



NATIONAL INTEGRATION EVALUATION MECHANISM

EVALUATING THE NATIONAL POLICIES ON INTEGRATION OF BENEFICIARIES OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

ROMÂNIA

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Ovidiu Voicu

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Contact: Ovidiu Voicu, ovidiu.voicu@inovarepublica.ro

www.inovarepublica.ro

fb.com/inovarepublica

SUMMARY

NIEM stands for *National Integration Evaluation Mechanism*. It is both the title of an international project and the name of a benchmark for evaluating national policies for refugee integration.

The NIEM project was funded by the European Union, through the European Fund for Asylum, Migration and Integration, as part of a consortium comprising 17 non-governmental organizations and universities from 14 EU member states. The project started in July 2016, and during the 6 years of its implementation, it aimed to draft and apply a methodology for evaluating the quality of refugees and asylum seekers integration policies. NIEM will contribute to the establishment of more efficient integration systems in the member states taking part in it, to an increased understanding and involvement of the national institutions responsible for integrating refugees and persons benefiting from international protection, and to the improvement of the institutional collaboration between the states involved in the project.

The NIEM benchmark for evaluating national policies for refugee integration is the main result of the project, and represents the efforts of an international research team reuniting members from all the organizations. The NIEM benchmark puts forth a tri-dimensional analysis of integration, based on the following axes:

- Groups of beneficiaries of international protection (refugees, asylum seekers, subsidiary protection beneficiaries, humanitarian protection beneficiaries)
- Steps of public policy (3 steps: Setting the Legal Framework, Building the Policy Framework, Implementation & Collaboration)
- Integration dimensions (12 dimensions: Mainstreaming, Residency, Family Reunification, Citizenship, Housing, Employment, Vocational Training, Health, Social Security, Education, Language learning and social orientation, and Building Bridges)

In order to measure the progress registered for the three axes, the research team defined 173 indicators. The relevant data for each of the indicators has been collected in each of the 14 participant countries: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden.

The first evaluation, or the baseline, was based on data collected in 2017, and the research project was published in 2018¹. For the second evaluation, the data was collected during 2019 (up until August 31st, 2019), and the results published in 2020. The third and final evaluation is using data collected in 2021 (up until August 31st, 2021), and the resulting analysis was published in 2022.

The national report for Romania follows the line of the previous NIEM publications. It starts from the main research findings, underlining the trends on each policy step and policy dimension. Looking at the aggregated scores, the study shows that Romania is lacking progress in all three steps of the policy process assessed by the NIEM standard:

¹ The research reports (in English and in the language of the country in which the research was conducted) are available on the website of the NIEM project: <http://www.forintegration.eu/pl/pub>.

- Step: Setting the Legal Framework. Romania has a score of 58.6 (out of 100), equal to that of 2019, but decreasing from 64.8 in 2017.
- Step: Building the Policy Framework. Romania is evaluated with 37.6 points (out of 100), with insignificant differences compared to previous years.
- Step: Implementation and cooperation. Again, Romania has a low score of 13.8 (out of 100), down from 20.3 in 2019.

In all these stages, Romania performs below the average of the 14 European countries included in the research. The study observes and discuss that Romania has similar scores with its neighbour countries, Hungary, Bulgari, Poland, and Greece.

The report is continuing the analyses on each of the 12 integration dimensions, as defined by the NIEM standard: Mainstreaming, Residency, Family Reunification, Citizenship, Housing, Employment, Vocational Training, Health, Social Security, Education, Language learning and social orientation, and Building Bridges. On each dimension, the analysis is including:

- The brief description of the respective dimension, emphasizing its importance for the integration of beneficiaries of international protection;
- List of relevant measured indicators;
- Presentation of the average scores for Romania, emphasising the longitudinal evolution (2017-2021), and comparing with the results of the other 13 countries.
- A short analysis, indicating the strengths and weaknesses of the public policies in Romania, in the field of immigration, for each dimension, as it results from the NIEM indicators.

The final chapter of the report is discussing the structural problems of the national integrations policies. The NIEM evaluation for national policies regarding the integration of beneficiaries of international protection in Romania shows that Romania has an acceptable record of accomplishment when it comes to establishing the legal framework, a mediocre one regarding the public policy framework and a weak one regarding the implementation and collaboration framework. The analysis is showing that there current policies are struggling in terms of vision, leadership, dialogue, and commitment. For each of these issues, the NIEM research is providing examples of positive practices that might be adapted in order to improve the current situation.

Although the data was collected in 2021, the report is looking at the challenges and opportunities brought by the Ukrainian refugees' crises. Confronted with the wave of refugees, Romania has quickly put together a different model of operation, better coordinated, and with a much more active involvement of all stakeholders. On the long run, it may lead to the needed paradigm shift that will improve Romania's performance in the field of migrant integration.