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# **The Potential Role of NGOs in the Integration of Migrants in the Context of Mainstreaming: The Case of Tyrol**

## **Abstract**

The view advanced by this paper is that integration of migrants is more effective with the participation of migrant institutions in the planning and running of mainstream activities. It presents a case for a promising approach for developing a model of integration which is adaptable over time as well as by region, and takes account the changing immigrant patterns, their changing needs as well as those of the host community

The focus of the presentation is on the role of NGOs in the system of mainstream institutions in the State government of Tyrol, its agencies, and local authorities. In 2002, Tyrol established a department of integration within the State government, incorporating the integration of migrants into a larger framework of integration and acknowledging the fact that integration is a horizontal issue, spanning from educational and labour market policy, to housing, family and cultural policies, not forgetting the role of the media in communicating strategies and promoting a common understanding. NGOs are not only integrated in the development of the guidelines of integration (mainstreaming), but also in the effective execution of various tasks. This includes especially the promotion of intercultural and professional competence by running multicultural nurseries, accompanying education and occupational training (multicultural trainers), training officials at various levels of government, helping with family planning etc.

## **No coordinated national system of integration in Austria**

To apply the concept of mainstreaming to the integration of migrants requires a governance system which is capable of promoting the integration of migrants effectively and efficiently within a broad national strategy of socio-economic, cultural and political inclusion. Such a system, while ensuring continuity and stability, has to be flexible and adaptable to new needs; the latter emanate from a world characterised by continuous change. As the pattern of migration evolves, so will the needs of the migrants and the host communities in their quest for integration and participation.

Obviously, newcomers will have different needs than second and possibly third generation migrants as well as various migrant groups, be they migrant workers or refugees. Mainstream integration will have to cater for all needs in order to ensure that social cohesion is not jeopardised.

Austria is a country with a long tradition of immigration, particularly worker migration and refugee intake. As a result, it has an above average share of migrants (foreign born) in its population in EU - comparison, the majority from third countries. (Figure 1) Both migration and integration policies are decided upon and implemented in the regions (Bundesländer). Federal laws tend to provide a general framework only, leaving it up to the federal states to draw up integration measures suitable for the special circumstances of the region. Even today, integration is a relatively loose term in the new law regulating the residence and settlement of foreigners (Niederlassungs- und Aufenthaltsgesetz – NAG 2005), leaving it up to the states to devise an institutional and budgetary framework to organise the integration of migrants. Due to the strong regional focus of policy formulation and implementation and the horizontal character of integration, comprising areas as diverse as education, employment, housing, health, social services, cultural activities and the like, little is known on a federal level about the amount of money spent on integration in the various regions, the instruments and measures implemented and their respective effectiveness.<sup>1</sup>

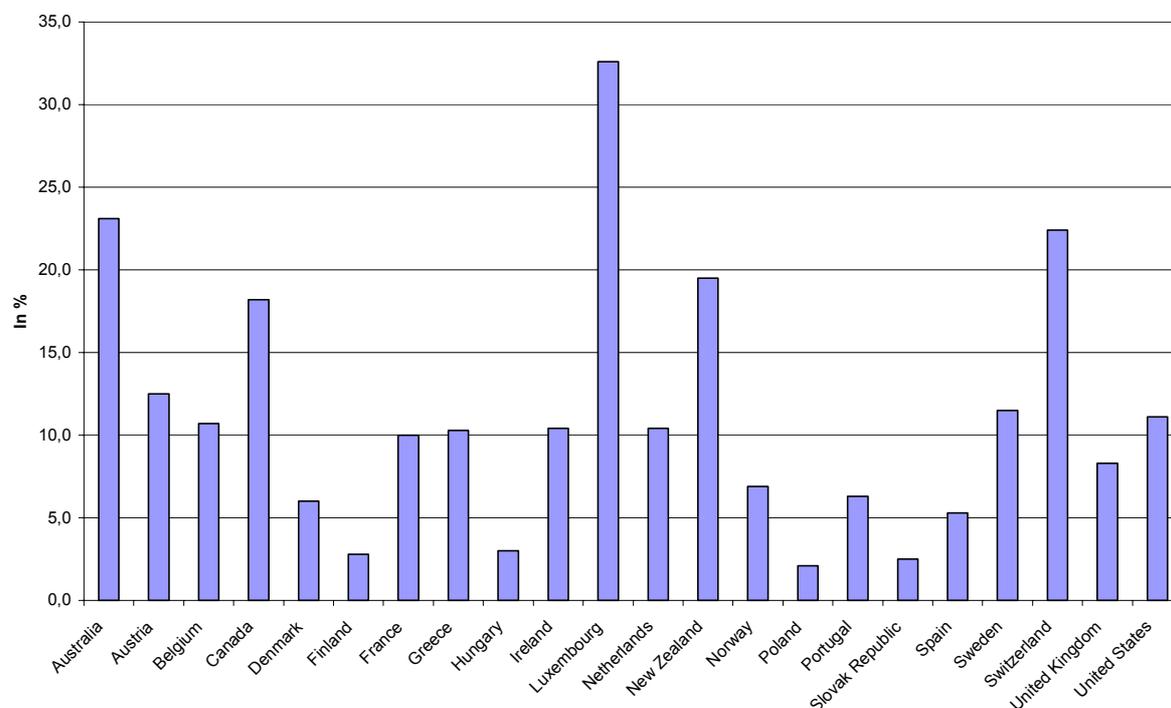
While it may appear, especially for a small country, that a single-issue national agency with a clear mandate to oversee the process of mainstream integration is necessary for a more efficient national integration policy, integration may be quite effectively undertaken at a local level even in the absence of a national strategy and institution. This can be verified in the case of Austria, a country which does not have a federal body/agency endowed with the power to draw up and/or coordinate migration and integration policies for migrants. As a matter of fact, integration is on the political agenda of every federal state. Thus, Austria has fairly diverse regional systems of integration, which takes into account the different needs of migrants as well as host communities. The various integration systems may differ by the speed,

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<sup>1</sup> For a first attempt to collect information about integration measures in the various regions see *IOM/BMI* (2005).

depth and scope of integration, which may be guided by different objectives of the regions as to the role of migration in their socio-economic development.

Figure 1: Proportion of foreign born in the population in international comparison: 2001



S: OECD.Census data, France 1999.

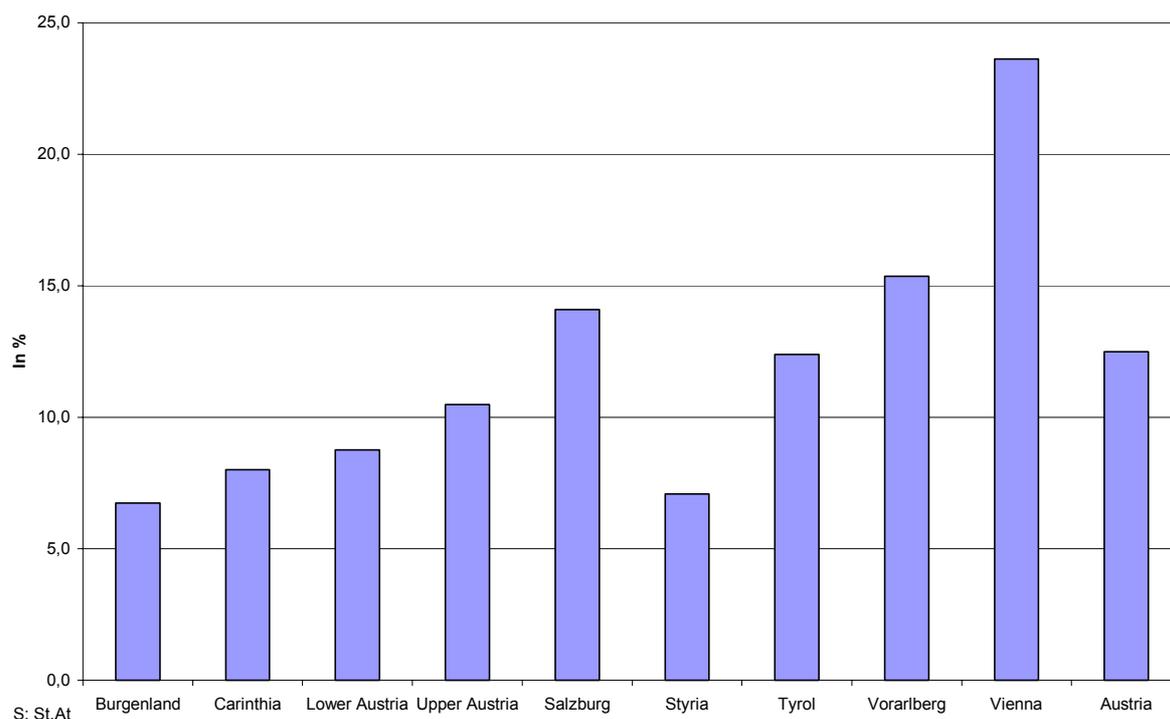
### A good practice example of integration: the case of Tyrol

In the present presentation, we concentrate on Tyrol, a federal state (Bundesland) with a proportion of foreign born in the population corresponding to the national average of 12.5 percent (2001), (Figure 2). We chose Tyrol because it is a very diverse region as far as the demographic and socio-economic structure is concerned, encompassing rural as well as urban areas, a wide spread of industries with a dominance of small and medium sized enterprises, and a great diversity of migrants as far as their ethnic and cultural mix is concerned, their educational attainment and the reason for coming (work, family reunion, refugees). The mainstream integration system developed in Tyrol has the ingredients necessary for a national system of integration, giving NGOs an important role in shaping it.

Vienna has addressed the issue of integration earlier than other federal states, combining targeting and mainstreaming, as both approaches seem to be necessary in a society under constant flux. But we do not focus on the city of Vienna, as cities face different challenges than regions like Tyrol. Vienna has also a significantly higher share of foreign born in its

population (23.6 percent), a result of an explicit population growth strategy, dating back to the 1970s. Also, a large city like Vienna plays a different role in globalisation than other regions in Austria. In addition, ethnically based social networks may also be a causal factor for the concentration of migrants in Vienna.

Figure 2: Proportion of foreign born in the population in Austria by region (Bundesländer) 2001



### Mainstreaming immigrant integration in Tyrol

In 2002, Tyrol established an agency within the State government (Integrationsreferat der Landesregierung)<sup>2</sup>, with the mission to mainstream integration policies and measures for migrants in all relevant portfolios of the State government and the communities, reaching out to and including civil society and social partners. Integration is seen as an essential part of a 'harmonious social development'. In order to be able to effectively mainstream integration, a think-tank, i.e., a consultancy body, has been created as a first step. This body advises the agency on how to go about mainstreaming integration. This body comprises consultants of various kinds, experts with and without migration background in a variety of specialty fields in the various departments and regions, as well as NGOs and the scientific community. A university institute (University Innsbruck) follows the development steps of integration mainstreaming and analyses and evaluates the process and progress.

<sup>2</sup> For details see the multilingual website [www.integrationsportal.at](http://www.integrationsportal.at)

One of the first steps was to draw up guiding lines/principles of integration for migrants in Tyrol (Leitbild zur Integration von Zuwanderern in Tirol). These guidelines represent the idea of mainstream integration of migrants as an integral part of social development in Tyrol. They are to ensure the sustainability of the socio-economic integration of migrants. The guidelines are modelled after the model developed in Basel, Switzerland, with a planning horizon of 10 years, and an operational concept of the road to take.

To facilitate a comprehensive coverage of integration mainstreaming, a participatory approach was applied in the development phase of the guidelines by including a variety of institutions, actors and interest groups as well as migrant associations. A strategic steering committee ensures that all regions and portfolios are included in the development of integration mainstreaming.

One of the aims of the agency is to persuade migrants and the host communities that integration makes sense and is necessary. Emotional, social and legal barriers to successful integration are to be made visible so that they may be addressed and eliminated in due course.

The agency has certain tasks to fulfil, in particular

- to provide information and guidance,
- to promote the acquisition of language and other skills,
- to raise the educational attainment level of the migrants,
- to promote social equality,
- to draw up special measures for women, children, youth, old, sick and disabled,
- to act as a mediator in case of conflict,
- to fund projects and research, in particular impact studies and evaluations,
- to provide funding and help draw up measures to promote the employability and employment of migrants, and
- to promote the participation of migrants in cultural, sports and other leisure activities.

The website is already an important source of information for migrants. It provides links to German courses for migrants and institutions engaged in mainstreaming activities. The agency is also the major source of funding of institutions, associations and initiatives of individuals and groups of persons in support of activities which promote the integration of migrants and the peaceful co-existence of natives and immigrants<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.tirol.gv.at/themen/gesellschaftundsoziales/integration/downloads/foerderungsrichtlinien.pdf>

### *The role of NGOs in mainstream integration*

The above outline of the design of integration mainstreaming indicates the important role Tyrol regional government is giving to NGOs in defining integration and in drawing up a horizontal (including all portfolios) and vertical (including all localities and levels of administration) system of integration. Thus, NGOs participate in the early stage of planning mainstreaming. In addition, they are important partners of public administration in organising integration initiatives and implementing integration measures. A good example of an NGO, which acts as a bridge between public administration, migrants and host communities is the multicultural association ('Verein Multikulturell')<sup>4</sup>.

The non-profit association Verein Multikulturell, with its strong intercultural orientation, was founded in 1993. Its mission is to promote intercultural dialogue. One of its activities is the use of the media to promote communication within and between host and migrant communities; topics are addressed, which impact on integration and social cohesion, e.g., learning about diverse cultures and beliefs, and providing a platform for dialogue. The development of the magazine 'Mosaik', which is focusing on migration and cultural issues, is one example, others are radio programmes in the various languages and a television programme focusing on experiences of migrants – 'Heimat, fremde Heimat' (Home, foreign Home). Also the internet has been included as a vehicle to promote integration, e.g., by setting up the internet portal 'Mona' (Migration online Austria). Further, a college for migrants is run by the association (Migrationsakademie), which offers German courses at all levels of competence for adults and pupils of primary and secondary schools, as well as computer courses for adults and youth. A special unit provides the linkage between schools and migrants, students and their parents, as well as between employers and their special needs when working with migrants. In the context of rendering training more efficient, this involves having multicultural and – or – lingual trainers to deal with education and training measures. These activities are funded by a combination of public institutions, the state integration agency and employers.

The same association (Verein Multikulturell) also acts as research centre, surveying the living conditions of migrants, building on the trust and confidence migrants have in people working with/in the multicultural association. This regional NGO acts locally within a larger network of institutions. It is also linked to national and supranational NGO networks. Examples of the NGO-networks are the Tyrolian and Austrian cultural initiative (Tiroler Kulturinitiative and IG Kultur Österreich), the Forum of Integration (Integrationsforum Tirol), the European Migrants Forum (EUMF), the European network against Racism (ENAR) as well as the European Multicultural Foundation.

This NGO is thus not only integrated in the development of the guidelines of integration (mainstreaming), but also in the effective execution of various tasks, in particular provision of

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<sup>4</sup> For more information see their website: <http://www.migration.cc>

intercultural and professional competence; The 'Verein Multikulturell' is, for example, cooperating with other NGOs/NPOs in the region, e.g., the multicultural nursery (Kindervilla; <http://www.kindervilla.info/>): 'Kindervilla' provides day-care for preschool children in various languages (by bilingual/bicultural professionals) for children of natives and migrants; its cooperation with the multicultural association is in the provision of German courses for migrant school children after school hours, to promote their learning capacity. The intercultural competence of the association is also accessed by public institutions, training officials at various levels of government, helping migrant families to access mainstream as well as targeted services, etc., The integration of NGOs into EU-wide networks promotes the expertise and professionalism of local actors; it is also helpful in accessing EU-wide funds to promote integration.

According to the NGOs, mainstreaming could be organised more effectively by contracting out various activities from public institutions to NGOs, rather than by co-funding them through subsidies. One example of services, which can be effectively outsourced to NGOs, is bilingual occupational education and training, as intercultural expertise tends to be higher in migrant associations than in traditional public sector institutions. In the case of Tyrol, where mainstream public institutions do not (yet?) provide sufficient career counselling, nor education and training for migrants, a greater degree of inclusion of NGOs in the provision of such services, could speed up integration and promote equal opportunity for migrants. Another public concern, namely, health issues of migrants, particularly of migrant women, can be more easily addressed by government if migrant associations are included.

Currently, a variety of funding systems of activities of NGOs is in place in Tyrol. NGOs themselves tend to favour contracts with public institutions as a means of advancing the mainstreaming agenda (preferred funding system).

### **Concluding remarks**

As exemplified by the case of Tyrol, to deal with the challenges that an increasingly diverse and mobile society poses for integration, mainstream government organisations should be complemented by NGOs/civil society groups. These bodies are able to voice new needs and their inclusion in integration policies ensures greater credibility of policy initiatives. This implies including associations of migrant groups and/or NGOs that cater for the various needs of migrants in policy formulation, decision making and implementation.

### **References**

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