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ONE-STOP-SHOP: A NEW ANSWER FOR IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION

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EVALUATION OF THE ONE-STOP-SHOP PROJECT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The INTI-project 'One-Stop-Shop, A New Answer For Immigrant Integration' is a European Commission (JLS) funded project that aimed to explore the feasibility of a specific format of service provision to immigrants within the more general framework of an integration policy for immigrants. The European Commission's Common Agenda for Integration recommended the OSS as useful format, which legitimates the initiative to explore its feasibility. The specific format as it was developed in Portugal since 2004 under the name National Immigrant Support Centres (CNAI) has been the exemplary source of inspiration for the project that was initiated and coordinated by the Portuguese High Commissioner for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue (ACIDI).

Key elements of the Portuguese CNAI-Centres are:

- Services for immigrants are available and accessible at one particular physical point (concentration);
- Such services cover in principle all domains that are relevant for immigrants (immigration and integration related services);
- Such services are coordinated in time and content through intensive and on the spot coordination of the various services;
- Services and their coordination include not only public (governmental) ones but also those relevant services provided by non-governmental organisations, which implies structural public-private cooperation;
- In the practice of providing the services language and cultural mediation is made available on the spot to smoothen communication and to build trust;
- Migrant organisations are involved as advisors in the setup and functioning of such centers, also as an element of trust building.

Two national Centers (in Lisbon and Oporto) are operational since 2004. The International Organisation for Migration has evaluated them positively in two reports (IOM 2006 and 2009). They represent "a clear example of concerted action of different Governmental agencies, in partnership with civil society" (IOM 2009, 37).

In order to explore the feasibility of this format of service provision to immigrants in other EU-countries the project brought together project-partners from six countries: Germany (Netzwerk Migration in Europa e.V.), Greece (Hellenic Migration Policy Institute), Ireland (the Immigrant Council of Ireland), Italy (the General Directorate for Immigration), Portugal (The High Commissioner's Office) and Spain (Directorate General for Integration of Immigrants). These partners accepted basically two tasks. The first was to make an inventory of immigration and integration policies in general and service provision to immigrants in their country in particular, specifically identifying service practices that come near to the One-Stop-Shop-format. This has been done in six country reports. The second task was to mobilise stakeholders in the country in Advisory Committees and discuss with them – on the basis of the inventory - the feasibility and desirability of developing and applying that OSS-format. IOM Portugal was the seventh partner in the project that particularly helped in the

comparative analysis of reports by making two working documents. The comparative process was given additional depth by organising three special workshops on key themes of the OSS-format: one on the role of socio-cultural mediators, one on the comparison of practices of integrated service provision to immigrants, and one on partnership between NGOs and governmental actors in service provision.

This whole exercise was planned to result in a Handbook that would bring together empirical experience with OSS-practices, and advice and recommendations as to how best realise service provision in this format.

This evaluation of the project is done in this report on two separate levels. The first level evaluates the project procedurally as it has been implemented, measured against the original project plan. On this level of evaluation the conclusions can be pretty straightforward:

- The country teams' have delivered country reports along the lines of a format that was developed in advance in order to facilitate comparative analysis; they have organised Advisory Committees to discuss the country reports and the desirability and feasibility of implementing the OSS-format in their countries (though results vary per country: see later).
- The coordinator has steered the project with a combination of perseverance and diplomacy along the lines set out in the plan, has coordinated the activities, provided adequate internal communication, collected and disseminated several inspiring OSS practices, made results available (easily accessible on the website: <http://www.oss.inti.acidi.gov.pt>) and has written the Handbook (in co-authorship with IOM in Portugal).
- IOM has provided guidance and a framework for the comparative exercise by two working documents and has contributed to the Handbook.
- The special workshops have been to a great extent a common effort realised in a division of tasks among the various partners.

On this level of evaluation one can safely conclude that the project as a whole and the partners in particular, have lived up to the expectations of the original plan.

Whereas this first level of evaluation is purely technical-analytical (aims-procedures-outcomes of the project out of context), the second level of evaluation takes the broader context into account and asks questions about the relevance of the exercise and outcomes. It means that the OSS-format and its possible relevance and feasibility has to be evaluated against the general background in which it is supposed to have certain functions and serve certain aims: in this case against the background of the general policy framing of immigration and integration in a country, the existing institutional structures for such policies, the configuration of actors involved in it (governmental, NGOs, migrants themselves), and even the specific characteristics of the clients/immigrants. Viewed and evaluated from such a perspective a number of observations can be made.

The first is that there is a number of assumptions underlying the OSS-format that are related to the orientation and content of immigration and integration policies in general that should be fulfilled in order to make the OSS-format a *politically feasible* instrument. Not only need such

general policies to be coherent and pro-active, they also should be mobilising and trust building – welcoming as some express it –, they should be right based, client-centered, and prepared to cooperate with all relevant non-governmental organisations and receptive for influence of immigrant organisations. These conditions should be fulfilled not only in the domain of integration, but at the same time also in the domain of regulation of admission and immigration. In actual practice, such conditions are found in only a few European countries. It is not accidental – from this perspective – that the OSS-format or model as described above, developed in Portugal, and that it finds quite some support in Ireland, as transpires from the project. Both are countries with a relatively short history of immigration; they start from what is sometimes called an ‘open situation’, not being hindered by a past of restrictive immigration policies and absence of coherent integration policies for immigrants (who were defined as temporary ‘guests’), as has been the case in most Northwest-European countries. In other words, conditions relating to the political framing of immigration and integration in these two countries makes the OSS-format in principle feasible.

A second set of assumptions relate to questions of institutional arrangements and divisions of competences and tasks in policymaking and implementation. I call this *structural feasibility*. The key elements of the OSS-format that are formulated above can only feasibly be organised, if institutional structures allow this. If services of OSS are supposed to cover all domains relevant for integration, then there should preferably be an organisational structure in which policies for admission and immigration and for integration are brought together in such a way that there is coherence (a condition of political feasibility). In most countries immigration and integration policies are located in different ministries; and not only that: these competences may also be situated on quite different levels, like in Spain where immigration is a national competence, but integration one of the autonomous regions and local governments. The independent competences, policy goals and orientations of these different agencies may well and actually do contradict each other. Again, here Portugal is the exception rather than the rule, having brought together the two domains in one governmental agency. The fact that the OSS in Portugal is able to include even services to illegal residents in its practice is unimaginable in most other European countries.

But there are also other institutional legacies that are relevant to realise the key elements of the OSS-format and that make it more or less feasible. The existence or absence of traditions of cooperation between state agencies and civil society in general is such a legacy, as is the tradition of more client or citizen oriented attitudes versus a more passive and authoritarian orientations of governmental agencies. The latter characteristic often goes together with more or less openness for diversity, both in its consequence of allowing for influence of organised clients (immigrants and their organisations) on service provision and for more awareness that material equality in service provision may be seriously hindered by linguistic and cultural barriers and should thus be solved by using interpreters and mediators.

Finally, there is a third category of conditions that should be fulfilled for an OSS to function properly that pertain to *practical feasibility*: they have to do with the physical place of the facility (easy to reach), opening hours, internal communication between agents involved and with clients, a welcoming atmosphere, etcetera. Behind many of such factors – but surely not all – there is the question of funding. That may be defined as a practical question, but it surely much more. The funding question is a good illustration of how the three levels of feasibility – the political, structural and practical one - do relate to each other. The first level of political

feasibility is the most important one. If there is a political orientation that fits the OSS-approach and a political will to implement it, than structural factors – even if these traditionally would not fit – can be transformed and adapted and funding questions be solved. Practical feasibility questions are in terms of their content in principle solved on the basis of experience and proper management, but such solutions can only be applied if structures and funds are made available through a political will.

The distinction between the three levels of feasibility is a generally accepted one in policy analysis, in this case applied to the OSS-format of service provision. Looking through this analytical lens to the project, a few observations can be made on the project itself and its implementation.

The first is that the selection of the countries that have decided to be involved in the project has steered its content. When we look at the partners involved in the project, we see that five relatively new immigration countries (with a relative 'open situation' to start from and at the same time a need to develop adequate instruments) are part of the project, while only one of the 'old immigration' countries is part of the project, Germany. It is particularly this latter case that illustrates not only the partial absence of the political conditions (although since 2000 much changed in the FRG), but also particularly a number of structural conditions and 'legacies' that do not directly fit the conditions. (This absence of 'old immigration countries' is not a consequence of deliberate choice before the project was conceptualized; it was – as the initiators made it clear – a consequence of the fact that most of the old immigration countries asked as partners did simply not react to the invitation. In this sense the feasibility question was part of the project even before it started through the selective process of participation).

The second is the choice of the partner institutes involved. These partner institutes are very divers, when it comes to their relation to policies. In three cases it have been governmental institutes (Portugal, Spain and Italy), in one case it was an NGO closely related to immigrants (Ireland), and in the two other cases it have been research institutes, a private one in the case of the FRG and a government related research institute in the case of Greece. Although in all cases researchers have been asked to do the country reports, staff members of the respective institutions have done all other tasks in the project such as the Steering Committee work, the management of the Advisory Committees and their discussions, and deliberations on the Handbook. The project and the way it worked illustrate the consequences of the structural positioning of the partners.

The third is that the project itself was a hybrid one that combined elements of an analytical-scientific approach, particularly in the country studies, and an approach of mobilization of stakeholders for OSS. The creation of the Advisory Committees in which policymakers from different Governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations and representatives from immigrant associations were brought together to discuss the OSS-approach, was on the one hand innovative and successful, in that it stimulated a dialogue between Governmental and Non-Governmental stakeholders and representatives of immigrant communities, as is illustrated in the minutes of these meetings (<http://www.oss.inti.acidi.gov.pt>). On the other hand such exercises followed understandably more the logic of a policymaking process than the logic of an analytical scientific exercise.

The Handbook that results from the common work reflects this diversity of contexts in countries, the positioning of researchers and project staff involved and the hybrid nature of the project itself. This has had both disadvantages and advantages. Among the disadvantages is a certain imbalance of the empirical data presented in the handbook. Most of the examples are coming from the five relative new immigration countries; empirical material from 'old immigration countries' of the EU is relatively absent (while on the website there are some examples from the USA). There is also to a certain extent a lack of analytical clarity, which is first and foremost a consequence of the fact that often compromise formulations had to be used in the handbook in order to find consensus among the divers participants of the project.

But the fact that the handbook is not primarily a scientific exercise, but essentially an effort to raise awareness and mobilize different stakeholders around a specific instrument to be used in policy implementation, also leads to the conclusion that as such the handbook is a valuable instrument, notwithstanding its scientific disadvantages:

- It provides the full range of elements that are relevant for policy makers and practitioners reading the handbook, be it formulated in political rather than analytical terms;
- It gives the full range of legitimization arguments for the approach, particularly focusing on legitimating arguments from EU-policy development; these may be particularly important in cases of 'politically open situations';
- It provides a comprehensive sample of examples of OSS-like instruments and their functioning;
- It gives a list of recommendations (do's and do not's) that are not so much derived from a strong analytical diagnosis, but are negotiated compromises from a very mixed team of participants, reflecting elements from these different backgrounds.

If one foresees that handbooks and their recommendations are always used differently, according to the need of the reader, it would seem that in this case advantages prevail. Some readers will be more interested in the political, legitimating arguments that are abundantly available in the first part of the Handbook; other readers will be more interested in empirical examples and recommendations based on such cases. Also these are fully available in the Handbook.

So, in conclusion: yes, the OSS-format is an ideal type of service provision, particularly geared to early reception of newcomers, if the political and structural conditions are fulfilled. In such a case, the questions are to a great extent limited to practical feasibility questions of organisation and logistics and to fine-tuning of the demand for and offer of services. That can be done by systematic monitoring and adaptation, as is done in the Portuguese case by continuous evaluations.

But the answer to the question whether such a model can be implemented in other contexts cannot be as affirmative. The political and structural conditions that underlie the format are only partially existent in other EU-countries, or not at all. There is a lot of political and institutional work to be done first in creating these conditions, before the format can be introduced meaningfully and successfully in these countries. Taking such initiatives without

these conditions being fulfilled may lead to failures, as is illustrated by the Italian case of the Sportello Unico per l'Immigrazione in the Handbook (p. 36).

These observations lead us to one of the basic questions of learning in policymaking: the transferability of good practices from one context to another. To know about structures and procedures of such good practices is not enough to fruitfully transfer them. We also need to know about the conditions to be fulfilled and the mechanisms on which good practices are based, in order to be able to 'translate' these to other contexts. Reading the Handbook in such a way makes it a great help for many.

1. INTRODUCTION

The INTI-project 'One-Stop-Shop (OSS), A New Answer For Immigrant Integration' is a European Commission (JLS) funded project that aimed to explore the feasibility of a specific format of service provision to immigrants within the more general framework of an integration policy for immigrants.

The specific OSS-format was developed in Portugal since 2004 under the name National Immigrant Support Centers (CNAI), initiated and coordinated by the Portuguese High Commissioner for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue (ACIDI).

The OSS-format as developed in the Portuguese context has quickly received a good reputation as an instrument for targeted, adequate, efficient and welcoming service provision for immigrants, helped by positive evaluations of external expert organisations like the International Organisation for Migration. The European Commission's Common Agenda for Integration (2005, 389) recommended the OSS as useful format.

This formed the ground for the Portuguese High Commissioner for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue (ACIDI) to formulate an international comparative INTI-project that aimed to explore the feasibility of the OSS-format in other EU countries. The European Commission selected, approved and funded the initiative in 2007 as one that fitted perfectly in the aims and goals of its INTI-programme (the forerunner of the present European Integration Fund).

The project aimed firstly at bringing together experiences of OSS-like initiatives in six EU countries and comparing them. Secondly, based on such inventories, discussions were to be organised in Advisory Committee of stakeholders on the feasibility of developing the OSS-format in the countries concerned. This whole exercise was planned to result in a Handbook that would bring together empirical experience with OSS-practices, and advice and recommendations as to how best realise service provision in this format.

The Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies of the University of Amsterdam, represented in the person of professor Rinus Penninx, was engaged in the project as an evaluator. This report is the result of that (post-hoc) evaluation of the project.

1.1. The project

The specific OSS-format as it was developed in Portugal since 2004 under the name National Immigrant Support Centers (CNAI) has been the exemplary source of inspiration for the project. The directly visible form of such centers is that these are easily accessible and reachable buildings to which any immigrant may come with any kind of question or problem at all times. The place is a safe and welcoming place where specialised service providers solve problems of their clients.

Key elements of the Portuguese CNAI-Centers are:

- Services for immigrants are available and accessible at one particular physical point (concentration);
- Such services cover in principle all domains that are relevant for immigrants (immigration and integration related services);
- Such services are coordinated in time and content through intensive and on the spot coordination of the various services;
- Services and their coordination include not only public (governmental) ones but also those relevant services provided by non-governmental organisations, which implies structural public-private cooperation;
- In the practice of providing the services language and cultural mediation is made available on the spot to smoothen communication and to build trust;
- Migrant organisations are involved as advisors in the setup and functioning of such centers, also as an element of trust building.

Two national Centers (in Lisbon and Oporto) are operational since 2005. The International Organisation for Migration has evaluated them positively in two reports (IOM 2006 and 2009). According to the IOM the CNAI's represent "a clear example of concerted action of different Governmental agencies, in partnership with civil society" (IOM 2009, 37).

In order to explore the feasibility of this format of service provision to immigrants in other EU-countries the project initiators have in the phase of the conception of the project tried to recruit project partners from different EU countries. The response to invitations has not always been positive. In some countries, as was reported by the coordinator, there was little enthusiasm to participate, particularly in Northwest European countries with a longer tradition of immigration. When the proposal was filed, project-partners had been found from six countries:

- Germany (Netzwerk Migration in Europa e.V.),
- Greece (Hellenic Migration Policy Institute),
- Ireland (the Immigrant Council of Ireland),
- Italy (the General Directorate for Immigration),
- Portugal (The High Commission for Immigration Intercultural Dialogue), and
- Spain (General Directorate for Integration of Immigrants).

These partners accepted basically two tasks. The first was to make an inventory of immigration and integration policies in general and service provision to immigrants in their country in particular. They were specifically asked to identify service practices that would come near to the One-Stop-Shop-format as outlined above. This task was to be done by a researcher of the partner institute (or specifically hired for that task).

The second task was to mobilise stakeholders in the country in Advisory Committees and discuss with them the feasibility and desirability of developing and applying that OSS-format.

In principle stakeholders would include all those actors that should be involved in the ideal type of OSS-format outlined above: various governmental agencies of different levels (national, regional, local) and domains (all domains relevant for integration of immigrants), non-governmental actors that provide relevant services to immigrants and immigrants and their organisations. The starting point of discussions in these Advisory Committees would be the inventory of the country report. The aim was to discuss the feasibility of developing an OSS-format of service provision itself. One could see this as a form of political mobilisation in favour of such a format.

The comparative process was given additional depth by organising three special workshops on key themes of the OSS-format. A first workshop focused on the role of socio-cultural mediators in service provision. The second workshop focused on systematic cross-national comparison of practices of integrated service provision to immigrants. The third workshop focused on again another key element of the OSS-format: partnership between NGOs and governmental actors in service provision.

IOM Portugal was the seventh partner in the project. Participation of this partner was very helpful, since IOM – even the same person from IOM – had an intimate knowledge of the practice of the OSS-practice as it was implemented already for some years in the Portuguese CNAI-centers through the extended evaluation studies (IOM 2006 and 2009). The latter evaluation did not only include the two main CNAI-centers, but also the evaluation of the smaller decentralised CNAI-information centers in Portugal. The concrete input of IOM in the project came from the comparative analysis of reports in two working documents.

The comparative analysis of all the material collected through the above mentioned procedures would feed into a Handbook for service provision according to the OSS-format. Such a text was to be drafted by the coordinator, with the help of IOM, and to be discussed in the Steering Committee of the project in which all partners are represented. The final version of the Handbook was to be presented during the final conference of the Project in February 2009.

Finally, the project plan foresaw an external evaluation of the project in general and in particular an evaluation of the results of the project: The Handbook on How to Implement a One-Stop-Shop for Immigrant Integration. The next paragraph explains how this evaluation has been undertaken.

1.2. Evaluation approach

Evaluations exist in many forms, depending on what is defined as the unit to be evaluated, the aspects to be taken into account and the approach chosen.

Inspired by literature on evaluative policy analysis (Fischer 1980; 1995) this evaluation of the project has chosen for two separate levels of evaluation. The first level is a technical-analytical one: it compares aims, plans, procedures and outcomes of the project out of context. In that sense it evaluates the project procedurally. It looks at the implementation of the project and measures this implementation against the original project plan. It essentially answers the

question: did the project what it promised to do? This first level evaluation is done briefly in section 2 of this report.

The second level of evaluation takes the evaluation of the project a step further by taking its broader context into account. On this level questions about the relevance of the exercise and significance of the outcomes are central issues. In this concrete case the central topic of the project – the feasibility of the OSS-format in EU countries – is the central focus of analysis. That brings in the contexts in which such an instrument could possibly be relevant and feasible. In this case we have to analyse the feasibility of the OSS-format against the background of the general policy framing of immigration and integration in a given country. We also have to take into account the existing institutional structures for such policies, the configuration of actors involved in them (governmental, NGOs, migrants themselves), and even the specific characteristics of the clients/immigrants. In short, in such an evaluation the feasibility of the OSS-format has to be measured against all implicit and explicit conditions that have to be fulfilled to make that format function well.

In doing that second level of evaluation in section 3 we will use an analytical distinction of the concept of feasibility that is often made in policy analysis: political feasibility, structural feasibility and practical feasibility. The first refers to the political conditions that should be fulfilled for an OSS-service to function. The second refers to conditions related to institutional and organisational arrangements of policy domains and actors involved in an OSS-format service. The third refers to physical, logistical and organisational conditions of the OSS-service.

2. THE FIRST LEVEL OF EVALUATION: THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT

The project planned a number of activities, a sequence of these activities, a distribution of tasks among the participants in order to deliver the planned result of the project (see 1.1.). Specific tasks of coordination and of communication and dissemination were foreseen to attain the goal of the project. Each of these will be briefly evaluated below.

Country Reports

The first step of the plan was to make an inventory of immigration and integration policies in general and service provision to immigrants in their country in particular. The country teams were specifically asked to identify service practices that would come near to the One-Stop-Shop-format as outlined above. This task was to be done by a researcher of the country team (or specifically hired for that task).

The implementation of this task was prepared by a format (or framework) for the country studies in order to guarantee comparability of the data to be collected (see document 3). This format has been discussed in the Kick Off Meeting (document 2) and in later Steering Committee Meetings. The country studies have been done by researchers of the Country Teams. This has resulted in six country reports of Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal

and Spain. All country reports have been made available on the website of the project: <http://www.oss.inti.acidi.gov.pt>.

The comparison of the country studies has been prepared by two Working Documents. IOM Portugal (Maria Abranches) drafted these documents as a starting point for comparative analysis. These documents are also available on <http://www.oss.inti.acidi.gov.pt>. Although it is not possible to evaluate the country reports on their coverage and completeness, it is clear that they have had several functions in the project. Firstly, they have been taken as starting points for the discussions in the Advisory Committees. Secondly, they have been a rich source for the Handbook, both for illustrations of individual cases of OSS-like service provision and for comparative analysis.

Advisory Committees

All country teams have organised Advisory Committees. But in doing so, it became clear that each Country Team had to do this, given the structure of the field of relevant actors in their countries. This has ultimately led to significant variations in a) the participants in the AC's (e.g. along the division of local versus national actors); b) the frequency of meetings; and c) the topics and direction of these discussions. In the Portuguese case things were simple, because such an AC existed already. In the German case, AC's were convened in two different places (Berlin and North-Rhein/Westphalia). With the benefit of hindsight one might say that this diversity has turned out to be an advantage for the project: it was direct empirical evidence of the fact that political and structural conditions - even for a *discussion* on the OSS-format of service provision - are in fact different in the countries concerned. I will come back to this later. The minutes of all meetings of Advisory Committees are available on the website: <http://www.oss.inti.acidi.gov.pt>.

The special workshops

Three special workshops on key themes of the OSS-format have been organised. Different partners took up responsibility for the workshop and they were held in different places. The first workshop was held in Dublin, February 26, 2008. It focused on the role of socio-cultural mediators in service provision, who fulfil ideally a number of important functions in the OSS-format as proposed in this project: from the straightforward function of linguistic translation, to the more complex task of cultural translation and brokering, to trust building and representation of immigrants through their organisations. The second workshop focused on systematic cross-national comparison of practices of integrated service provision to immigrants. The third workshop focused on again another key element of the OSS-format: partnership between NGOs and governmental actors in service provision. Summary reports of the workshops are available on the website again: <http://www.oss.inti.acidi.gov.pt>.

Coordination and communication

The coordinator has planned and prepared the above-mentioned activities thoroughly and precisely. An adequate internal communication was established within the project. Apart from

the internal direct communication by e-mail, the regular platform on which that coordination took place have been the Steering Committee meetings. Six meetings of the Steering Committee have taken place – apart from the Kick Off meeting – held in turn in the six participating countries.

The coordinating partner has established a special website for the OSS-project as its main channel of dissemination of the results of the project: <http://www.oss.inti.acidi.gov.pt>. The website makes the results available in an easily accessible way, both the ones that normally would have the status of ‘internal’ documents, like the minutes of all meetings, and the official deliverables, like the Country Reports and the Handbook itself. In that sense the project has had a policy of openness from the beginning. The visitor of the site can choose how deep he or she wants to go into the project.

The Handbook

The Handbook is clearly the result of a joint endeavor of the partners. In terms of empirical content, it draws on the material collected by the Country Teams in the Country Reports and the meetings of the Advisory Committees and on additional material that has been collected by all partners.

In terms of its conceptualisation the Handbook was defined as common product that should be based on consensus of the whole team. Procedurally this meant that the coordinator drafted the Handbook (in co-authorship with IOM in Portugal) and extensive discussions in two Steering Committee meetings have been held to make the draft a consensus text.

On this first level of evaluation one can safely conclude that the project as a whole and the partners in particular, have lived up to the expectations of the original plan.

3. EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT IN CONTEXT

3.1. Observations on the basic assumptions underlying the project

The second level of evaluation takes the broader context into account and asks questions about the relevance of the exercise and outcomes. In this part the central focus is on the feasibility of the One-Stop-Shop-format in different contexts, in this case different national contexts. It means that the OSS-format and its possible relevance and feasibility has to be evaluated against the general background in which it is supposed to have certain functions and serve certain goals. The OSS-format is an instrument in a wider context, in this case of integration policies in general. So wider questions have to be asked pertaining to the background of the general policy framing of immigration and integration in a country, the existing institutional structures for such policies, the configuration of actors involved in it (governmental, NGOs, migrants themselves), and even the specific characteristics of the clients/immigrants. Viewed and evaluated from such a perspective a number of observations can be made.

The first is that there is a number of assumptions underlying the OSS-format that are related to the orientation and content of immigration and integration policies in general. The OSS-format has to fit in into such a general framing. In other words, a number of conditions derived from general immigration and integration policies should be fulfilled in order to make the OSS-format a *politically feasible* instrument. Looking at the key elements of the OSS-format listed above, we can deduce a number of these critical conditions: such general policies should be coherent, meaning in the first place that there is a coherence between immigration policies on the one hand and integration policies on the other. If the OSS-format is supposed to cover the wide range of service provision that is related both to immigration competences (visa and first entrance, regularising the legal position, residence permits, and naturalisation) and to integration (access to all important domains of society, early reception facilities etcetera) and deliver adequate and coherent service, policies in these two domains should not contradict each other. Even more, the two domains should have a common pro-active orientation. Such policies should also be mobilising and trust building, i.e. they work in their strategies from the assumption that integration processes themselves cannot be steered (and policies implemented) without using the resources available within the immigrant groups themselves. They furthermore should be right based and client-centered. The governmental actors involved should be allowed and prepared to cooperate with all relevant non-governmental organisations and receptive for influence of immigrant organisations. These conditions should be fulfilled not only in the domain of integration, but at the same time also in the domain of regulation of admission and immigration.

A second set of assumptions relate to questions of institutional arrangements and divisions of competences and tasks in policymaking and implementation. I call this *structural feasibility*. The key elements of the OSS-format that are formulated above can only feasibly be organised, if institutional structures allow this. That question of structural feasibility pertains thus to a number of factors. Firstly, if services of OSS are supposed to cover all domains relevant for integration, then there should preferably be an organisational structure in which

policies for admission and immigration and for integration are brought together in such a way that coherence (a condition of political feasibility) is guaranteed. If such competences are embodied in separate (ministerial) agencies, or located at different levels (national, regional, local) this will at least complicate cooperation. But there are also other institutional legacies¹ that are relevant to realise the key elements of the OSS-format and that make it more or less feasible. One of these refer to the close cooperation of governmental and non-governmental actors. Traditions and legacies on this topic certainly differ significantly between (EU) countries in general, but also specifically, when it comes to countries in which practical integration policies have been done by civil society actors, like churches and trade unions, often in the absence of such governmental policies. A comparable observation relates to the question whether governmental services are based in traditions of more client or citizen oriented attitudes versus more passive and authoritarian orientations of governmental agencies.

Finally, there is a third category of conditions that should be fulfilled for an OSS to function properly that pertain to *practical feasibility*. Such conditions have to do, firstly, with factors that make the service easily accessible: the physical place of the facility that should be easy to reach by public transport; opening hours that maximise possibilities from the perspective of the client, including evening and weekend hours. Secondly, they have to do with creating a client centered service: a welcoming atmosphere, facilities for children, an adequate logistical processing of clients to different service providers. Thirdly, they have to do with creating conditions for internal communication between agents involved and with clients.

3.2. Political, structural and practical feasibility in the project

The distinction between the three levels of feasibility is a generally accepted one in policy analysis, in this case applied to the OSS-format of service provision. It provides a tool to look through this analytical lens to the project, as it is implemented. Three basic observations can be made on the project that have had consequences for the extent to which these three forms of feasibility appear in the project and the Handbook and how they become manifest.

The first is that the selection of the countries that have decided to be involved in the project has steered its content. When we look at the partners involved in the project, we see that five relatively new immigration countries are part of the project. Immigration and integration policies are relatively new fields of policy making in these countries. There is – much more than in Northwest European countries – an ‘open situation’: notwithstanding the fact that they all have become EU members and thus have had to accept the *acquis*, the policy situation is much less determined by long standing and path-dependent traditions in this field. They furthermore have in common that they were until recently predominantly emigration countries. Only one of the ‘old immigration’ countries is part of the project, Germany. It is particularly this latter case that illustrates not only the partial absence of the political

¹ Zincone *et al.* (forthcoming) lists in her conclusive chapter an impressive number of institutional legacies that may have a long-lasting effect on the making and implementation of immigration and immigrant policies. The most important are: Colonial past and traditions, Relations between religions, religious minorities and the State, State and Class, State and civil society, Welfare state regimes and the migration experience of the country concerned.

conditions (although since 2000 much changed in the FRG), but also particularly a number of structural conditions and 'legacies' that do not directly fit the conditions for the OSS-format.

This absence of 'old immigration countries' in the project is not a consequence of deliberate choice before it was conceptualized. The initiators have tried to recruit partners from many EU countries. However, most of the old immigration countries asked as partners did simply not react to the invitation. In this way, the (political and structural) feasibility question seems to have been part of the project even before it started: the old immigration countries that did decide not to participate may well have been motivated by negative expectations of the political and structural feasibility of the OSS-format in their particular countries.

The second factor that has influenced particularly the form, in which political and structural feasibility appears in the results of the project, is the choice of the partner institutes involved. These partner institutes are very divers, when it comes to their relation to policies. In three cases it have been governmental institutes (Portugal, Spain and Italy), in one case it was an NGO closely related to immigrants (Ireland), and in the two other cases it have been research institutes, a private one in the case of the FRG and a government related research institute in the case of Greece. Although in all cases researchers have been asked to do the country reports, staff members of the respective institutions have done all other tasks in the project such as the Steering Committee work, the management of the Advisory Committees and their discussions, and deliberations on the Handbook. The structural positioning of the partners of the project has unintendedly but surely influenced the work and the results. This process was most obvious in the discussion meetings on the draft Handbook in which consensus was 'negotiated' and final texts approved.

The third observation is that the project itself was a hybrid one from its conception. It has tried to combine elements of a scientific, analytical approach that was particularly represented by the country studies, and an approach of mobilisation of stakeholders for OSS that is actually part of policy preparation. The creation of the Advisory Committees in which policymakers from different Governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations and representatives from immigrant associations were brought together to discuss the OSS-format, was on the one hand innovative and successful, in that it stimulated a dialogue between Governmental and Non-Governmental stakeholders and representatives of immigrant communities, as is illustrated in the minutes of these meetings (<http://www.oss.inti.acidi.gov.pt>). On the other hand such exercises followed understandably more the logic of a policymaking process than the logic of an analytical scientific exercise.

In view of these three observations, what do the results of the project teach us about the feasibility of the OSS-format in the six countries studied? And what wider conclusions beyond the six country studies can possibly be drawn?

3.3. OSS as a politically feasible format

Since the analytical concept of political feasibility was not used by the project – but is introduced by the evaluator – one will not find direct references in the results of the project.

Nevertheless through the country reports and the minutes of the Advisory Committees one can reconstruct the following general picture.

It is quite clear that the Portuguese political situation is one in which all political conditions for an OSS-format are fulfilled. In terms of the history of this project, this is a tautology: the OSS-format or model that was used as a starting point for the project was actually developed in Portugal, as we have seen. It could develop there because those conditions of political feasibility were fulfilled. That in turn made it possible to strengthen in the course of time the cooperation between more and more governmental and non-governmental agencies in the CNAI's, thus fulfilling the structural conditions. The success of the model in Portugal has recently led to the structural integration of the tax department in the OSS, more or less on its own request. The focus in the Portuguese case has thus been on matters of practical feasibility. Systematic evaluation of the CNAI-practice forms the best guide for such continuous practical improvements.

In actual practice, such political conditions are not found in the other countries of the project. From the country reports and the minutes of the Advisory Committees it transpires that conditions in Ireland do come relatively close to that in Portugal. The OSS-format does find also quite some support in that country. As the Country Report on Ireland (p. 46) states quite optimistically:

“The Irish context is characterised by a central Government, the crucial role of NGOs in service provision to immigrants, and the recent nature of immigration to the country. It is also of significance that the majority of immigrants in the country are from within the European Union. The implementation of a One-Stop Shop model would therefore be particularly feasible and useful in this context, as the development of integration services is still at an early stage. It will be adapted to these particularities of Irish immigration. Furthermore, Ireland has comprehensive experience of Government service provision in both English and Irish. This expertise could be built upon by extending the number of languages used to facilitate immigrant service-users.”

In the Irish case, discussions focus more on elements of structural feasibility, in particular the question whether an OSS-format for immigrants should be part of a general facility for all citizens and residents, and be more decentralised.

In the cases of Spain, Italy and Greece the basic split of immigration and integration policies (or the lack of coherence, as formulated earlier) plays an important role as a basic obstacle for a comprehensive OSS-format. In the texts of the country reports and the minutes of the Advisory Committees this is expressed mostly by indicating varying institutional barriers between the two domains.

The German case is most explicit in its doubts about political feasibility. In the final paragraph of the Country Report it reads:

“Based on the discussions of the roundtables the scepticism about implementing a One-Stop-Shop model in old countries of immigration has significantly increased. The feedback of the experts around the table was in between curiosity, scepticism and hostility. In particular the representatives from state agencies were more than sceptical. Given the highly diversified structure of the state and non-state immigration and integration organizations, given the

competing interests and given the historically grown division of labour it strikes me as rather unlikely that a One-Stop-Shop model in a pure sense could be implemented in Germany” (Country Report Germany, p. 31).

The text is formulated strongly in terms of what I would call structural feasibility arguments, but these refer indirectly also strongly to the non-fulfillment of political conditions. This is all the more clear, if one reads in the preceding pages about the completely uncoordinated functioning of immigration and integration policies and the general mistrust that immigration agencies have built up among immigrants. The picture outlined here for Germany is one that could be found in other older immigration countries (see e.g. Bruquetas-Callejo et al. (2007) for the Netherlands).

3.4. OSS as an structural/ institutional feasible format

In most countries, immigration and integration policies are located in different ministries. This is not problematic in itself as long as there is a strong coordination, politically and structurally. Again, here Portugal is the exception rather than the rule, having brought together the two domains in one governmental agency. The fact that the OSS in Portugal is able to include even services to illegal residents in its practice is unimaginable in most other European countries.

In most countries, the location of immigration and integration policies in different ministries goes together with a separate structuring of these competences, often situated on quite different levels. The Spanish Country Report is the best example to illustrate the various structural barriers that may arise for an OSS-format inspired on the Portuguese example (Country Report for Spain, p. 66-68; see also Bruquetas-Callejo et al. 2007):

“In Spain, policies in the area of integration of immigrants are shared by both the National Government and the Autonomous Communities. Concerning the latter, in some areas the competences are complete, both in legislative and executive terms, and in others competences are only in relation to implementation. Moreover, the city or town halls have, increasingly, the need to organise and provide assistance services to the immigrant population, but in many cases they do not have sufficient resources. (...)

Thus, on the basis of the Constitutional distribution of responsibilities and the respective Statutes of the Autonomous Regions, programme and support services for the immigrant population (i.e., employment, education, healthcare, social services, housing, etc.). (...) (P)ractically all Autonomous Regions and those municipalities with a relevant immigration population have been, as of 2001, working on their specific immigration/integration plans. Although some of these plans are limited to only education or employment issues, most are general in nature and take on multiple areas where the fundamental challenges linked to immigration surface: reception, education, employment and training, health, housing, social services, awareness raising, legal counselling, and cooperation in the area of development, to name a few. Some plans read like catalogues, merely listing resources available, but not limited to immigrants. Others, however, have been conceived in such a way as to include immigration into the action lines undertaken by public policies. (...)

We should add to all of the above the essential role performed by civil society. Its involvement in the formulation and implementation of immigration and integration policies and its

cooperation with the public administrations is so relevant that it is fair to say it would have been impossible to achieve some of the immigrant integration policies undertaken in recent years without civil society. Furthermore, these stakeholders have taken on other proprietary actions that have notably raised awareness among the general public of the migratory reality and against possible xenophobic reactions. The three especially relevant groups of stakeholders are trade unions and business associations, NGOs and immigrant associations. (...)

On the other hand, public opinion in the area of immigrant integration responds to the principle of normalisation: since the integration of this group of persons is broached from the vantage point of access to public services on an equal footing with the rest of the population (i.e., access to employment, healthcare, education, housing, social welfare, etc.), the result is the need for a network of services common to both the immigrant and the local population. Evidently within the scope of these mainstream services, the decision is to design programmes that specifically target the immigrant population and that take fully into account the possible disadvantage that they suffer...”

The list of structural barriers in this quotation is may be somewhat longer than in the case of Ireland, Greece and Italy, but some of the elements do return in each of these countries. The policy choice for ‘mainstreaming’ in contrast to special services for specific groups, for example, is one that returns under different headings. In Spain it is indicated as mainstreaming. In Ireland and Greece the same argument is formulated under the question whether OSS-service to immigrants could possibly be integrated in already existent service points for all citizens.

The German case is special – as compared to the five other countries – because in that case a number of barriers are added that relate to a longer standing tradition of immigration and integration policies, their relation and the consequences for the (non-)cooperation between relevant partners, as was testified by the earlier quotation.

Interestingly, it seems that recent immigration countries are in principle more open for diversity, both in its consequence of allowing for influence of organised clients (immigrants and their organisations) on service provision and for more awareness that material equality in service provision may be seriously hindered by linguistic and cultural barriers and should thus be solved by using interpreters and mediators.

3.5. OSS as a practically feasible format

Discussions on conditions of practical feasibility in this project are empirically based on two sources: first of all, the Portuguese CNAI-centers and their evaluations and secondly, limited evidence of OSS-like service provision that has been found in the other five countries. The first source is the most important. Most of the practical advice and instruction that is based on this material has gone in the chapter 3, 5 and 6 of the Handbook: how to organise mediation services, how to guarantee maximum accessibility and how to organise human and financial resources.

Behind many of such factors – but surely not all – there is the question of funding. That may be defined as a practical question, but it surely much more. The funding question is a good

illustration of how the three levels of feasibility – the political, structural and practical one - do relate to each other. The first level of political feasibility is the most important one. If there is a political orientation that fits the OSS-approach and a political will to implement it, than structural factors – even if these traditionally would not fit – can be transformed and adapted and funding questions be solved. Practical feasibility questions are in terms of their content in principle solved on the basis of experience and proper management, but such solutions can only be applied, if structures and funds are made available through a political will.

4. THE HANDBOOK: A MULTI-FUNCTIONAL TOOL

The handbook that results from the common work reflects the diversity of contexts of the six countries that have been involved. It also reflects the positioning of researchers and project staff involved. Thirdly it mirrors the hybrid nature of the project itself. This has had both disadvantages and advantages.

One of the relative disadvantages is that the empirical data presented in the handbook are not covering all EU countries. It is not, and it was not planned as a representative study. Most of the examples are coming from the five relative new immigration countries. Empirical material from 'old immigration countries' of the EU is relatively absent (while on the website there are some examples from the USA).

A more serious disadvantage from the point of view of scientific analysis is that to a certain extent the project and the Handbook lack analytical clarity. This is first and foremost a consequence of the fact that the project itself had an hybrid nature (having elements of scientific analysis and of political mobilisation), reinforced by the fact that the active participants in the project have come from institutes that cover the full range between independent research institutes and policy departments of national ministries. The procedures of work chosen have often led to negotiated compromise formulations in the handbook in order to find consensus among the divers participants of the project.

But the fact that the handbook is not primarily a scientific exercise, but essentially an effort to raise awareness and mobilize different stakeholders around a specific instrument to be used in policy implementation, leads at the same time to the conclusion that as such the handbook is a valuable instrument, notwithstanding its scientific disadvantages:

- It provides the full range of elements that are relevant for policy makers and practitioners reading the handbook, be it formulated in political rather than analytical terms;
- It gives the full range of legitimization arguments for the approach, particularly focusing on legitimating arguments from EU-policy development; these may be particularly important in cases of 'politically open situations';
- It provides a comprehensive sample of examples of OSS-like instruments and their functioning;
- It gives a list of recommendations (do's and do not's) that are not so much derived from a strong analytical diagnosis, but are negotiated compromises from a very mixed team of participants, reflecting elements from these different backgrounds.

If one foresees that handbooks and their recommendations are always used differently, according to the need of the reader, it would seem that in this case advantages prevail. Some readers will be more interested in the political, legitimating arguments that are abundantly available in the first part of the Handbook; other readers will be more interested in empirical examples and recommendations based on such cases. Also these are plentifully available in the Handbook.

5. IN CONCLUSION

The project has shown in the first place that the OSS-format – as it is actually practiced for some time in Portugal – works. It can be done and it may function as an important instrument of a comprehensive integration policy, particularly geared to early reception of newcomers. As an ideal type of service provision, however, it has become clear that it can only be transferred to other countries, if a number of political and structural conditions are fulfilled. If that is the case, the questions to be answered are to a great extent limited to practical feasibility questions of organisation and logistics and to fine-tuning of the demand for and offer of services. That can be done by systematic monitoring and adaptation, as is done in the Portuguese case by continuous evaluations.

But the political and structural conditions that underlie the format are only partially existent in other EU-countries, or not at all. There is a lot of political and institutional work to be done first in creating these conditions, before the format can be introduced meaningfully and successfully in these countries. Introducing an OSS-format of service provision without these conditions being fulfilled may lead to failures, as is illustrated by the Italian case of the Sportello Unico per l'Immigrazione in the Handbook (p. 36).

These observations lead us to one of the basic questions of learning in policymaking: the transferability of good practices from one context to another. To know about structures and procedures of good practices is not enough to fruitfully transfer them. We also need to know about the conditions to be fulfilled and the mechanisms on which good practices are based, in order to be able to 'translate' these to other contexts. Reading the Handbook in such a way makes it a great help for many.

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ANNEX I. BASIC DOCUMENTS OF THE PROJECT USED FOR THE EVALUATION

1. Proposal “One-Stop-Shop. A New Answer for Immigrant Integration”, JLS/2006/INTI/148. 19 pp.
2. Minutes of the Kick-Off meeting, held November 9, 2007 in Lisbon. Pp. 3.
3. Draft version of the framework for Country Reports (attached to document 2), pp. 5.
4. Minutes of the Advisory Committee Meeting’ TEMPLATE (attached to document 2) pp. 5.
5. Minutes of the first Steering Committee Meeting, held in Madrid, December 3, 2007. Pp. 4.
6. Minutes of the second Steering Committee Meeting, held in Dublin, February 26, 2008. Pp. 3.
7. Minutes of the first Transnational Workshop on Cultural Mediators, held in Dublin, February 26, 2008.
8. Technical Progress Report to the European Commission by the project coordinator, March 26, 2008. Pp. 106.
9. Minutes of the third Steering Committee Meeting, held in Athens, June 5, 2008. Pp. 10.
10. Minutes of the second Transnational Workshop “Integrated Service Provision to Migrants: examples of One-Stop-Shops in Europe, held in Athens, June 5, 2008.
11. Minutes of the fourth Steering Committee Meeting, held in Berlin, July 7, 2008. Pp. 10.
12. Minutes of the third Transnational Workshop “Partnerships between NGO’s and Governmental actors in providing services to migrants” held in Berlin, July 8, 2008.
13. Minutes of the fifth Steering Committee Meeting, held in Rome, November 25, 2008. Pp. 5.
14. Minutes of the sixth Steering Committee Meeting, held in Lisbon, January 8, 2009. Pp. 5. (Attended).
15. Final Conference of the INTI-project “One-Stop-Shop: A New Answer for Immigrant Integration”, held in Lisbon, February 5-6, 2009 (Attended, including a presentation “Evaluation of the feasibility of the implementation of the One-Stop-Shop in EU Member States”)
16. Minutes of the Advisory Committee meetings in Portugal, Spain, Greece, Ireland, Italy and Germany: see <http://www.oss.inti.acidi.gov.pt>.
17. Country Reports on Portugal, Spain, Greece, Ireland, Italy and Germany: see <http://www.oss.inti.acidi.gov.pt>.
18. IOM Working Documents 1 and 2: see <http://www.oss.inti.acidi.gov.pt>
19. Handbook on How to Implement a One-Stop-Shop for Immigrant Integration (Catarina Reis Oliveira, Maria Abranches and Claire Healy), available at the website <http://www.oss.inti.acidi.gov.pt> and as printed publication. Lisbon: ACIDI (ISBN 978-989-8000-76-7).
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