



# SOCIAL INTEGRATION IN OECD COUNTRIES

Paris/Tokyo 22 February 2023

Thomas Liebig

International Migration Division  
Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs



# OECD work on international migration



## Monitoring migration trends and policies



## Assessing the impact of migration



## Tackling challenges of integration of immigrants and their children



## Responding to emerging challenges (e.g., climate change, refugee crisis)



## Analysing migration policies (e.g. family, labour, international students)

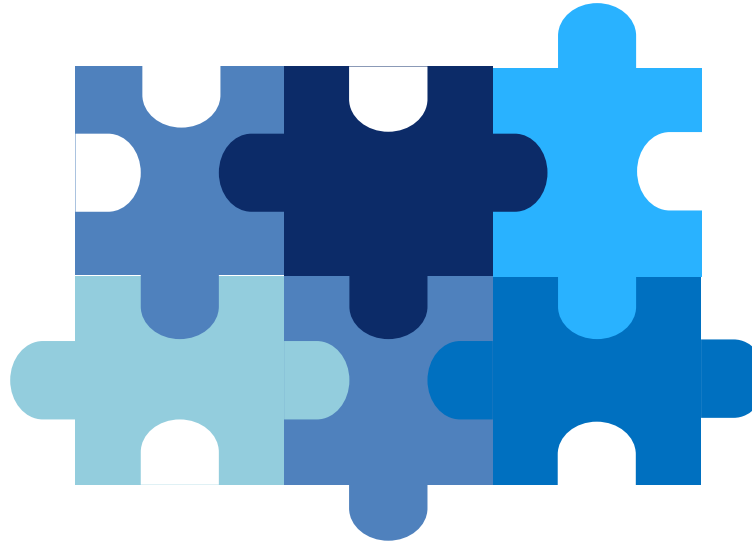




# Introduction: Social integration

**Everybody agrees it's important**  
but what it means is interpreted differently  
– very difficult to grasp

**What?**  
“Social cohesion”, “common values”, “blending in”, and “sense of belonging” are all frequently referred to, but do not fully capture it



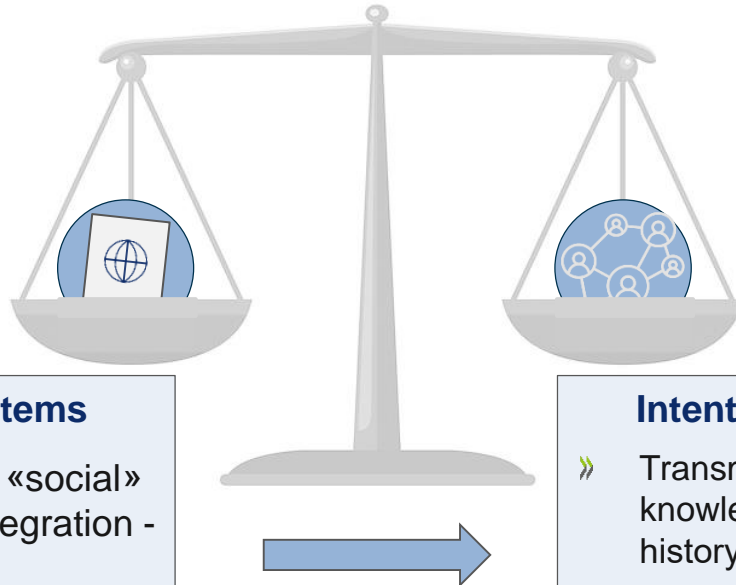
**A two-way process**  
Social integration is logically a (multifaceted) two-way process that needs to involve both migrants and the recipient community

**At the national level**  
“integration courses” increasingly focus on social integration/ values, but...  
» At best transmit awareness  
» Adherence to values is difficult to test & transmit

**At the local level**  
actual social integration takes place, in surveys migrants often report a greater sense of belonging to the local community than to the host country at large



# Introduction: Social integration



## Social integration systems

- » Some countries refer to «social» and others to «civic» integration - different connotations
- » Social orientation is more specifically for new arrivals
- » Increasingly important element of integration policy
- » Often introduced in reaction to perceived past «integration failures»

## Intentions & characteristics

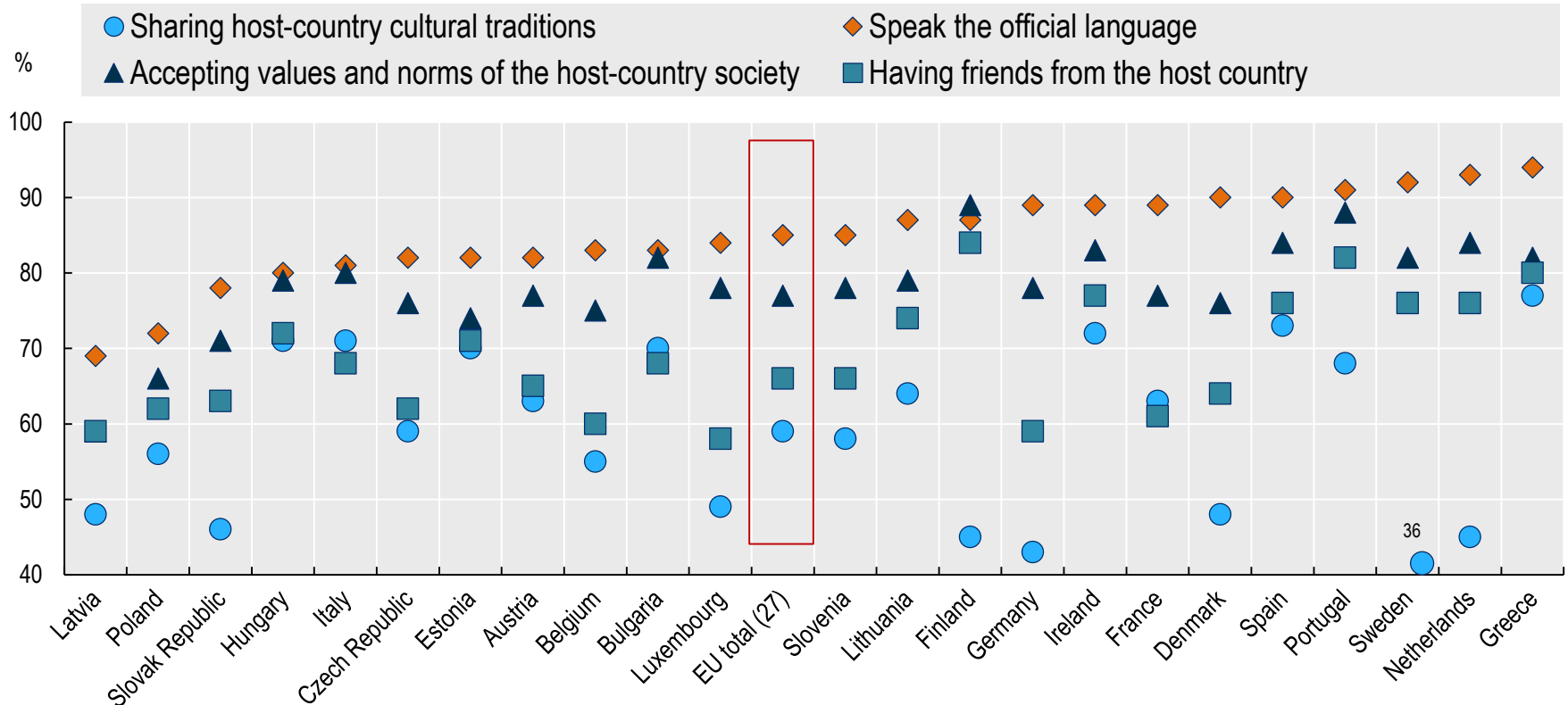
- » Transmitting host country specific knowledge (society, political system, history etc.) and norms & “values”
- » Strong links with language training
- » Settlement countries: Welcoming societies, civic interaction & engagement
- » In Europe, increasing focus on obligatory participation in «civic» integration with varying sanctions (less stable permit, benefit cuts, fines), but enforcement is difficult



# Social integration is key for overall integration...

## Social integration factors deemed important for successful integration

EU citizens, 15-year-olds and above who think that the respective factor is important for successful integration of non-EU immigrants in the host-country, EU 2021



New arrivals not only need language and job support, but also need to **understand how the host country society functions and its expectations for residents.**

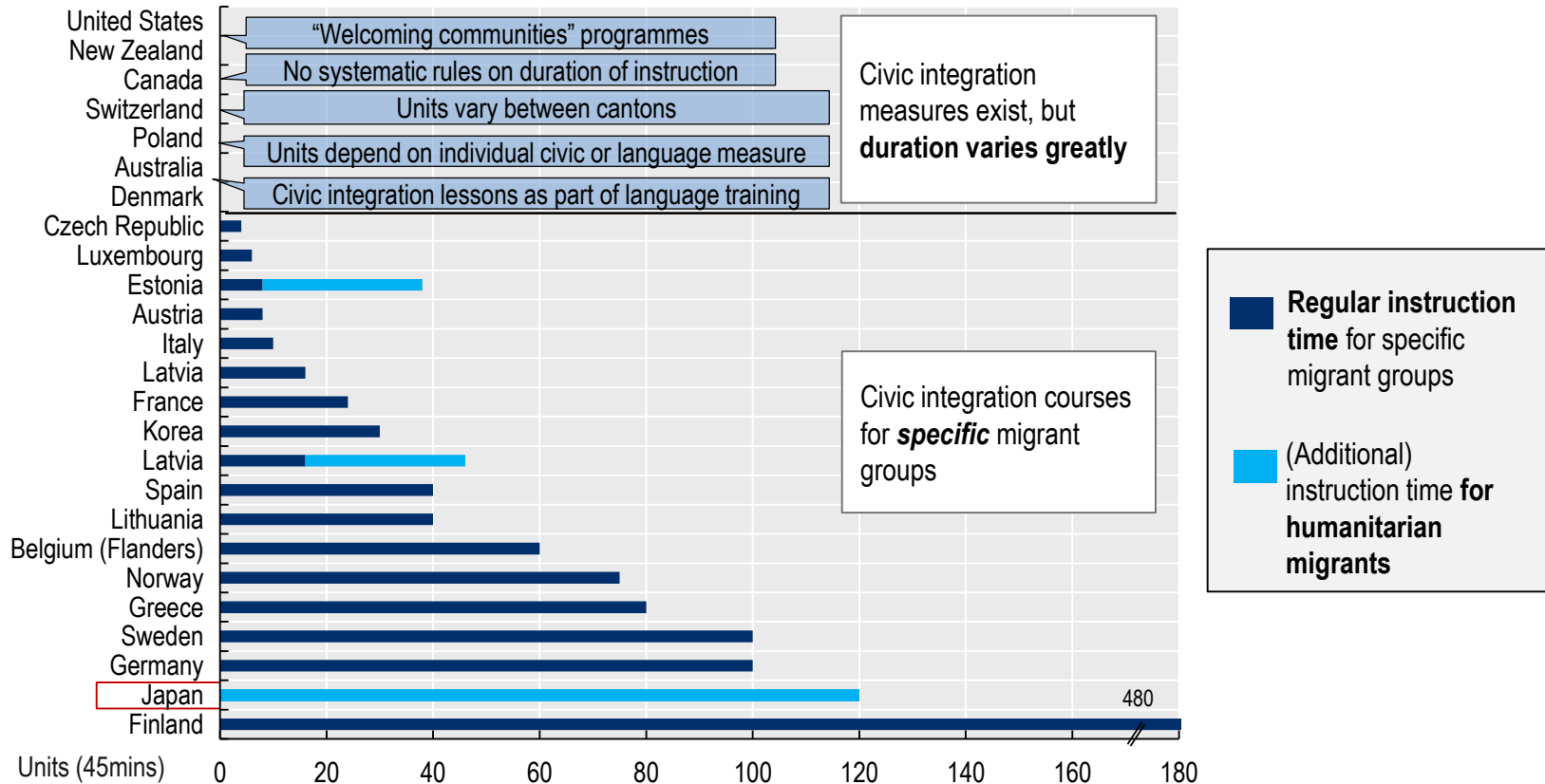




## ...and constitutes an important part of integration policy in many OECD countries

### Duration of public civic integration courses in OECD countries

Time units (45 minutes) of public civic integration courses, OECD 2021



**Social integration measures**  
have become an important component of integration programmes.






# Countries design social integration courses in different ways...


**Characteristics of public civic integration courses in OECD countries**  
Introduction Measures for Newly-Arrived Migrants, OECD 2021

Language(s) of instruction/ interpretation		M	M	M	M	H	M	M	M	H	M	H	M	H	M	M	M		M	M		M	
As part of a language course																							
Obligatory participation																							
	Australia	Austria	Belgium	Canada	Czech Republic	Denmark	Estonia	Finland	France	Germany	Greece	Italy	Japan	Korea	Latvia	Lithuania	Luxembourg	Netherlands	Norway	Romania	Spain	Sweden	Switzerland

 Obligatory participation

 Civic integration as part of language course

 Multiple languages

 Host-country language only



Civic integration courses vary between host countries – generally they are **offered/ obligatory only for certain groups of immigrants** (part. humanitarian migrants).





## ...and increasingly move it out of the class room

**Networks are important for integration outcomes & fostered through non-traditional social integration measures**



**Social integration cannot be “learned” through courses alone**

### **Innovative ways of promoting social integration: new approaches and stakeholders**

- » **Canada’s Settlement Program:** Includes services that focus on building connections and promoting social cohesion such as conversation circles, museum visits, community events...
- » **Belgium (Flanders):** “Flemish buddy” programme
- » **Norway, Sweden, United States:** Libraries as point of entry into host-societies (repositories of information, meeting place, discussion forum, language learning support...)
- » **New Zealand:** “Welcoming Communities” programme that bring migrants and native-born members of local communities together (similar initiatives in Australia, Canada and the US)





























































# Social integration increasingly starts before departure...

## Available pre-departure introduction measures

Introduction Measures for Newly-Arrived Migrants, OECD 2021

	In-person classes	Online options
Australia	 	 
Austria	 	 
Denmark	 	 
Finland	 	 
France	 	 
Germany	 	 
Israel	 	 
Italy	 	 
Japan	 	 
Latvia	 	 
Netherlands	 	 
Portugal	 	 
Slovak Republic	 	 
Spain	 	 



While most countries offer pre-departure information sessions or materials (print/electronic), **only some provide broader pre-departure introduction measures**





# ...and cannot be achieved without involving other stakeholders

## National government

Role of standard setting, central monitoring & organisation of introduction measures



## Local government

Understand the needs of new arrivals & can tailor introduction programmes accordingly



## Migrants

Should be involved in the design of (civic) programmes & play role in reaching out to new arrivals



## Non-governmental organisations

Provide a robust network of volunteers and have liberty to experiment



## Civil society

Community engagement & associations promote interactions between newcomers and host-societies at local level



## Private sector

Can be mobilised for efficient & innovative service provision (e.g. language learning, mentorship...)



An integration system that engages a wide array of stakeholders can **expand expertise and opportunities** for individual migrants, however **coordination challenges** may arise.



## *In a nutshell*

### KEY INSIGHTS



Social integration is **receiving increasing attention** across the OECD



While there is broad agreement about its importance, it is very **difficult to gauge what it actually means** – let alone to measure it...



...and what this implies for reception and integration policies



As social integration is **a tacit process**, it cannot be solely achieved through classroom learning



As a result, **new approaches and stakeholders** have emerged





## *For further information*



[www.oecd.org/migration](http://www.oecd.org/migration)

@liebig\_thomas