



## Social Change Initiative

# Migration policy making in Europe: challenges & opportunities for civil society

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  - Drivers
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# Task set

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- Role NGOs in shaping migration/integration policy
- Perceptions of factors - external & internal that impact on influence
- Where? EU policy & national level in France, Germany, Greece, Italy, & UK
- *Short* review: 21 days – review literature; 24 interviews; London convening
- Why?



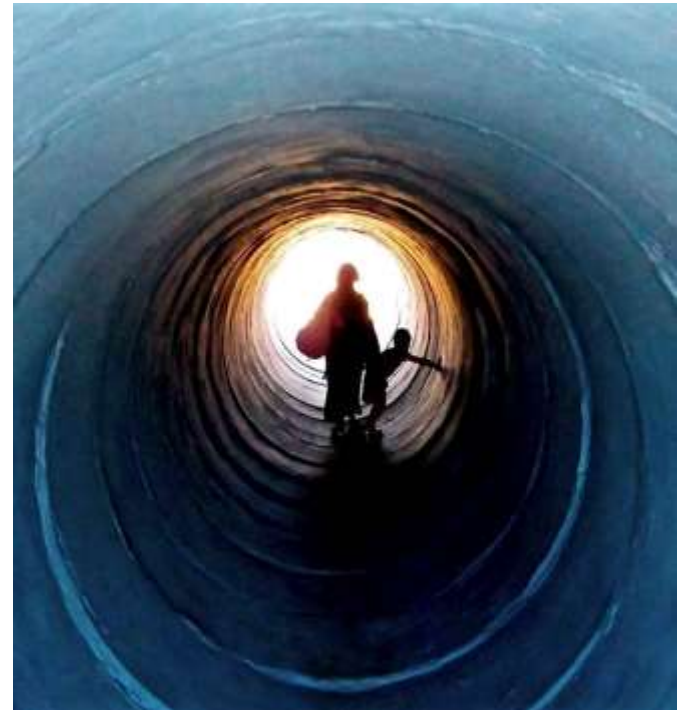
# Context: Drivers

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- Refugee 'crisis'; security; electoral risks of public hostility/rise of far right; imminent elections...demand for labour; international/EU law....

Recognise:

- magnitude of drivers relative to civil society leverage
- Tensions & trade offs in policy making



# Context: Policy making process-es

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- Played out between Ministries, tiers government, DGs
- Differing cultures & approaches between/within departments
- Some need, want, expect engage with civil society – some do not
- Competitors for influence
- Sheer complexity of policy-making environment & processes NGOs seeking to influence



*'The more a topic needs to be addressed through coordination of various Ministries the more the action becomes inefficient'*

Advisor to Minister, Italy

*'Civil servants think they are much higher in the hierarchy than NGOs'*

NGO, France

# Context: civil society

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- Fragmented, different roles, funded remits
- Many NGOs no aspiration to engage in advocacy or critical challenge
- Service providers have wealth of evidence – but constrained by aims, funder
- Others aspire - but no capacity
- International NGOs in camps - may have no remit / knowledge of policy system
- Limited coordination / tensions, across these sector divides

*‘a growing disconnection between grassroots and advocacy levels, and this is damaging for the effectiveness of advocacy.’*

Academic, formerly NGO,  
France

*‘There is a need to give NGOs some influence in return for their contribution, some reciprocity.’*

Funder, migration sector

# What makes civil society influential?

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- Fit with policy makers agenda
- Credibility
- Strategy / tactics
- Tone
- Trust
- Capacity
- Inside knowledge
- Evidence
- Coordination / allies



# What makes civil society influential?

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- Fit with policy makers' agenda

*'Most of the infrastructure on integration is run by them and churches; in every small town they have people engaged in this field so they have a lot of expertise and they know how to bring it to the government. The government has to work with them. You can't make an integration programme without them.'*

German government official

*'The first thing Ministers want is to talk to friends, on side, to help them achieve their objectives. On side means they can be trusted, they won't attack the Minister in public the next day. It doesn't mean they agree with everything the Minister does. So tone is important.'*

UK government official

*'If you want to be listened to you have to help government achieve what it wants to achieve.'*

Director of think-tank, UK



# What makes civil society influential?

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- Credibility

*‘What we want is added value. I want NGOs that are on the spot giving actual testimony of what they have seen and then I quote it literally as they are very credible. That gives us an evidence base that is not anecdotal, with a timeline.’*

MEP, LIBE Committee

*‘These organisations are not there on the Talk Shows, TV programmes. There is no original voice from the people who are living here as immigrants and no professional voice with that expertise. So the programmes are speaking about them and there is no really good voice from them’.*

German government official

# What makes civil society influential?

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- Strategy
- Tactics

*'We need some issues on which people try to get lots of public support and others where a wing is arguing from a different perspective and having them there keeps us honest. We need to have people who insist on human rights; express moral outrage'.*

Former advisor to Prime Minister, UK

*'The organisations have their stance, often very critical....but they also know to be influential they have to be constructive. It is a dilemma for them of which they are fully aware. They have to go beyond criticism, propose alternatives.'*

*We tell them we have political constraints and are happy to take proposals that are politically feasible. We can listen to other ideas but there is not much we can do. So they try to balance their position.'*

Official, European Commission

# What makes civil society influential?

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- Tone
- Trust

*'They criticise a lot. We could do the same. But that leads nowhere. We should find synergies, ways of cooperation, come together and see what we can do together. But we come from different cultures. The difficulty is to overcome the negative stereotypes that each has for the other and find the common space to cooperate... But it is easier for them to criticise, even when we are funding them! Many colleagues are suspicious about their role'*

Greek government official

*'A key factor is attitude. [NGO] is a good example. It has a political agenda, is not just a service provider. It is defending an idea. Their attitude is not always cooperative. It is argumentative. They feel they have to fight for attention to get what they want. That isn't the best way to talk to this office. A cooperative approach is the best one....an NGO is more influential if it is proven trustworthy'.*

Italian government Ministerial advisor

# What makes civil society influential?

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- Capacity
- Inside knowledge
- Evidence

*'Some are more keen to talk to government and have more lobby skills; people who have professionalised in that way, and increasingly so. They know how government works, address the right people with the right set of arguments.'*

Advisor to Minister, Italy

*'This work is highly technical, and requires a large amount of effort, expertise and resources, as well as very good networks'.*

Foret & Mourão Permoser (2015) – on role of religion in EU policy-making on immigration  
*J. European Public Policy. 22(8)*

*'We value service providers that have experience, can provide concrete examples, have anecdotal cases that illustrate, and who can facilitate us getting access to that so that we can see for ourselves. Evidence is something we want from them, on what they are doing and the rationale'.*

Government official, UK

# What makes civil society influential?

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- Coordination across sector
- Collaboration – including unusual allies

*‘They [Ministers] are more receptive to a friend who brings an NGO’s proposal to them, than when they hear from the NGO itself’.*

UK government official

*‘In Brussels the advocacy power of the migration NGOs is one tenth of what it could be if they worked together’*

Advisor to Minister, formerly in Brussels

# Influence – factors taken together

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Comparing UK migration NGOs with the international development sector

‘Their clarity of objectives, leverage of moral capital, spend on communications, mobilization from bottom up and holding fast in face of attacks in particular make them stand out. They use high politics as well as public politics, radicals as well as insiders.

There is nothing comparable in the migration sector. It is more oppositional, weaker. They are less able to contain their differences and diffuse in their objectives. They have less infrastructure around the country. So there is less organizational heft, weaker links to society.’

Former Advisor to Prime Minister, UK

# Ways to enhance influence

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- Unlock untapped potential in service sector
- Build personal relationships of trust between policy makers and NGOs
- Encourage policy makers to learn from counterparts abroad – on policy, & models of engagement with NGOs



# More ways to enhance influence

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- Support cooperation & realignment across NGO sector
- Build advocacy skills
- Strengthen the evidence base
- Strengthen voice of migrant-based organisations in media debates





# More ways to enhance influence

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- Resource NGOs to engage in advocacy
- Enable NGOs to learn from their counterparts abroad
- Identify what advocacy has worked in migration/integration field
- Consider cities & regions as potential allies for securing national policy change

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## Key takeaways...

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- Strength of drivers/political imperatives on migration – extent NGOs' influence not solely dependent on them!
- Some policy makers no expectation NGOs engaged in policy making / expectation add value: *essential to address*
- Parts of NGO sectors no aspiration to engage – yet credible & evidence rich: *untapped resource*
- NGOs need diverse tactics & skills – not one size fits all, within & between countries
- NGOs must drive change in own sectors – but *many ways in which funders could support*

