EMN IRELAND MIGRATION MEMO #3: How do EMN Countries monitor the integration of non-EU nationals?

THE ISSUE

The term integration describes the process by which migrants become a part of a host society, by participating economically, socially, culturally and politically, and becoming accepted by the host society. Integration supports social cohesion and inclusive growth in the host country. According to the 2022 Census, 20% of the population in Ireland were born abroad, and 12% were non-Irish citizens. Understanding and monitoring how migrants are faring is crucial to enable policy makers in Ireland and elsewhere to anticipate and address challenges effectively.

This EMN Ireland Migration Memo provides a comparative overview of integration monitoring approaches by EMN Countries and outlines key findings of the most recent ESRI *Monitoring Report on Integration* (2022).

COMPARING INTEGRATION MONITORING ACROSS EMN COUNTRIES

Most EMN countries define integration in their society in accordance with the European Union definition, as a two-way process involving both migrants and residents in the host country. The European Union has a common set of indicators, the Zaragoza Indicators for monitoring the results of integration policies in four areas: employment, education, social inclusion, and active citizenship.

Over half of responding EMN Countries[1] have a **policy or strategy to monitor integration** at the national level which establishes methods and actors for monitoring integration at different levels and/or defines indicators and processes to monitor integration. In Sweden, for example, the monitoring of the Swedish integration policy is a part of the government's yearly budget process. Ireland is one of six countries that has no specific integration monitoring strategy. Across EMN countries **key areas of integration monitoring** include education, employment, housing, health, social benefits, national language literacy and civic participation.

In terms of **governance**, integration monitoring is mainly managed at national level by the Ministry responsible for migration policy (Cyprus, Czechia, Greece, France, Italy and Montenegro) or social affairs (Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland and Slovakia). In practice, integration monitoring regularly engages regional and local actors in just over one third of responding countries.

Administrative data (e.g. population registers, social welfare, health or education data collected by government departments/agencies for their own purposes) is mainly used for monitoring integration, which is collected from ministries, agencies and local /regional authorities. Individual progress from personal integration plans is monitored and aggregated in 5 countries (France, Italy, Poland, Montenegro, Serbia). **Survey data** is also used in almost half of the responding countries. Only Ireland and Estonia primarily rely on survey data for integration monitoring.

In terms of **migrant groups targeted by monitoring activities to assess integration outcomes**, the majority of EMN Countries target migrants from certain geographical areas or define subgroups (e.g. beneficiaries of international protection) while Spain and Montenegro target 'vulnerable groups' including unaccompanied minors and people with disabilities among others.

Ten countries, including Ireland collect **views from third country nationals regarding their own integration process or integration generally**, mainly via surveys, interviews or consultations with migrant organisations to inform integration strategies or assess integration outcomes. Slightly more countries collect data on **public opinion towards integration of migrants**, mainly through surveys.

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[1] Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Spain, Finland, France, Italy, Lithuania, Latvia, Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden and Montenegro.

CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED IN MONITORING INTEGRATION

Data limitations within administrative and survey data means that data may not be detailed or disaggregated enough to be used to monitor integration outcomes effectively, as is the case in Ireland, meaning large disparate groups are combined. Spain has experienced challenges with the comparability of data across surveys with different levels of disaggregation.

Data availability and comparability, as well as **practical issues with gathering information for surveys is a challenge**. Some countries noted that foreign-born nationals may be less likely to respond to surveys due to language and cultural barriers, lower trust, and higher mobility, leading to under-sampling of some groups and biased results. In some cases, countries experienced challenges in using administrative data as it is either not available for analysis or difficult to access.[2]

Issues with the targeting of surveys were reported, specifically to private households in the case of Survey of Income and Living Conditions (SILC) and Labour Force Survey (LFS) data (on which Ireland relies), which exclude unhoused people, people in international protection accommodation centres and other potentially vulnerable groups.

GOOD PRACTICES IDENTIFIED IN MONITORING INTEGRATION

Collection of surveys specific to migrant populations: Group-specific surveys can be a useful tool to assess and analyse the integration pathways of newcomers. For example, the French 'Elipa' survey is based on a panel of 6,500 foreign nationals who were issued a first residence permit in 2018, and who have been surveyed three times (2019, 2020 and 2022).

Monitoring the integration of second-generation migrants: Some EMN countries identified this as important as the group may also face disadvantage or discrimination.

Dedicated and well-established permanent teams: Teams that gather and process data from distinct sources, as is the case in Portugal, are seen as a good practice. **'One-Stop Shops'** where migrants access integration-related services are also seen as useful for integration monitoring. They provide a platform for the regular exchange of information between stakeholders responsible for integration.

Other good practices identified included the **centralisation of indicators and data collection** (such as the Finnish 'Integration Indicator Database') **and public access to results of monitoring activities** (such as the 'Barometer Living Together' dashboard in Flanders, Belgium).

INTEGRATION IN IRELAND: KEY FINDINGS FROM 2022 ESRI MONITORING REPORT ON INTEGRATION

Migrant* labour market outcomes were more severely impacted by the Covid 19 pandemic compared to Irish-born individuals. However, by the beginning of 2022, the migrant employment rate had risen to 77%, surpassing pre-pandemic levels (71% in 2020) and the Irish-born employment rate (72% in 2022). African migrants who have long faced disadvantages in the labour market saw considerable improvements in employment rates, increasing from 56% in 2020 to 74% in 2022.

In education, migrants have higher educational attainment. In the 25–34 age group, 67% of migrants hold tertiary degrees compared to 56% of Irish-born individuals. English language skills play an important role in integration outcomes, and therefore a lack of coordinated strategy for English language provision was identified as a concern.

Migrants were **less likely to own homes and faced more housing affordability issues,** with 29% spending more than one third of their income on housing compared to 8% of Irish-born individuals. These findings underline the importance of including housing as a meaningful indicator in future Migrant Integration Strategies. Migrants also had a **higher 'at risk of poverty'** rate (17%) than Irish-born individuals (12%).

* Refers to all born-abroad, including EU and non-EU born.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Monitoring supports evidence-based policymaking,** with 35% of EMN Member and Observer Countries, including Ireland, reporting that integration monitoring had informed policy changes or processes.
- **Challenges and limitations in the collection, coverage and analysis of data can impact integration monitoring and result in monitoring gaps**. In Ireland, there is a clear need for more detailed and better-quality data on migrants and their situation.
- Measures to **seek increased engagement with migrant populations** are good practices and **combining methodologies for monitoring integration such as surveys and administrative data** can assist with this
- **Monitoring for different generations or specific groups** provides a more rounded picture of how migrants are faring.

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[2] For discussion of data challenges in Ireland, see the ESRI report on challenges, opportunities and data gaps in monitoring integration in Ireland