Integration and Inclusion of Newcomers in the EU' (policy brief, Share Network, October 2022); Share Network, 'Rural Ambassadors for Inclusive Territories', accessed 9 January 2023.

37 NSW Council of Social Service (NCOSS), 'Principles of Co-Design' (issue brief, NCOSS, Darlinghurst, New South Wales, Australia, 2017).



Want to learn more about how different types of stakeholder engagement work in practice? Check out:

- ★ The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) report [Multi-Stakeholder Approach for Better Integration of Refugee Students](#) includes practical examples and guidance on how to engage multiple stakeholders to secure refugee students' integration (see page 21 of the report).

6.5 Promoting meaningful engagement, especially with migrant and refugee communities

Several tried and tested techniques can help you involve stakeholders in the policymaking cycle. This section provides both general strategies to promote overall stakeholder engagement and specific suggestions to increase the meaningful engagement of migrants and refugees.

Strategies to maximise overall stakeholder engagement

General tips to strengthen engagement include:

- ✓ Incorporate formal requirements for stakeholder engagement into policy proposals; this could include requiring the creation of formal and informal communication channels and dialogue structures, such as forums and facilitated information exchanges, or committing to several rounds of consultations.³⁸
- ✓ Always engage stakeholders in a transparent, systematic, and nondiscriminatory manner. To do so, you should review and confirm that your engagement strategy is in line with legal and other requirements on informed consent and personal data protection. You should also keep careful and systematic records of all exchanges that occur throughout the stakeholder engagement process.³⁹
- ✓ Designate a person within your team to be responsible for coordinating the stakeholder engagement process from the outset and make sure the individual has the appropriate skills, resources, and support to perform this task.⁴⁰
- ✓ Assess the costs related to stakeholder involvement early on in the policy process. This should include costs related to training staff, data collection and analysis, and staff fieldwork and/or stakeholder travel to engagement activities.

38 OECD, *Improving Governance with Policy Evaluation: Lessons from Country Experiences* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2020).

39 Dimitar Markov and Maria Doichinova, 'Involving and Engaging Stakeholders in Perception Studies', PERCEPTIONS, accessed 29 November 2022.

40 Reidar Kvam, *Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement: A Joint Publication of the Multilateral Financial Institutions Group on Environmental and Social Standards* (Washington, DC: Inter-American Development Bank, 2019).

- ✓ Follow up with stakeholders after receiving their input. You may want to consider providing feedback to them on how their interests and suggestions were addressed in the implementation phase of a project. This may help build trust and buy-in.

Strategies to meaningfully engage migrants and refugees

Migrants and refugees, though the beneficiaries of integration policies, are often overlooked by policymakers in the policy cycle. And even when migrants and refugees are involved, there are often barriers that prevent their successful engagement or they are not involved in a meaningful way.

One reason for this is that refugees and migrants are often viewed as being vulnerable and in need of assistance, and their agency and expertise on integration issues are not acknowledged. They may be invited to participate in high-level events and meetings, but they are typically not informed afterwards of what will happen next or what has been done with their contributions. Too often, those who participate in the policy process are also not financially compensated or formally acknowledged for their input.

Migrants' and refugees' participation can only be considered 'meaningful' if it gives them power over decisions affecting their lives. The Global Refugee-led Network defines meaningful participation as:

*'When refugees and migrants — regardless of location, legal recognition, gender, identity, and demographics — are prepared for and participating in fora and processes where strategies are being developed and/or decisions are being made (including at local, national, regional, and global levels, and especially when they facilitate interactions with host states, donors, or other influential bodies), in a manner that is ethical, sustained, safe, and supported financially.'*⁴¹

In order to meaningfully engage refugee and migrant stakeholders, you will need to:

- ✓ Engage migrants and refugees throughout the policy cycle, especially prior to amending any integration policies affecting their well-being.
- ✓ Foster a culture that values migrants' and refugees' unique knowledge and perspectives and how they can improve integration policies, taking their insights into consideration in decisionmaking processes.
- ✓ Promote sustained engagement by establishing structures where migrants and refugees can express their ideas, opinions, and suggestions on a regular basis. These could be consultations or co-design workshops, forums at the local or regional level, or advisory boards.
- ✓ Ensure migrants and refugees know about opportunities to influence decisions that affect them, including by advertising these opportunities in a variety of communication channels and working closely with community members to spread the message.

41 Global Refugee-led Network, *Meaningful Refugee Participation as Transformative Leadership: Guidelines for Concrete Action* (N.p.: Global Refugee-led Network, 2019), 7.

- ✓ Ensure migrants and refugees can participate in engagement opportunities, for example by providing interpretation and translation support, transportation, preparation activities (e.g., skill development workshops, peer support, and mentoring), and digital support (if meetings are being held virtually).
- ✓ Compensate migrants and refugees for their time, expertise, and work, while also acknowledging the value of volunteering.

BOX 6.4

Case study: The National Intercultural Health Strategy's adaptation of stakeholder engagement to include migrant and ethnic minorities in Ireland

In Ireland, the Health Service Executive's National Intercultural Health Strategy is responsible for the implementation of ethnic equality monitoring. To make health policy more evidence-based, the strategy involved a consultation process with migrants and ethnic minorities. The strategy coordinators used a flexible and less conventional approach to reach out to people who may not feel comfortable or be available to join traditional consultation processes, such as migrant workers, irregular migrants, and women from a conservative cultural background.

Strategies that helped them engage migrants and refugees include:

- organising consultations during the evening to prevent conflicts with work;
- using different consultation formats, including big workshops, surveys, small focus groups, and individual interviews;
- providing transport and child care to overcome some of the practical barriers can hinder participation; and
- providing interpreters to overcome potential language barriers.

Sources: Jan Niessen and Thomas Huddleston, *Handbook on Integration for Policy-Makers and Practitioners, 3rd Edition* (Brussels: European Commission Directorate-General for Justice, Freedom, and Security, 2010), 90; Jane Pillinger, *Consultation Report: HSE National Intercultural Health Strategy* (Dublin: Irish Health Service Executive, 2008).



Want to learn more about engaging migrants and refugees as stakeholders in integration processes? Check out:

- ★ The European Network of Migrant Women's guide to [Meaningful Engagement and Integration of Migrant Women](#) recommends ways to engage migrant women in the integration field and discusses how to overcome specific barriers to engagement.
- ★ The SHARE Network's [10 Key Principles for Refugee and Migrant Participation](#) sets out the network's core principles for how to enhance migrant and refugee engagement.

6.6 Further reading and resources

Resources on stakeholder engagement strategies:

- ★ [Improving Governance with Policy Evaluation: Lessons from Country Experiences](#), published by the OECD, discusses evaluation frameworks from OECD countries that include different stakeholder engagement models (in Chapter 3, see the subsection ‘Involving stakeholders throughout the evaluative process’).

Resources on participatory approaches and co-design:

- ★ [Effective Inclusion of Refugees: Participatory Approaches for Practitioners at the Local Level](#) is a toolkit designed by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Migration Policy Group to help local authorities use participatory approaches to find practical solutions to the problems refugees face. The toolkit includes a printable and interactive handbook, scorecard, and explainer video.
- ★ [Engaging Citizens in Policy-Making: Information, Consultation, and Public Participation](#) is a policy brief published by the OECD that illustrates the guiding principles for engaging citizens in policymaking and describes tools and strategies to use in this process.
- ★ [Principles of Co-Design](#), published by the NSW Council of Social Service in Australia, is a short summary of what to aim for when setting up a co-design process.

Resources on self-evaluating stakeholder engagement practices:

- ★ [MIPEX – R Handbook for Self-Assessment: A Step-by-Step Practical Guide for the Improvement of Regional Integration Practices](#) includes a section on actors and relations that aims to help policymakers evaluate stakeholder engagement practices.
- ★ UNHCR’s [Accountability to Affected People \(AAP\) Self-Assessment](#) tool can be used to measure a project’s performance in terms of communication and transparency, feedback and response, participation and inclusion, learning and adaptation, and work with partners and stakeholders.

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