



European Economic and Social Committee | Comité économique et social européen

PERIOD **ACTIVITY REPORT**
2018 **PSG Immigration and**
2020 **Integration (IMI)**

**DIRECTORATE C – LEGISLATIVE
WORK**

PRESIDENT: Carlos Manuel TRINDADE

Introduction

The Study Group on Immigration and Integration was set up in 2009 with the mandate to prepare the EESC contribution to the European Integration Forum (currently called European Migration Forum (EMF)) and to give concrete structure to the EESC's role as a bridge and facilitator between organised civil society and the EU institutions in the area of migrant integration. The overarching priority of the IMI Group is to promote the development of a common European immigration and integration policy based on the principles of fundamental rights and solidarity, with strong involvement of the civil society.

To achieve these goals, the IMI Group, during this mandate, has organised public consultations on the topic of the EMF meetings, thereby facilitating close involvement of civil society in the development of EU migration policy. It has organised public hearings and conferences in cooperation with highly respected partners, such as the US and Canada Missions to the EU and the Migration Policy Institute Europe. In addition, the Group has created close contacts with the presiding Council Presidencies. The IMI members have participated actively in the European Migration Forum.

The IMI Group carried out five fact-finding missions as part of a project on the role of civil society organisations in ensuring the integration of migrants and refugees. The country visits provided an in-depth view of problems and best practices, documented in individual country reports that feed into a synthesis report presenting the project's main findings, conclusions and recommendations.

Carlos Manuel Trindade

President of the IMI Group

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Activities and main findings

During the half term 2018-2020, the IMI Group has continued calling for the development of a common and functioning European immigration and integration policy and contributed to changing the narrative on migration by highlighting the positive contribution of migrants. It has done so by organising hearings and conferences – alone and together with other stakeholders.

The main focus of most of these events was the inclusion of newcomers, covering issues such as social and economic integration and the role of housing in refugee inclusion, but there was also an opportunity to address the phenomenon of climate refugees and related challenges ahead.

The Group contributed to the EMF meetings organised in close cooperation with the European Commission. One IMI group member represents the EESC in the Forum Bureau. One IMI meeting per year has been dedicated to a consultation with CSOs on the topic of the next EMF meeting, allowing close involvement of civil society organisations in the development of EU migration policy. The 2020 edition of the EMF, planned to take place in June and to deal with integration in inclusive societies, had to be cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Group conducted five fact-finding missions on the role of civil society organisations in ensuring the integration of migrants and refugees with the aim to identify good practices to see if they could be replicated elsewhere, including those contributing to positively changing the narrative on migration. The findings of these country visits will feed into a synthesis report that will be adopted at Group's last meeting of the mandate in September. Although the situation in the five countries visited varied enormously in many ways, some general conclusions have emerged for all countries. CSOs play an important role in migrant and refugee integration in all visited countries but their involvement in the design of integration policies does not always correspond to the importance of their role. Member States should find ways to strengthen the cooperation with CSOs to ensure that their expertise as practitioners is used more in designing integration policies to increase their efficiency.



Despite playing an important role in the integration process of both migrants and refugees, civil society organisations find it hard to obtain funding and experience difficulties implementing a long-term strategy. To avoid tensions between the host population and the newcomers, integration measures should ideally benefit the local population as well. The additional benefit of this is that it facilitates encounters, which reduce the level of distrust and animosity that are often seen in societies welcoming newcomers in their midst. When specific integration initiatives turn out very successful, it can be useful to consider franchising or duplication in other areas of the country.

IMI members regularly represented the Group and the EESC at external conferences and meetings organised by EU institutions and other stakeholders, for example the EASO Consultative Forum, the European Commission's Expert Group on Economic Migration and Going Local events. Thanks to its IMI Group, the EESC has built a good reputation as a committed partner in this policy area, both among other EU institutions, international organisations, diplomatic missions and civil society stakeholders.



Appendix I – List of meetings and events

	< April 2018	2019	> October 2020	Total
Study Group/PSG/Observatory meetings				
Meetings in Brussels	2	1	1	4
Meetings outside Brussels	0	0	0	0
Extraordinary meetings	0	0	0	0
Fact-finding missions	0	4	1	5
Conferences and hearings organized by the SG/PSG/Observatory	1	3	1	5
Participation of members in events, meetings	4	7	3	14
In Brussels	4	5	1	10
Outside Brussels	0	2	2	4