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European Civic Integration and Common Values: The Experience of a Board Game¹

*Roberta Medda-Windischer and Andrea Carlà**

Abstract

In recent years, the so-called refugee crisis has become a structural feature of many European countries. Consequently, the focus of policies towards refugees has shifted from emergency and first reception issues to include policies for their integration. Meanwhile, in the past decade civic integration policies have become fashionable in many European countries. According to civic integration programmes, a key tool for the process of inclusion of migrant populations is classes and training through which migrants learn the language and values of their host country, such as democracy and human rights. However, there is scepticism about civic integration programmes developed at the national level, which have been criticised as unidirectional, disciplinary and exclusionary. This paper is situated at the interplay of these dynamics, presenting the results of the EU-funded project 'Euroregions, Migration and Integration' (EUMINT), which aims to develop a Europe-wide civic integration programme for asylum seekers, refugees and local populations, while attempting to address some of the problems attributed to these types of initiatives. Reframing the concept of civic integration, EUMINT employs a bottom-up, participatory and active-learning approach and innovative interactive didactic material in order to organise civic integration encounters where refugees, asylum seekers and members of the local population discuss key values of the European Union (Art. 2 of the Treaty on European Union - TEU). Based on surveys with participants, this article presents the results of such encounters organised in Austria and Italy (Tyrol, South Tyrol and Friuli Venezia Giulia), evaluating to what extent they have been successful in fostering awareness of EU values.

Keywords: *civic integration, asylum seekers, refugees, EU common values, pedagogical tools, board games*

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*If he were allowed contact with foreigners
he would discover that they are creatures similar to
himself and
that most of what he has been told about them is lies.
The sealed world in which he lives would be broken,
and the fear, hatred, and self-righteousness
on which his morale depends might evaporate.
George Orwell, 1984*

Introduction

In recent years, the so-called refugee crisis has become a structural feature of many European countries. Before 2015, Europe usually counted around 400,000 asylum seekers per year; in 2015, this number peaked at 1.2 million, though in subsequent years it decreased noticeably (Eurostat 2016; Eurostat 2019). The flow of refugees has mainly come from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. Turkey has accommodated a large part of them (Wenden 2016, 13-29).

Following the Austrian government's decision, in late February 2016, to reinforce controls at its borders and the subsequent 'domino effect' in the countries along the Balkan route such as Croatia, Slovenia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (now North Macedonia), which have progressively limited passage to only Syrians, Afghans and Iraqis and eventually completely closed their borders, the route from Libya to Italy became the main axis of migration flows to Europe. Though some governments have tried to hinder their arrival, there are still thousands of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees reaching the Italian, as well as Greek and Spanish, shores.

In recent years, areas located along the South–North axis of migration paths, such as the Italian regions of South Tyrol and Friuli Venezia Giulia as well as the Austrian state of Tyrol, witnessed the arrival of asylum seekers and refugees fleeing a combination of war, violence and poverty. Coming mostly from countries in Central Africa, Syria as well as Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, Pakistan and Bangladesh, they amount to around 1% of the population (less than 1% in South Tyrol and Friuli, and around 1.5% in Tyrol) (Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano and EURAC Research 2017; Regione Autonoma Friuli Venezia Giulia 2019; Bundesministerium für Inneres – Österreich 2017). It is important to note, however, that due to the geographical position of these regions, many more people have ended up in their main cities in an attempt to cross the border to reach the countries of Central and Northern Europe (Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano and EURAC Research 2017; Carlà et al. 2021; Triandafyllidou 2016, 31-48; Benedikt 2019).

Following these arrivals, policies towards asylum seekers and refugees have continued to focus on emergency and first reception issues, whereas policy efforts at both the national and European level have addressed the need to reduce the flow of asylum seekers, to share the burden among European countries or to create more humanitarian migratory paths. At the same time, such development calls for paying greater attention to policies for the integration of asylum seekers and refugees in host societies. In general, it is acknowledged that the growing presence of people with a migrant background poses for countries of destination various challenges and problems of a social, economic, political and cultural nature. How can processes of inclusion be designed and supported in order to create a fully integrated society? What is the best way to accommodate cultural diversity? What can be done to avoid discrimination and xenophobia?

In this regard, civic integration policies have become fashionable in many European countries in the past decade. According to the logic of civic integration, a key tool for the process of inclusion of the migrant population is classes and training through which migrants learn the language and especially the specific features of the country as well as more general common values such as liberty, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Thus, civic integration places the burden of proof on the shoulders of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, who are expected to prove their willingness to integrate into the host society. In general, there is deep scepticism about civic integration policies and civic education programmes for newcomers developed at the national level, which are increasingly criticised as ‘unidirectional, disciplinary and exclusionary and resulting in participants being more estranged, apprehensive, fixated and resistant’ (Kostakopoulou 2010, 957).

Situated at the interplay of these dynamics, this paper shares insights from the EU-funded project –‘Euroregions, Migration and Integration’ (EUMINT),² which aimed to develop a civic integration programme with a European dimension for asylum seekers, refugees and local populations, while attempting to address some of the problems and criticisms attributed to these types of measures as they have been developed and experienced

² The EU-funded Interreg IV Italy-Austria EUMINT project (2018–2020) aimed to strengthen cross-border cooperation between institutions in the provinces of Bolzano (South Tyrol) and Trento, in the states of Tyrol and Carinthia, and in the regions of Friuli Venezia Giulia and Veneto in order to tackle social, economic, political and cultural challenges arising from migration. Convinced that border regions require common and coherent measures in the field of integration policies, the EUMINT project involved municipal, provincial/regional and Europe-wide institutions in three different spheres: institutional, labour and civic integration. Led by Eurac Research (Bolzano/Bozen), the EUMINT project had 16 partners. For further information, see www.eurac.edu/eumint.

at the national level.³ Reframing the concept of civic integration, EUMINT employed a bottom-up, participatory and active-learning approach and newly designed interactive didactic material in order to organise Europe-wide ‘civic integration encounters’ where refugees, asylum seekers and members of the local population could freely discuss key values of the European Union (Art. 2 TEU) (Medda-Windischer et al. 2020a; Medda-Windischer et al. 2020b).⁴

Based on surveys of participants, the article presents the results of the EUMINT encounters organised in Austria and Italy (Tyrol, South Tyrol and Friuli Venezia Giulia). Convinced of the need to adopt ‘a more qualitative focus on the means of integration’ (Goodman 2014, 239), we analyse how participants – asylum seekers, refugees and local populations – experienced these encounters and what they retained from them. The article has two goals: first, to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the concept of civic integration. In this regard, we relate the debate to the role that European common values play in European society and show how the ambiguities of civic integration programmes developed at national levels were overcome in the EUMINT encounters. Second, we evaluate to what extent these encounters have been successful in fostering awareness of EU values. In this way, this paper sheds new light on civic integration debates and its role in processes of migrant integration, for developing a Europe-wide civic integration programme.

1. Civic Integration and Beyond

Since the turn of the century, many countries have started to adopt civic integration programmes in order to deal with migrant populations. These programmes are a type of ‘policies for migrants’ (Hammar 1990) that use as the main tools for migrants’ inclusion language training, employment counselling and the ‘inculcation of respect’ for the basic principles and values of the host society (Larin 2019, 1). These programmes are framed in what

³ Though the project concerned asylum seekers and refugees, the project foresees as potential users the broader category of third-country nationals. The article thus addresses the topic of civic integration with regard to the migrant population in general. Though we are aware that there are differences in the legal status, and thus the rights and benefits and integration experience among different categories of migrants, many aspects and challenges concerning civic integration are similar.

⁴ Education for democratic citizenship, human rights and civic values aimed at equipping learners with knowledge and understanding to empower them to exercise and defend democratic rights and human rights and to play an active part in democratic life with a view to the promotion and protection of democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms is equally important and supported for all citizens and not only for foreign citizens (see, among others, Council of Europe 2010; European Union 2015).

Mouritsen labelled the ‘civic turn’ (Larin 2019, 4), which is characterised by, on the one hand, the spread of civic education in schools and initiatives to discuss national values (including experts’ closed-door commissions and public crowdsourcing exercises) and, on the other, measures to restrict or prohibit minorities’ practices that are considered contrary to national values (Banulescu-Bogdan & Benton 2017, 1).

The term ‘civic integration’ is a translation of the Dutch concept of *inburgering*, which initially appeared in the 1998 Dutch law *Wet Inburgering Nieuwkomers* (Newcomers Integration Act) and which Marie-Claire Foblets interprets as ‘citizenisation’, referring to the promotion of participation-enabling skills (Goodman 2014, 3). As Banting and Kymlicka (2013) have pointed out, civic integration highlights the fact that migrants should integrate into mainstream society and that, as a key assumption, ‘employment is a key part of integration ..., [that] integration requires respect for basic liberal democratic values ... [that] knowledge of the host society’s language, history and institutions is indispensable to integration ... [and that] anti-discrimination laws and policies are also essential to better integration’ (586-587). According to Goodman (2014, 16), civic integration policies ‘consist of cultural requirements, namely language and knowledge of society, that empower individuals to act independently in their host society’. Thus, civic integration aims to share with migrants a common ground in which to interact with the rest of the society. In this way, it differs from assimilatory practices since it foresees neither the forced incorporation of migrants into the culture of the majority population nor the loss of their specific culture and values. In other words, it is a tool to govern a culturally diverse society rather than to homogenise that society, though the line between these concepts remains thin.⁵

From the initial Dutch experience, civic integration programmes have spread to several other countries, including Austria and Italy. They have also been addressed at the EU level. In this regard, though the responsibility for integration policies lies primarily with the Member States, the EU can provide incentives and support to promote the integration of legally resident third-country nationals in the Member States. Furthermore, intersecting with integration issues, the EU can adopt measures to combat

⁵ Note that, in its recent ‘Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027’, the European Commission, in addition to the term ‘integration’, largely employed by the Commission in its previous documents, introduces the term ‘inclusion’ apparently more as a synonym of ‘integration’ than a different concept (European Commission 2020). It seems that the use of the terms ‘integration’ and ‘inclusion’ is following the same path as the use of the terms ‘multiculturalism’ and ‘interculturalism’, which, for many, is considered a mere semantic discussion. On this point, see Meer and Modood, 2012, 175-196.

discrimination, including on the basis of racial or ethnic origin and religion or belief (European Commission 2021; European Parliament, 2021).⁶ References to civic integration can be found in the EU Directive concerning the status of third-country nationals who are long-term residents and the EU Directive on the right to family reunification, which foresee the possibility of introducing integration conditions.⁷ Specifically, the former directive allows EU Member States to impose integration requirements as a condition for acquiring long-term resident status in the first place and to introduce language requirements as a condition for access to education and training (Art. 11(3)(b)). Likewise, according to the Family Reunification Directive, Member States may require that third-country nationals comply with integration measures, in accordance with national law, if they want to exercise the right to family reunification (Art. 7(2); Medda-Windischer and Crepaz 2021, forthcoming). Furthermore, the 'Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy in the European Union' (CBPs), adopted in 2005, state that integration requires respect for the EU's basic values, which include equality and non-discrimination, and knowledge of the language, history and institutions of the host society (European Commission 2005, CBPs 2, 4 and 17). On this basis, the CBPs are thus seen as giving leeway to civic integration programmes (van Oers 2014, 261).⁸ However, it should be pointed out that the CBPs foresee integration as a two-way process of mutual accommodation by both migrants and Member States' residents, in which migrants' cultural traditions, religious practices, and social and economic contributions to society play an important role (European Commission 2005, CBP 1).

The interest in civic integration programmes is related to different factors, such as the emphasis given today to neoliberalism and values of self-reliance, the political orientation of government and the rise in power of right-wing

⁶ See Council Directive 2000/78/EC establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation, OJ 2000 L303/16; Council Directive 2000/43/EC implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, OJ 2000 L180/22.

⁷ Council Directive 2003/109/EC of 25 November 2003 concerning the status of third-country nationals who are long-term residents; Council Directive 2003/86/EC of 22 September 2003 on the right to family reunification.

⁸ The Court of Justice of the European Union, in its *P and S* judgment, confirmed that Member States may require that third-country nationals, even those who already have long-term residence status, comply with integration conditions, in accordance with national law. The Court stated that learning the national language and about the host State could facilitate communication with citizens of the host country and 'encourages interaction and the development of social relations' (ECJ 2015, *P and S v Commissie Sociale Zekerheid Breda, College van Burgemeester en Wethouders van de gemeente Amstelveen*). On this point, see also Peers 2015.

parties, and the retreat from multicultural policies. However, according to Banting and Kymlicka (2013), civic integration and multiculturalism can be combined, and civic integration policies are actually often layered on top of existing multicultural programmes (Goodman 2014, 68-77).

It should be stressed that civic integration programmes are not uniform; rather, there is a great variety across countries. For example, they range from being based on courses on a country's language(s), history and customs, to using tests and/or interviews; they are obligatory or voluntary; they imply financial costs for migrants or are supported by the state; they are or are not a condition for obtaining a resident permit and/or access to social rights; they require good-faith efforts or proof of high proficiency in the host country's language and cultural knowledge; and they are used for migrants' entry into the host country, their settlement and/or the acquisition of citizenship. To summarise, as pointed out by Goodman (2014, 5-6), civic integration programmes vary in terms of design (how requirements are organised and what instruments are used), scope (which legal categories are targeted), sequencing (at which stage of the migration process they are organised) and purpose, depending on the institutional context and the country's political configuration. In this regard, Banting and Kymlicka (2013, 589) distinguish between liberal and illiberal models of civic integration based on the level of pressure put on migrants and the openness of national identity towards diversity.

In Italy, civic integration policies were introduced in 2009, consisting of integration and language requirements through language and civic-oriented courses and/or tests. These requirements concern the process to obtain resident permits, and not the acquisition of citizenship. Indeed, the Italian law requires migrants to sign an *accordo d'integrazione* (integration agreement) in order to have a resident permit for more than one year. Implementation of integration agreements started in March 2012. By signing an agreement, migrants commit to acquiring a sufficient level of knowledge of the Italian language; learning the fundamental principles of the Italian Constitution and the characteristics of civic life in Italy, especially regarding the health and school systems, social services, the work sector and fiscal duties; and registering their children in schools (Ministero dell'Istruzione 2011).⁹ The agreement is organized as a points-based system, in which

⁹ Decree of the President of the Republic, 14 September 2011, n. 179. According to the ASGI (*Associazione per gli Studi Giuridici sull'Immigrazione* – Association of Legal Studies on Immigration), the Italian integration agreement (*accordo di integrazione*) should be replaced by programmes to be attended on a voluntary basis either on the main features of Italian society and the Italian and European legal systems, or social and cultural activities with NGOs, or vocational training and other courses on access to the labour market, housing and

migrants, within a period of two years, can score points by attending free classes on the Italian language and on civic education or, as an alternative, by taking an assessment test. In addition, migrants can acquire further points by attending schools and universities, receiving public honours, carrying on business activities, enrolling in the national health system, volunteering, renting or buying accommodations and by having attended training courses in their original country. If migrants do not fulfil the terms of the agreement, their residence permit may be revoked, or the authorities may refuse to renew their residence permit, and they may eventually be expelled from the country. Furthermore, it has been necessary since 2009 to pass a test of knowledge of the Italian language in order to obtain a so-called long-term resident's EC residence permit.

In Austria, integration programmes apply to the process of entering and settling in the country, as well as acquiring citizenship. Migrants should demonstrate knowledge of the German language through certification obtained from a recognised language institution. Asylum seekers and refugees are exempted from this requirement. The programme has a focus on language knowledge and does not require migrants to attend civic integration courses as such. According to the law, integration courses must convey

knowledge of the German language in order to communicate and to read everyday texts, topics from everyday life with civic elements, and topics that serve to convey European values and core democratic values, and which enable participation in the social, economic and cultural life in Austria.¹⁰

In addition to the language test, the acquisition of citizenship also requires the passing of a citizenship test to assess one's knowledge of Austrian society; the test focuses on the history, geography, political system and culture of Austria and the region where the individual in question lives (Mourão Permoser, 2012, 192; Goodman 2014, 44-64). Furthermore, in 2015 the Austrian government introduced a 50-point integration plan for refugees. Among the plan's measures is a free Austrian values and orientation course, which focuses on the Austrian Constitution, fundamental values and codes of conduct and covers both theoretical and pragmatic issues (Austrian Council of Ministers 2016; Banulescu-Bogdan and Benton 2017, 12).

social services (Radicali italiani 2016, 175).

¹⁰ See Federal Law Act on Settlement and Residence in Austria (*Bundesgesetz über die Niederlassung und den Aufenthalt in Österreich*), BGBl I 2005/100, para. 16(2) (translation of the quotation by Mourão Permoser, 2012, 190).

Although civic integration programmes have been adopted in many countries, scholars disagree on how to evaluate them. Goodman (2014, 2) sees civic integration policies as the 'latest iteration of the ongoing project of nation-building', reflecting a state identity based on the logic of 'togetherness', where 'individuals can join the larger national community thorough initiative and commitment', in contrast to a national identity that underline 'sameness' and where membership is based on inherited or ascriptive features. According to Goodman (2014, 16), civic integration policies foster migrants' autonomy as well as cohesion, a sense of being part of the national political community and of acceptance, commitment and 'shared ownership of national rules and norms and even common resources'; in this way, civic integration creates 'an accessible, common bond uniting otherwise 'most-different' people' (Goodman 2014, 32).

At the same time, civic integration policies and civic education programmes for migrants have received several criticisms, and there is deep scepticism about them. Indeed, stressing the coercive nature and the conditioning of rights of some civic integration programmes, some scholars speak of 'repressive liberalism' or 'illiberal liberalism' (Joppke 2001, 2; Orgad 2010, 53-105; Guild et al. 2009). In this regard, the discussion of the concept of civic integration touches upon the so-called Böckenförde paradox, namely the fact that a liberal state cannot impose through coercion and authoritarian methods a shared sense of community, which is its prerequisite; otherwise, it would no longer be liberal (Böckenförde 1991). Some authors point out that civic integration programmes raise barriers to membership, creating greater alienation, especially among well-integrated migrants who are long-term residents, and who are asked to prove themselves, thereby feeling that they actually do not belong to the society (van Oers 2014, 270). Another perspective on civic integration sees it as representing a form of 'new paternalism', in which migrants are supervised in acquiring their missing skills, and this feature together with the techniques of conditionality 'serve to replicate relations of power that are themselves implicated in the structural causes of poverty and inequality' (Ben-Ishai cit. in Goodman 2014, 240).

An additional problem behind civic integration policies is that they might have a cultural bias, mixing moral requirements and cultural preferences, and that there might be discrepancies between assumptions of legal theory and idealised representation of the country, on the one hand, and the reality and experiences in practice, on the other hand. Thus, there is the risk that common values will not be implemented uniformly in practice, raising the problem of a double standard. As Banulescu-Bogdan and Benton (2017, 17) have pointed out:

while values courses may celebrate equality and the rule of law many minorities may experience discrimination or ethnic profiling by authorities: and while gender equality is held up as one of the principal reasons for restricting certain Muslim cultural practices, problems such as domestic violence are in fact endemic in many native communities. Initiatives to define and promote values will ring hollow if they exist only on paper.

This issue is further complicated by the rise of populist far-right parties that are challenging and reframing liberal values in restrictive terms.

There is also the risk that civic integration policies might have selective effects because migrants who have difficulties fitting in in society – for example, the elderly, those with little education or who do not know how to read, women in disadvantaged positions, traumatised individuals – might have more difficulties dealing with these types of programmes (van Oers 2014, 270-271).

Among the harsh critics of civic integration policies, Larin (2019, 9) considers them to involve the application of civic nationalist ideology towards migrants, arguing that civic integration best serves to regulate migration flows rather than to integrate migrants and that it ‘reflects the self-representation of the majority’ instead of being an important basis of social cohesion. Furthermore, according to Larin, the central elements of civic integration (knowing the language and culture and sharing the values of one’s new home society) might be conditions for integration rather than sufficient tools to successfully integrate. Indeed, passing civic integration requirements is not evidence of successful integration, since it does not address the main problems of migrant integration and inequality and other contextual factors that hinder it. Furthermore, civic integration policies ‘can provide the skills ... but it cannot mandate the practice’ since people might choose not to integrate or might commit only on paper and not in practice (Goodman 2014, 241).

2. Common Values and Their Relevance

Despite the criticisms of civic integration programmes, and despite the ambiguities and controversial ideologies underlying them, it is acknowledged that social cohesion and a sense of belonging to a given community require the maintenance of a common, albeit minimal, degree of awareness of certain values (Putnam 2001; Stolle et al. 2008, 57-75; Kelsner and Bloemraad 2010, 319-347; Portes and Vickstrom 2011, 461-79) even if these values are often interpreted differently depending on the context and time (Toggenburg 2017; Leino and Petrov 2009). Furthermore, as international mobility flows

continue to increase in Europe, as elsewhere, to an unprecedented level, the question of social cohesion and shared values reveals an unequivocal urgency for most European countries, which consider themselves to be reasonably homogeneous and cohesive. At the EU level, the question arises as to how to approach the issue of European common values. In this light, it becomes paramount to reflect on a European-inspired type of civic integration programme, which might overlap with, or even replace, existing national initiatives by addressing some of the problems usually attributed to these types of programmes.

The linkage between communities, social cohesion and values emerges clearly from Eurobarometer's surveys conducted on a regular basis at the European level. For instance, according to a recent Eurobarometer survey that asked which areas most created a sense of community among EU citizens, those interviewed indicated values (21%) after culture (27%), the economy (25%) and history (23%); religion came last, together with languages (9%) (Eurobarometer 2020, 133-135).¹¹

EU law makes very explicit the values shared by the European Union and its Member States (Toggenburg 2017; 2008, 109-129; Kochenov 2014a; Biondi et al. 2012.).¹² Article 2 TEU sets out these core values by stating:

The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society characterised by pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men.

The values listed in Article 2 TEU, which derive their origin from a combination of culture, religion and humanism (Preamble to the TEU), are defined as foundational values of the EU as well as values that are 'common to the Member States'.

Relying again on Eurobarometer surveys, many Europeans consider shared values – in particular those listed in Article 2 TEU – to be very relevant,

¹¹ The data cover 27 EU Member States (without the United Kingdom).

¹² Note that these values are also the values underlying the Council of Europe's European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR): its preamble asserts that European countries have a common heritage of political tradition, ideals, freedom and the rule of law, which are the principles of liberal democracy and the underlying values of the Convention itself. Hence, it is fair to say that the Convention was designed to maintain and promote the ideals and values of a democratic society (Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, ETS No. 005, opened for signature on 4 November 1950, entered into force on 3 September 1953). See European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) (1989), *Soering v. The United Kingdom*, paras 87-88; ECtHR (1976), *Kjeldsen, Busk Madsen and Pedersen v. Denmark*, 27; Council of Europe, 1975-1985. Among the vast literature on the ECHR, see Merrills 1993.

at least as far as Europe is concerned. According to a 2020 Eurobarometer survey, an overwhelming majority of those interviewed (91%) think that all EU Member States should respect the core values of the EU, such as fundamental rights and democracy (Eurobarometer 2020, 86). In addition, according to a European Parliament Eurobarometer survey (2019), a clear majority of those interviewed see protecting human rights (48%), freedom of speech (38%), gender equality (38%) and solidarity between EU Member States (33%) as the main fundamental values to preserve in the European Union and the frame for the EU's political action.

As Toggenburg (2017, 5) reminds us, when the wording of Article 2 TEU was first discussed and decided upon, the drafters advocated a rather short value provision representing

a hard core of values meeting two criteria at once: on the one hand, they must be so fundamental that they lie at the very heart of a peaceful society practicing tolerance, justice and solidarity; on the other hand, they must have a clear non-controversial legal basis so that the Member States can discern the obligations resulting therefrom which are subject to sanction.

The Preamble to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union also includes an explicit reference to common values, where it states that the EU

contributes to the preservation and development of these *common values* while respecting the diversity of the cultures and traditions of the peoples of Europe and the national identities of the Member States and the organisation of their public authorities at national, regional and local levels.¹³

As clearly stated by the Director of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), Michael O'Flaherty (2018):

All of the 13 values listed in Article 2 are reflected to a greater or lesser degree in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union's 54 articles. Indeed, it could be said that the Charter translates the Article 2 values into more detailed and operational human rights code.

In other words, the values listed in Article 2 TEU are explicated by the rights enshrined in the Charter.

It is acknowledged that Article 2 TEU on the Union's values not only makes a political and symbolic statement but also has concrete legal effects. First, it is a condition which European states have to respect in order to be allowed to apply for membership (Art. 49 TEU). Second, 'a clear risk of a serious

¹³ Emphasis added.

breach' of these shared values by a Member State may lead to a suspension of some rights resulting from Union membership (Art. 7(2) TEU).¹⁴ Third, the promotion of its values is one of the EU's primary objectives, including in its external relations, as mentioned in Article 3(1) and Article 21(2) TEU (Piris 2010, 71-72; Toggenburg 2017, 2).

The Union's values are, therefore, part and parcel of the very essence of the EU and, dating from the 1970s, are intimately connected with the concept of 'European identity' (Biondi et al. 2012, 138; Ciancio 2009, 7). According to the Copenhagen Declaration on Europe's identity by European heads of state in 1973:

The Nine wish to ensure that the cherished *values* of their legal, political and moral order are respected, and to preserve the rich variety of their national cultures. ... [T]hey are determined to defend the principles of representative democracy, of the rule of law, of social justice ... and of respect for human rights. All these are fundamental elements of the *European identity* (Heads of State or Government Summit Conference, 1973, para 1).¹⁵

In this regard, it is important to note that the values of the Union have not been described as 'universal': if, on the one hand, they are considered to be part of European identity, on the other hand, they have not been understood as necessarily shared by every other State and people; indeed, values are ideologically contested and differently understood across the EU (Mastronardi and Spanó 2009, 66; Ciancio 2019; Galland 2014, 61-78).

On this point, in contrast, FRA Director O'Flaherty (2018) assertively stated:

These [values] are sometimes described as 'European values'. However, I am uncomfortable with that term ... these values are *universal values*;

¹⁴ According to some authors, only a violation of the values mentioned in the first part of Article 2 TEU, in contrast to those mentioned in the second part, enables the start of the infringement procedure and, eventually, the suspension of participants' rights (Mastronardi and Spanó 2009, 66-67; Pechstein 2012, 17). On the infringement proceedings, solely or in part, based on a violation of a Union value expressed in Article 2 TEU, Gormley argues that the likelihood of such proceedings, 'in the present state of the EU law, [is] somewhat remote ... in particular, the likelihood of the Commission acting via the infringement proceedings route in relation to Article 2 TEU seems little more than zero' (Gormley 2017, 78). On the judicial enforcement of the values enshrined in Article 2 TEU through the interplay with other EU primary law provisions and judicial remedies, such as those foreseen in Articles 258, 259 and 260 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) and Article 19 TEU, see the recent stream of case law issued by the European Court of Justice (ECJ) (2018a), *Associação Sindical dos Juizes Portugueses*; ECJ (2018b), *Minister for Justice and Equality*; ECJ (2019), *Commission v. Poland*. On this point, see Spieker 2021; Scheppele et al. 2021; Rossi 2020.

¹⁵ Emphasis added.

they are values of global origin. They are inspired by theistic and philosophical traditions and values from across the world. They speak to humanity not to geography.¹⁶

In general, the EU's focus on values is considered to be a safeguard to ensure that the value consensus among States, although minimal and permanently contested, does not erode and that the EU itself stays true to its value commitments in its policies (Toggenburg 2017, 3). In this regard, it is also important to note that the EU did not create the values listed in Article 2 TEU. Rather the EU reproduced at the EU level what already existed within the national constitutions of its Member States (Toggenburg 2017; Ciancio 2019, 11).

As mentioned earlier, despite the explicit wording of Article 2 TEU and other EU documents referring to the notion of 'values', the concept is rather foggy and surrounded by uncertainties.

Generally, values are considered to be sociological presumptions about the ethical preferences of individuals, which are usually scientifically unfounded (von Bogdandy 2011, 42). As Carl Schmitt (1979) pointed out, referring to 'values' involves a risk of which lawyers, in particular, should be aware: values are typically expressed in absolute and not relative terms; hence it is extremely difficult for profoundly different, and even opposing, values and conceptions of life to coexist in pluralist and diverse societies (della Cananea 2011, 10-11; Böckenförde 1990; Habermas 1996).

In this respect, it is important to stress the difference between law and ethics: with the latter, and the discourse surrounding it, having, *inter alia*, a strong paternalistic dimension (von Bogdandy 2011, 42).

According to von Bogdandy (2011), the concepts listed in Article 2 TEU, even if they are referred to as values, must be more correctly understood as *norms* and *principles* – fundamental principles. It is usually acknowledged that values and principles are different: the former indicate the fundamental ethical convictions of individuals, whereas the latter identify legal norms. Since the 'values' of Article 2 TEU, as seen earlier, produce legal effects, they should be more appropriately considered legal norms and, due to their constitutive significance, also fundamental principles (von Bogdandy 2011, 49; 2010, 95-111).

Therefore, Article 2 TEU should be better interpreted as comprising founding principles and legal norms rather than values, which mostly have an ethical dimension (von Bogdandy 2009, 11-54; Kochenov 2014b, 148). These legal principles, unlike other factors, such as happiness or well-being, have a normative dimension, orient individual behaviour and shape shared

¹⁶ Emphasis added.

rules and standards in order to facilitate coexistence between communities and individuals (Mouritsen and Jaeger 2018).

Applying these concepts to the processes of migrants' inclusion and the achievement of an integrated society, it is clear that a boundary line should be drawn from the Kantian distinction between morality and legality (Joppke 2001). Hence, if it is lawful to require knowledge of fundamental principles, it is certainly not fair to ask anyone to adhere to the *ethical* values underlying these principles. And moreover, in a pluralist democracy, it is the right of every individual to believe that the law or majority values are unjust and should be changed with peaceful means without the state being given the right to interfere in those convictions. What is essential is not to require that migrants or any individual conform their ethical values to those of the Western world but to know and respect the principles and rights of the legal system in which they live (Cavaggion 2017, 8).

The risk inherent in this process is what the political sociologist Christian Joppke (2012) defined as 'muscular liberalism', according to which:

liberal host-society values and institutions are to be intrinsically and unconditionally accepted for what they are ... The problem is that implementing this muscular liberalism would entail moral intrusiveness and curtailment of individual liberties that would destroy precisely the liberal values it means to achieve.

This has also been defined as the 'paradox of liberalism': excluding someone based on ideological ideas is illiberal in view of the liberal principles of freedom and tolerance (Orgad 2010; Entzinger 2003); the paradox lies therein that the liberal state must either tolerate illiberal practices or turn to illiberal means to 'liberate' the illiberal. Either choice, as Orgad (2010) argues, undermines liberalism.

3. How to Overcome the Main Criticisms of Civic Integration: Some Considerations

In light of the importance that common values – or, more correctly, fundamental principles and norms – have in society, the challenge of fostering knowledge of those values is to identify a format in which to introduce them to people that avoids the criticisms of civic integration programmes presented above. For this purpose, civic integration programmes should be based on Goodman's (2014) 'logic of togetherness', where people are bonded together while respecting their multiple and diverse identities. In this regard, looking at civic integration programmes that focus on common values, a number of considerations can be put forward.

First, values should be drawn from legal norms, especially Article 2 TEU, rather than from social practices. Furthermore, as suggested by Banulescu-Bogdan and Benton (2017, 14), such values should not be depicted as rosy ideals, but rather in inclusive and non-ethnic terms, presenting them as not fixed and portraying even-handedly the ‘imperfections, limitations, and contradictions that undoubtedly exist within society – and the sometimes painful historical contexts that gave rise to them’. At the same time, the discussion around the values should be rooted in evidence of how and why values work in individuals’ daily lives. In this way, democratic engagement is fostered, which ‘involves debating the meaning, application, and contradictions of abstract values’ (Mouritsen and Jaeger 2018, 15).

Second, civic integration programmes should assess neither the knowledge nor the morality of the participants – that is, their willingness to believe in common values. Indeed, as observed by Joppke (2014, 25), a liberal state ‘can only regulate the external behavior of people, not their inner motivations’; therefore, it should refrain ‘from prescribing substantive conceptions about ‘what is good’ and from requiring people to believe liberal values’ (van Oers 2014, 25). Along these lines, participants in civic integration programmes should not be expected ‘to undergo deep moral change’ (Goodman 2014, 33). Instead, they should gain some knowledge and understanding of those values and the benefits and challenges connected to them, allowing participants to engage in dialogue with others, but such knowledge and understanding should not be tested during or after the encounters.

Third, civic integration programmes should be based on a voluntary approach that advocates common values and skills for the autonomy of the participants without sacrificing their diversity. Indeed, knowledge of common values should be provided as orientation material rather than being mandatory.

Fourth, civic integration programmes should pursue active-learning, participatory didactic methods, such as role playing and games, rather than theoretical teaching, using different means of communication, employing concrete examples and encouraging participants to present their personal stories. Such methods foster discussions and the free exchange of opinions. Thus, participants can familiarise themselves with common values through self-reflection and dialogue with other participants – rather than direct teaching. In this regard, attention should be given to the profile and training of the people leading the civic integration activities, who should act more as mediators than as teachers or lecturers. They should be chosen from among people with content knowledge as well as specific didactic and intercultural

sensibilities and skills to resolve conflicts and nurture dialogue.¹⁷ Recognising the tensions at the heart of this endeavour, these mediators should be given broad goals and guidelines, rather than precise instructions, allowing them the flexibility to sort out what works best for their participants and which issues/values are particularly pertinent for a group of people in a distinct area. Similarly, specific consideration is given to the setting where civic integration programmes take place, which should consist of an open and safe environment that favours dialogue and questioning (Mouritsen & Jaeger, 2018, 19). Moreover, the informational and didactic material should be designed to reach everyone, in particular vulnerable groups and individuals who experience barriers entering the society, such as those who do not know how to read.

Finally, it should be stressed that civic integration programmes should be designed with a bottom-up approach with the involvement of representatives of migrant associations and other stakeholders who provide input to define the content and format of the programmes.

Looking at finding a balance between challenging one's own belief system and practices while respecting individual cultural identities and differences, the format of civic integration programmes should pursue a threefold goal: 1) encouraging participation and critical dialogue about values; 2) empowering individual participants so that they acquire some of the skills and knowledge needed to act independently in the host society; and 3) contributing to fostering a sense of belonging (understood as the feeling of being part of a community) and participation in the host society, which serve to establish and strengthen social cohesion. Participants should be given the tools to understand both their rights and duties, without sacrificing their differences, thus strengthening solidarity and the bonds of mutual understanding between people from diverse cultural backgrounds. Civic integration programmes may also represent moments of social interaction and language practice.

4. EUMINT Board Game: *The House of Common Values*

The considerations discussed above were tested in the EU-funded EUMINT project, in which a board game called *The House of Common Values* was developed for asylum seekers and refugees as well as for the local population

¹⁷ See, in this regard, the guidelines elaborated by the Italian government for the civic integration classes implemented in Italy (Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca 2011).

(Medda-Windischer et al. 2020a; Medda-Windischer et al. 2020b).¹⁸ The board game represents an innovative civic integration programme with an EU dimension, which departs from existing national programmes.

The board game is based on a metaphor. As mentioned earlier, communities are identified and kept together through social cohesion on the basis of common factors, including shared values: European societies can be represented as a house where different people live and in which the existence of rules for its functioning is a simple necessity to ensure the sharing of the house itself so that its tenants do not live in separate rooms and are not disconnected from one another (Toggenburg 2017, 5). Questioning or interpreting these rules differently in time and/or space does not diminish their importance or signify that one has renounced them (Toggenburg 2017).

Through an interactive and playful methodology, the board game is based on the same metaphor of the house in order to present and discuss the common values listed in Article 2 TEU. The game represents a house in which various daily situations take place: participants are invited to share short stories and personal experiences stemming from these open situations and to link them to a common value; the linkage between individuals' stories and common values is open to the interpretation and full discretion of each participant; in other words, there is no right or wrong answer. By linking stories and values, a connection is made between individual experiences, daily situations and values that, sometimes, are perceived as abstract and rhetorical concepts (European Commission, 2016).

The game was tested in 82 encounters carried out in 2019 involving approximately 700 individuals from among asylum seekers, refugees and the local population in various municipalities in Italy and Austria (South Tyrol, Tyrol and Friuli Venezia Giulia). Participants took part voluntarily in single encounters lasting approximately two to three hours, and they were recruited through open announcements with the help of local NGOs and public offices, such as social services and integration departments, which also provided organisational support. To ensure that these encounters were learning exchanges, various didactic materials that foster further exploration of core values were developed – in addition to the board game – including explanatory notes, videos and illustrations of the values, in order to address the needs of a broad range of participants, including people who are unable to read and individuals with very limited language knowledge. The encounters were analysed through surveys, and the findings were used to refine future encounters and final outputs and to assess their impact.

¹⁸ The board game *The House of Common Values* and other related material can be downloaded from the project website: www.eurac.edu/eumint.

Mediators were trained to guarantee the sustainability of the activities and ensure a multiplier effect.

As mentioned earlier, one of the ultimate goals of civic integration programmes should be to contribute to the creation of an integrated society. Therefore, the encounters address not only asylum seekers and refugees but also the local population. Through the use of the EUMINT board game *The House of Common Values*, illustrations, videos and other learning materials, the goal is to involve any interested person in the process. Tools such as the EUMINT board game represent a motivating icebreaker for a heterogeneous public to start developing fruitful exchanges and discussions on both their own values and shared values as well as cultural differences (Medda-Windischer et al. 2020a; Medda-Windischer et al. 2020b).

5. Analysis of the EUMINT Encounters and Board Game on Common Values

The EUMINT encounters and *The House of Common Values* aim to foster awareness of EU values, while avoiding the criticisms usually directed at civic integration programmes. To evaluate their success, we ran two types of surveys with encounter participants: a survey to evaluate the board game and a follow-up survey on common values. The results of these surveys are analysed in the following sections.

5.1. Survey on EUMINT Encounters

A first overview of the results of the EUMINT encounters comes from the evaluation forms that participants were asked to compile at the end of 72 encounters (those organised in Tyrol and South Tyrol). Out of 605 participants, 529 people (326 in South Tyrol and 203 in Tyrol) completed the evaluations, with a turnout of 87.4%, making them a relevant data set, though we are aware of the limitations of these types of evaluations in terms of reliability and analytical depth. The evaluations centred on three main types of questions: 1) why a person participated; 2) how they evaluated the experience; 3) and what they took home from the experience. From the evaluations completed by the participants, a great majority (75.4%) of whom had never taken part in activities on values before, an image of the encounters emerges as an enriching positive experience where people reflect with interest on common values.

With similar results in South Tyrol and Tyrol, among the main reasons to participate in the encounters were the desire to learn more about common values (66.7%), followed by more practical social needs, such as the desire

to meet new people (47.4%) and to improve linguistic skills (28.7%). The multiple-choice questions gave participants an opportunity to provide alternative motivations; 20% provided alternatives, which included 'curiosity about the topic' or 'curiosity about something new'.

Concerning the questions to evaluate the encounters, participants were asked to agree with certain statements on the encounters and, in both South Tyrol and Tyrol, most agreed with the positive statements: 'the dialogue on values was interesting' (73.5%); 'I learned something new on common values' (59%); 'it was amusing' (45.7%); and 'I reflected on my personal values' (41.2%). Only 3.8% stated that they did not learn anything new; most negative statements focused on linguistic issues: 14.7% could not understand much, and 13.6% could not express themselves properly. Furthermore, in the two regions analysed, most participants considered the activities carried out during the encounters interesting (79.6%), followed, to a lesser extent, by other positive adjectives such as 'amusing', 'comprehensible' and 'new' (42%, 41% and 34.2%, respectively). Overall, fewer than 20 participants considered the encounter activities boring or not adapted to their specific personal situation (2.1% and 1.1% respectively). Similarly, the game was mostly considered interesting (74.1%). Among the game's key features were that it was comprehensible and amusing, a choice made by 37.9% and 36.2% of the participants, respectively, whereas only 3% considered the game boring. It should also be noted that 7.8% provided written criticism that referred, most of the time, to the length and complexity of the activities. Finally, a feature of the encounters was to bring together natural-born citizens and people with a migrant background. The risk that this choice might make some participants less inclined to engage proved to be groundless, since most participants felt comfortable in the group (88.8%). In this regard, it is relevant to note that, among comments and suggestions on how to improve such encounters, most suggested having more natural-born citizens and more participants from abroad (27.9% and 24.9%, respectively).¹⁹

When asked to evaluate whether the knowledge acquired during the encounters would help them in their daily lives, most of the participants (68.2%) responded in the affirmative, and 17.6% said that it would partly help them. It should be noted that there were more negative responses in Tyrol, where 8.9% of participants responded in the negative (3.7% in South Tyrol).²⁰ The encounters seemed a bit less successful in addressing people's desire to improve their linguistic skills. Indeed, 51.2% and 16.3% of participants improved or improved in part, respectively, their linguistic skills. In general,

¹⁹ It should be noted that 14.8% of the sample suggested having different didactic material.

²⁰ Some 8.5% of participants did not answer the question.

it is worth noting that most of the participants in both regions would recommend the encounters in whole (73%) or in part (15.1%) to friends and acquaintances.

To summarise, the encounters were mostly positively evaluated by participants, who appeared to be interested and engaged. As a final note, it is also worth mentioning that approximately 200 participants (about one third of the sample) provided, in addition to answers to the questionnaire, specific comments, criticisms and suggestions on how to improve the encounters and the board game.

5.2. Survey on Common Values

The survey on common values was conceived as a follow-up study on the impact of the EUMINT encounters on participants' knowledge of common values, their understanding of the relevance of common values to their daily life and their openness to diversity. Accordingly, three questions were formulated and posed after the EUMINT encounters:

1. Could you tell me about three values that you remember from the EUMINT encounters?²¹
2. How useful and relevant are values – such as human dignity, equality between women and men, minority rights, etc. – in your daily life?²²
3. How do you rate your openness to diversity (cultural, religious, linguistic, gender, etc.) after participating in the EUMINT encounters?²³

The sample for the study consisted of a total of 40 people: 20 asylum seekers / refugees and 20 local residents who, in the period between February and May 2019, had participated in the EUMINT encounters on common values in various municipalities in South Tyrol. They were contacted to take part in the survey by Eurac staff by phone in the period between May and August 2019. The participants ranged from 18 to over 60 years of age. Seventeen of the 40 participants were between 18 and 35 years old; there were 14 participants between 36 and 60 years of age, and nine were over 60 years old. The sample comprised an equal number of men and women. The national composition and the urban/rural main area of origin of the sample were very diverse: EU-28 (N=20), Africa (N=14), Asia (N=4), the Americas (N=2);²⁴ half of the

²¹ Open question.

²² The possible responses to Question 2 were 0 (not at all), 1 (little), 2 (enough) or 3 (very much).

²³ The possible responses to Question 3 were 0 (much worse), 1 (worse), 2 (unchanged), 3 (improved) or 4 (much improved).

²⁴ Respondents were asked to indicate only their geographical macro-area of origin. Thus, it is not possible to draw any conclusion on the effect that the specific origin of the respondents had on their answers.

sample comprised individuals from urban areas; and half, from rural areas. Finally, regarding the level of education, one respondent had less than five years of schooling; nine participants, between 6 and 10 years of schooling; 18 participants, between 11 and 14 years; and 12, more than 14 years of schooling.

As regards Question 1 on one's knowledge of common values, respondents indicated 99 different aspects, which were categorised according to 16 values. Out of all responses, the most frequently cited values were solidarity (16%), freedom (15%), equality (13%), justice (10%), tolerance and human rights (both 9%), and gender equality and non-discrimination (both 6%). The results showed that only in four cases did respondents indicate concepts that were not considered a common value according to Article 2 TEU.²⁵ It should be pointed out that, although the range of values indicated by asylum seekers/refugees and local residents were similar, there was an important difference in the ranking of the categories. Considering the five most mentioned values, the former group started with freedom, equality and non-discrimination, followed by democracy and human rights. In contrast, local residents mentioned solidarity, justice and tolerance the most, followed by freedom and equality. During the follow-up study, a similar question was posed to a group of people with characteristics similar to those of the main sample in terms of gender, age, national and urban/rural origins, and education, who did not participate in the EUMINT encounters. The precise question was, 'Can you tell me three values you associate with common European values?' The aspects this group mentioned most frequently were solidarity, freedom, education, pluralism, equality and tolerance. It is interesting to note that this group, in contrast to the group who participated in the EUMINT encounters, indicated more often (in 31 cases out of 90) concepts such as work, peace and, among the most mentioned values, education, which are actually not considered values by Article 2 TEU.

Question 2 concerned the relevance of common values in daily life: in this case, almost all of those interviewed (N=38) considered shared values very useful and relevant in their daily lives, and only two respondents considered them sufficiently relevant; no one responded that common values were irrelevant or of little relevance. It is interesting to note that there was no difference in how asylum seekers / refugees and local residents answered this question: both categories of individuals considered common values very important in their daily lives. The two people who responded 'sufficiently relevant' were both female, over 60 years of age and with 11–14 years of schooling.

²⁵ These concepts were respect, hospitality and respect for the environment.

As for Question 3 on their openness to diversity after the EUMINT encounters, 16 out of the 40 people interviewed indicated that their openness towards societal diversity had improved, and eight said that their attitude was 'much improved' (with a majority of responses indicating improvements after the encounters), whereas 16 of those interviewed said that their openness remained unchanged (either positively or negatively). In more detail, among the 20 asylum seekers and refugees, 13 responded that their attitude towards diversity had improved or was much improved, but it remained unchanged for the other seven. In contrast, among the 20 local residents, 11 indicated that, after the EUMINT encounters, their openness to societal diversity had improved or was much improved, and it remained unchanged for the other nine. As for age categories, for the majority of interviewed individuals between 18 and 35 years of age (11 out of 17) and for those over 60 years of age (seven out of nine), their attitude towards diversity had improved or was much improved; in contrast, for 8 out of 14 of those between 36 and 60 years of age, their attitude remained unchanged. Finally, for the only respondent with less than five years of education, their attitude towards diversity after the EUMINT encounters improved, and for the majority of those with between 6 and 10 years or between 11 and 14 years of education, their attitude improved or was much improved (6 out of 9 and 11 out of 18, respectively). For half of the interviewed individuals with more than 14 years of education, their openness towards diversity remained unchanged after the EUMINT encounters. The results of Question 3 showed that the EUMINT encounters had a more positive impact, though only slightly, on the participants' openness towards diversity among participants with less education and among asylum seekers and refugees.

The present survey is clearly not without limitations. One limitation is the relatively small number of participants (40 individuals who participated in the EUMINT encounters). Thus, a future study should include more participants, possibly interviewed before and after the encounters on common values, to measure how and to what extent their knowledge of common values and of the relevance of those values changes over time as well as how their attitudes towards diversity change over time. Another limitation is the short duration of the encounters, which were conducted for a single session lasting two to three hours. It is possible that if participants were given a longer, more thorough session in which the common values were presented and discussed over several days, there might be more pronounced effects on their knowledge about common values, their understanding of the relevance of those values in daily life and their attitudes towards societal diversity. Therefore, future research should examine the effect of lengthier encounters

on common values and conduct an analysis of attitudes towards diversity before and after encounters on common values among the same individuals.

Beyond these limitations, the main findings of the survey on the impact of the EUMINT encounters on common values are that the encounters and the use of the board game *The House of Common Values* led to improved knowledge of common values and, more significantly, to an enhanced understanding of the relevance of common values in one's daily life as well as an increased openness towards societal diversity. This study showed that activities on common values such as the EUMINT encounters based on a playful didactic activity are beneficial in our diverse societies in which social cohesion, shared values and a common sense of belonging are increasingly important.

Conclusions

This paper contributes to current debates surrounding the so-called civic turn and civic integration programmes, describing and analysing EUMINT encounters based of the board game *The House of Common Values*, an innovative format for a civic integration programme with a European dimension. The analysis above shows the positive effects of such encounters, which were designed with a voluntary, participatory and active-learning approach to overcome some of the main criticisms and limits usually assigned to civic integration programmes. Referring to Orwell's words quoted at the beginning of the paper, EUMINT encounters contribute to fostering self- and mutual understanding of what (local and foreign) people have in common; this understanding is needed to overcome the fears of *the other* that too often characterise the current public debate in Europe. Thus, the values listed in Article 2 TEU are not only one of the main elements that keep the EU Member States and their citizens together, but they can also be a key tool for the process of integrating *new citizens*.

Civic integration policies risk, however, being counterproductive in fostering an integrated society if they are not supported by diversity-oriented policies. Conversely, these policies may undermine social cohesion if they are not complemented by civic integration policies (Banting and Kymlicka 2013, 592). A combination of both approaches is thus a necessary response to the challenges of migrants' integration.

Indeed, as correctly acknowledged by Banting and Kymlicka (2013), there is nothing inherently incompatible between civic integration programmes and respect for diversity. In this regard, they argue that coercive or illiberal versions of such programmes are 'incompatible with any meaningful

conception of multicultural support for diversity' (Banting and Kymlicka 2013, 593); instead, they point out that 'voluntary approaches to civic integration can be combined with a multicultural approach to form a potentially stable policy equilibrium' (Banting and Kymlicka 2013, 593). The EUMINT encounters analysed in this article pursue these objectives by adopting a voluntary approach in these activities and a diversity-oriented perspective.

While acknowledging that civic integration programmes, as in the format of EUMINT encounters, might be an important element for achieving social cohesion, we are aware that they are not sufficient, and other elements should be addressed. A crucial factor in this regard is how open the society is to the expression of difference and the presence of diversity-oriented policies. It is also clear that other contextual factors affect migrants' integration outcome, such as the communities in which they live, the education they receive, as well as other socio-economic factors and existing social or familial networks (Goodman 2014, 241).

Migrant integration remains an enduring litmus test for the effective and genuine implementation of common values in European countries, and the EUMINT encounters could be just one of the tools to pursue this goal.

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