



European Competence Centre for Social Innovation
ESF+ Community of Practice on Migrant Integration

Work Programme 2025

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Background

Community of Practice on Migrant Integration (CoP MI) was set up in the last quarter of 2023, alongside the launch of the first Work Programme (WP) 2023–24.

The overall **aim of the CoP was – and still is – to set the context and frame a common understanding of migrant integration, while engaging CoP Members in information exchanges during events.**

During the first WP, a total of 142 unique participants attended eight in-person and online events. The CoP saw an increase in CoP membership from 26 to **115 members** operating in a total of **16 countries** (including EC representatives and DGs/Country Desks). The majority are from regional and national managing authorities, intermediary bodies, implementing bodies, line ministries. Among the remaining members:

- 21% represent civil society organisations (including 24 members from NGOs and Non-profits).
- 14% represent the European Commission (16 CoP Members).
- 3.5% are from the Competence Centre for Social Innovation (based in four different countries).

The **second WP** is designed around a co-creation principle whereby the **objectives, topics and formats** for the 2025 WP and CoP events are guided by feedback from members.

The most relevant **objectives** identified for the second WP are:

- 1) **To address current and future realities of migration through the design of effective ESF+ programming and calls.**
- 2) **To explore practices on how to involve the local level, employers, social partners and migrants in ESF+ funding.**

The main topics of interest listed below will be addressed through **three online and three on-site events** in the course of 2025, in **formats** such as study visits, project presentations and conferences with experts.

The identified **topics** of interest are as follows:

- a. **Integration measures within childcare and education systems.**
- b. **Integration of migrants in the labour market.**
- c. **Adapting to new realities** by promoting cohesive communities and **social inclusion of migrants.**

Key Lessons Learned from the WP 2023–2024

The formation of the newest of five CoPs posed various challenges, mainly due to the saturation of CoPs and events, duplication of individuals working on social topics (and thus attending events across multiple CoPs), and a topic that still varies greatly depending on the geographical context.

In parallel, the same challenges led to an understanding of the importance of a CoP focusing on migrant integration, reflecting the objectives of ESF+ funding, the specificity required in approaches, and the diverse needs of migrants from different backgrounds, operating in complex realities and at different stages of integration.

It was clear that there was no ‘one size fits all’ approach to ensuring successful integration and building cohesive communities. In line with this, the experts pursued a **‘building blocks’ approach**, which proved relevant in supporting the development of relationships with members.

The underlying belief for the first WP cycle and the lessons learned was that engaging the **CoP members through co-development** in the face-to-face events and through surveys **provides space for members to feel more engaged and heard**, and ultimately ensures the relevance of topics that unfold over a cycle.

CoP Achievements During the WP 2023–2024

Considering that CoP MI was only established in October 2023, it is an achievement in itself to have 115 members a full year later. Of these, **26 members joined only in 2024**, reflecting a **22.6%** expansion of this CoP since its offset.

Beyond the numbers, one of the main achievements was the level of engagement of different members. This is a direct result of building relationships to **engage relevant and experienced speakers for each of the topics** set for the events, and is also a statement of the links and networks built so far. Likewise, the ongoing discussions with partners for possible study visits are a result of the **positive bridges built** over the past 12 months.

The first WP of the CoP aimed to achieve its goals through two specific objectives outlined in WP 2023–2024:

- i) Programming and implementation of the ESF+ and/or other related EU funding for Third Country Nationals (TCNs).
- ii) Supporting people fleeing Ukraine, notably in the context of the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD).

The WP objectives were achieved through the following events:

Format	Meeting topic	Date
Online meeting	Introductory Meeting with Desk Officers	Q2 2023
Online meeting	First Plenary Session: CoP on Migrant Integration Introduction	Q4 2023
On-site event	Social Innovation Forum 2023 Workshop: <i>Stages of Integration</i>	Q4 2023
Online meeting	Working Group Meeting: MA & Desk Officer Meeting	Q1 2024
Online meeting	Interactive Session: Understanding EU Funding and Management	Q1 2024
On-site event	Joint event with Social Inclusion CoP including Site Visits, Lisbon	Q2 2024
Online meeting	Interactive Session: Responses to people fleeing Ukraine: What can we learn?	Q3 2024
On-site event	Social Innovation Forum 2024 Workshop: <i>Developing the 2nd Work Programme</i>	Q4 2024

A final overall achievement is the creation of a space for listening, knowledge sharing and co-creation through the events, bilateral meetings and exchanges, and the feedback gathering exercises, including the surveys that will inform the next WP.

CoP MI 2025

The **overall objective** of the 2025 WP is to **create networking opportunities** through **active engagement** and the creation of **synergies** between CoP Members. This will be achieved through the 'building block' approach, the sharing of effective practices and the networking possibilities created through the CoP.

In contrast to the previous WP, both specific objectives will be more general, focusing on the best use of funding and allowing for the topics of interest to be discussed under both objectives. The objectives will therefore be achieved not through targeted events addressing them, but as an overall methodology, including the engagement of the relevant stakeholders throughout the 2025 WP.

The **specific objectives** identified are:

1. **To address** current and future realities of **migration through the design of effective ESF+ programming and calls.**
2. **To explore practices** on how to **involve the local level, employers, social partners and migrants in ESF+ funding.**

The **topics** and focus of the events are planned based on the feedback from CoP MI gathered during the second half of 2024. The following topics were prioritised by members during the last term of 2024 and are therefore considered paramount for the 2025 planning:

- a. **Labour market integration**, which has already been touched upon in the 2024 events, and there will be opportunities to visit projects to further deepen discussions on this topic.
- b. **Childcare and education**, which will most likely be addressed together with the CoP EES and Material Support to respond to common needs.
- c. **Adapting to new realities** through the promotion of cohesive communities and the **social inclusion of migrants.**

The main outputs of the WP will be delivered through the events listed in the WP 2025 Events Calendar, which will allow for discussions on the objectives and topics highlighted in the surveys. The main outcome of the events will be documented in summary reports for wider dissemination.

Other proposed outputs include information packs on the CoP MI, an article/guide on a topic related to the current realities of migrant integration and an end of year survey to further develop WPs based on member feedback.

Events Calendar 2025

Format	Focus topic	Date ¹
Online event	Launch of the WP 2025	4 March 2025
Study visit, Salerno, Italy	Labour Market Integration	21–22 May 2025
Online event	Adapting to changing realities on Migrant Integration	5 June 2025
Online event	Drafting EU Calls: Panel Debate	1–12 December 2025 (TBC)
On-site event	Social Innovation Forum 2025	October 2025 (TBC)
On-site, joint CoP event	Joint CoPs Event with Material Support, Employment, Education and Skills and Migrant Integration	November 2025 (TBC)

¹ Dates are only provisional and subject to changes.

Annex 1: Survey results and analysis

The CoP MI Workshop at the Social Innovation Forum (SIF) in October 2024 was the first time members joined face-to-face in a stand-alone event. Therefore, this session was used to launch a feedback exercise the first and second WP through:

- i) the Co-Evaluation Survey,
- ii) an exercise carried out during the SIF 2024 workshop, and
- iii) the Co-Development Survey.

The surveys, designed by experts, ESFA and the European Commission, were disseminated to engage CoP members who did not attend the SIF.

Topical insights and learnings emerged through the analysis of members' survey results, gathered with the aim of guiding the design of the next WP. Below are the main points voiced by participants:

a. Membership

From the survey, most CoP MI respondents indicated that they continue their affiliation with this CoP to exchange ideas and create synergies, hear from colleagues in other countries, advocate for more inclusive policies and challenge myths and stereotypes affecting migrant integration. Therefore, **information exchange** and **networking** remain **priorities** and could be given a deeper focus, as expressed by members in the Brussels workshop (October 2024): *'Improve exchange/communication among ESF+ CoP members and key national + local stakeholders.'* Achieving this will contribute to fulfilling the **overall objective** of the CoP MI.

b. Objectives

Other envisioned **objectives** shared by members include **'designing ESF+ calls on migration'** (13 responses, mainly referring to methods and examples) and **'adapting EU funds programming to changing realities'**. Additionally, respondents noted the importance of **involving relevant stakeholders at the local level in managing ESF+ funding**. These responses guided the development of the two **specific objectives** of the CoP MI.

c. Format

The importance of **relevant study visits**, as well as **hearing about more projects** and more conferences with experts, migrants and academia was highlighted by 85% of respondents.

Some interesting suggestions were also mentioned, such as:

- *'Cocreation workshops – attendees have the opportunity to suggest a topic/s which they would like to address / discuss and people join the 'round table', with an iteration thereafter to build upon the first results.'*
- *'More time for discussion between participants.'*
- *'More time should be devoted to the exchange of experiences between Member States.'*

It is also worth noting the desire to **learn from failures**:

'We have already concluded that bad examples are lacking so that we can learn more from mistakes.'

d. Structure

Synergies, mutual learning and networking are still the most frequently mentioned priorities to be fulfilled.

Some technical requests were also highlighted:

- *'Simultaneous translation to make more accessible to a larger number of participants.'*
- *'Send the link earlier, please. I have missed events, I really wanted to attend due to link coming late and then realizing it was a different time to Ireland.'*
- *'The links are sent late or if they were sent as teams link the calendar would automatically correct the time for the diary.'*

e. Stakeholders

The co-creation and 'building blocks' approach can only be effective if the right stakeholders are involved. Responses to this question will feed into the CoP's outreach to new members and potential speakers at events. Some of the stakeholders suggested are:

- *'Some important partners are still missing – National bodies responsible for public policies in the area of migration.'*
- *'Implementation bodies (non-statutory welfare organisation such as Caritas and the Red-Cross), Civil society, important National bodies working on migrant integration.'*
- *'Social (tech) entrepreneurship ecosystem as a key stakeholder.'*
- *'Involvement of migrant self-organisations (extended by empowerment).'*
- Local mentors

f. Content

A rich variety of feedback was provided regarding the content of the events and the focus of the WP activities. These include:

- Trauma and responding to trauma: mental health support and literacy.
- First-hand experience:
- *'Hear people coming from the origin country of migrant people.'*
- Depending on national contexts, the boundary between EU funding sources differs. It is worth exploring how they can be better used and how synergies can be created to contribute to holistic inclusion through complementary projects, effective practices and identified barriers.
- *'Different realities within the EU (namely about what it is to be a migrant, refugee, with an asylum request, etc. what rights they have in the different countries), because this conditions the success of the projects indicated as good practices.'*
- *'Use social media and digital tools to address, accompany and advise migrants.'*
- *'Definition of integration pathway (if applicable, ESF Plus – AMIF) and reflections on impact measurement methods (indicators, target values).'*

Respondents to the Co-Development Survey were given a choice of ten topics to rank in order of preference for the WP 2025. For the purpose of analysis, the responses are divided into three groups:

- Group 1: Most preferred topics (1–3).
- Group 2: Second preferred topics (4–7).
- Group 3: Irrelevant topics (8–10).

Topics	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Integration of migrants into the labour market	12	6	2
Migrant social inclusion and promotion of cohesive communities	12	8	0
Integration measures in childcare and education systems	13	12	0
Facilitation of education, training and recognition and acquisition of skills	6	13	1
Access to health, including mental health	4	14	2
Access to housing	2	14	5
Active participation of third country nationals in their host country	0	10	10
Social innovation as a tool for social change towards third country nationals	4	15	3
Tackling discrimination, including through intersectional approaches	7	3	2
Specific responses towards people fleeing Ukraine in the EU	0	1	19

Integration measures within childcare and education systems was ranked the highest in Group 1 and also appeared under Group 2, reflecting the different realities in different contexts. A similar pattern was observed for **'Integration of migrants into the labour market'** and **'Migrant social inclusion and promotion of cohesive communities'**.

The most selected topics in Group 2 were very specific: **'Social innovation as a tool for social change towards third country nationals'** was the most chosen, followed by **'Access to housing'** and **'Access to health, including mental health'** (both ranked equally), and thirdly, **'Facilitation of education, training and recognition and acquisition of skills'**.

In Group 3, there was a very clear consensus that the topic **'Specific responses towards people fleeing Ukraine in the EU'** is no longer considered relevant for WP 2025. On the other hand, the topic **'Active participation of third country nationals in their host country'** received as many votes as in Group 2 as in Group 3, possibly showing the different stages of integration each country is addressing and/or the contrasting approaches to social inclusion.

