



Toolkit for Evidence-Informed Policymaking in Migrant Integration

Section 4 Amplifying Impact through the Dissemination of Evidence

By Jasmijn Slootjes and Maria Belen Zanzuchi

January 2023

The full toolkit can be found at:
www.migrationpolicy.org/research/toolkit-evidence-policymaking



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101004635.



Title	Toolkit for Evidence-Informed Policymaking in Migrant Integration
Responsible Authors	Jasmijn Sloopjes and Maria Belen Zanzuchi, Migration Policy Institute Europe
Version	Final

SPRING is a EU-funded project focusing on the integration of recently arrived migrants in the context of the large-scale arrivals of refugees and other migrants since 2014. It aims to develop a toolbox to improve the innovation, effectiveness and sustainability of the work done by Europe's integration stakeholders at national, regional and local levels. The project mobilises significant research, networks and communications capacity and gathers, summarises and shares the best available research and evidence on the effectiveness, innovation, transferability, sustainability and evaluation methods for integration policies and practice.

The SPRING Platform integrationpractices.eu is the main hub to make the project results available to practitioners as well as to the general public.

Acknowledgements



The SPRING project received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the grant agreement 101004635. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union. The European Commission and the European Research Executive Agency are not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.

The authors thank their Migration Policy Institute (MPI) colleagues Meghan Benton for her insightful comments and feedback that played a crucial role in shaping this toolkit and Lauren Shaw for the excellent edits. They also thank MPI Europe interns Ilaria Marconi, Johanna von Kietzell, Giovanni Penna, and Vilde Hefte for their invaluable research assistance. In addition, the authors are grateful for the support they received from their colleagues in the SPRING Consortium. The authors are particularly grateful for Guia Gilardoni's excellent leadership throughout the SPRING project, the interesting discussions with Peter Scholten about improving the research-policy-practice nexus, and the valuable insights from Alexander Wolffhardt and Sinem Yilmaz about the transferability of evidence.

Critical input on the design of this toolkit also came from the experts who participated in the March 2022 roundtable 'Implementing What Works: Promoting Evidence-Based Migrant Integration Policymaking' and the September 2022 workshop on the role of communities of practice and cooperation networks in supporting more inclusive and evidence-informed integration policy and practice, both organised as part of the SPRING project. Finally, the authors thank the following interviewees for their valuable insights: Helen Baillot, Peter De Cuyper, Renée Frissen, Jenny Phillimore, Meta Van der Linden, and Jürgen Wander.

MPI Europe is an independent, nonpartisan policy research organisation that adheres to the highest standard of rigour and integrity in its work. All analysis, recommendations, and policy ideas advanced by MPI Europe are solely determined by its researchers.



4. Amplifying Impact through the Dissemination of Evidence

Key takeaways

- ★ Simply producing high-quality evidence will not ensure improvements in policy. To do that, evidence needs to be effectively shared and disseminated.
- ★ Too often, evaluation reports are not made publicly available or actively disseminated to a wide audience. This prevents key stakeholders from learning from valuable evidence and translating it into practice.
- ★ When developing a dissemination strategy, it is important to identify the objectives of your outreach, understand who your target audience is and what their information needs and communication preferences are, and what resources are available to support disseminate activities. Different audiences and dissemination objectives may require different communication formats and channels.
- ★ People are some of your greatest assets when it comes to effective dissemination. Securing policy advocates, becoming a policy entrepreneur, and working with knowledge brokers are effective strategies to amplify the dissemination of evidence and influence policy.

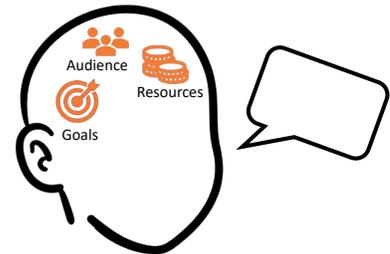
Policymakers are increasingly using evaluations to find out whether policies are effective and how they can be improved. Yet the impact of these evaluations generally remains quite limited. Too often, evaluation results and policy recommendations are circulated with only a small audience of actors directly involved in a policy or programme. Most are inaccessible to other policymakers and practitioners who could leverage this evidence to strengthen their own work. In short, conducting high-quality evaluations is not enough. Policymakers and others involved in the creation of evidence must also invest in its dissemination to a wider audience if they wish to amplify its impact.

In this section, you will learn...

- how to get started with evidence dissemination by setting objectives, understanding your audience, and identifying the resources available to you;
- how to select the most effective way(s) to present and communicate evidence; and
- what dissemination strategies can help you to inject evidence into the policy cycle.

4.1 Define your communication goals, audience, and resources

Simply creating high-quality evidence does not guarantee that it will reach the right audience or have the desired impact. That takes careful planning and effort. To begin, it is important to define your objectives clearly, determine who your target audience is, and understand what resources are available to support your dissemination activities. The questions in this section can help guide you through this planning process.



Step 1. Know your goals

- What are you trying to achieve with your research and dissemination activities?

- What are your short-term objectives? For example, to get relevant stakeholders to read and talk about the results, measured through the number of meetings with other policymakers and practitioners, through social media interactions, or other forms of engagement.



Tip: Decisions about how to share evidence are often left to the final stage of a project, when time and resources are limited. Instead, try to start thinking early on about the objectives of your evidence dissemination strategy, so related activities can be built in throughout the life of the project.

- What are your medium- to long-term objectives? For example, shaping an integration policy’s design, measured through additional funding allocated to a specific activity based on your recommendations.

Step 2. Know your audience

- Which key stakeholders do you need to inform about a project evaluation’s results? And from whom do you need buy-in to continue to implement or scale up the policy? Think about the local, national, and even international level, and stakeholders with different profiles (other policymakers, practitioners, etc).

- What are your priorities when sharing evidence with those stakeholders? What do you hope each will do once the evidence is in their hands?

- What do these stakeholders need and want to know?

- Given your priorities and your stakeholders’ information needs and preferences, what type of communication will be most effective? Does your audience have the skills to interpret complex statistical evidence, sufficient interest to read a long report, or would a more concise and accessible summary be more appropriate?

- When is the opportune moment to reach out to each stakeholder?



Tip: Knowing the needs and skills of your target audience is critical to understanding how to communicate evidence effectively. Different audiences may require different key messages, shared in different formats, and delivered through different channels. In this toolkit, Section 6 on stakeholder engagement provides an overview of how to map stakeholders and plan a communication strategy, which takes many of these same factors into account.

Step 3. Know your resources

- Who will be in charge of leading dissemination activities?

- What resources are needed and available to support dissemination? Is there a budget within the project for dissemination? How much time should different team members invest in implementing the dissemination strategy?

- Are there any actors within your network or community or any policy leaders with whom you are well connected who are also well connected to your key audience? Could they help you share your evidence with them?



Tip: Allocate funding, staff time, and other resources for dissemination early on. If you will need to draw on the expertise of consultants to design or carry out dissemination activities, those costs should be factored in too.



Want to learn more about developing the pillars of your communication strategy? Check out:

- ★ The report [Using Evidence: What Works?](#) by the Alliance for Useful Evidence sets out six effective ways to promote the dissemination and uptake of evidence, based on a review of more than 150 interventions.

4.2 Choosing the right communication tool(s) for your audience and purpose

Effectively presenting evidence to different audiences in ways that engage and inspire them is the key to ensuring that research findings are translated into practice. Evidence can be presented in a wide range of ways, from concise fact sheets and infographics to long, detailed reports, and from short videos to one-on-one meetings, private roundtables, and public events. Often, it will be necessary to present evidence in multiple formats to maximise impact and reach different goals and audiences (see Box 4.1). For example, decisionmakers may have limited time to read an entire report, so a compelling summary or memo with key takeaways and recommendations on how the evidence should inform their work and how they can implement recommendations is more likely to have the desired impact.

BOX 4.1

Case study: The Canadian Health Services Research Foundation and the 1:3:25 rule

The Canadian Health Services Research Foundation uses the 1:3:25 rule for dissemination. This means that for every 25-page report they publish (the maximum length allowed), they will also produce a 1-pager covering the report’s main findings and key lessons for policymakers and a 3-page executive summary with slightly more detail. Each output has different goals and is targeted to different audiences with more or less time. Variations of this rule have been used by organisations and government departments in other countries as well.

Source: Canadian Health Services Research Foundation, ‘Reader-Friendly Writing – 1:3:25’, accessed 9 January 2023.

Tips for disseminating evidence

- ✓ **Explore different formats for communicating and summarising research.** Because different audiences prefer to receive information in different formats, it is important to think carefully about the communication tools you use and for what purpose. Some examples to consider are: policy briefs, reports, memos, press releases, podcasts, infographics, ‘information nuggets’,²⁰ presentations with slides, and storytelling.
- ✓ **Understand the channels through which your audiences look for information and learn about what works.** Different stakeholders may have different ideas about what constitutes a trusted source and different go-to places to search for



Tip: Using existing online platforms can help you boost dissemination of policy findings and recommendations by facilitating the sharing of evidence and supporting peer-learning. Consider using: the [European Website on Integration](#), [IMMERSE](#), the [SPRING Consortium’s Evidence on Integration Policy Practices](#) repository, and the other databases described in Section 2 of this toolkit. Uploading evidence on these platforms takes relatively little time, and some have country rapporteurs who can help you submit best practices and potentially have them translated.

²⁰ For a discussion of ‘information nuggets’, see Chapter 4 of Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *Building Capacity for Evidence-Informed Policy-Making: Lessons from Country Experiences* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2020).

evidence. These may include social media and traditional media (TV and radio), intermediaries who convey information in private conversations, and conferences and research repositories.

- ✓ **Tailor and frame the information based on what you know about your audience.** Communications should not only focus on key findings, lessons learnt, and recommendations, they should also seek to create momentum and engage the audience. Framing the evidence in the right way promotes uptake. Consider:
 - Why is this issue and information important for your target audience? Why should they care?
 - What are the most important pieces of information for your audience? How can you highlight these key messages?
 - What actions do you expect your audience to take based on the findings and the situation? What actionable recommendations can you offer the audience?

- ✓ **Identify language barriers and other obstacles to accessibility.** If you aim to reach audiences with a different linguistic background to your own, translating the entire piece of research or at least the key findings and recommendations can help you do so. Thinking about other ways to make your research more accessible—including in terms of how technical text is and where evidence is made available—can also boost dissemination.



Want to learn more about how to create a communication strategy? Check out:

- ★ INSAP’s [Evidence-Informed Policymaking Toolkit](#) includes a module on communication (Module 4) that helps policymakers determine the three key aspects of the communication strategy: the audience, content, and channel. This toolkit also provides guidance for developing effective written and oral communications.

- ★ The UK Overseas Development Institute’s [ROMA \(Rapid Outcome Mapping Approach\) toolkit](#) is a guide to policy engagement and influence, based on more than 100 case studies. The toolkit provides information on how to create a communication strategy and how to promote evidence uptake.

4.3 Dissemination models that promote evidence-informed policymaking

This section introduces three models that promote and facilitate evidence-informed policymaking. Applying these models in the field of migrant integration policymaking could enhance communication of results and help bridge the gap between research, policy, and practice.

Securing policy advocates by engaging people of influence, including policy leaders and (communities of) practitioners

Identifying people and organisations that both share an interest in the subject you are working on and are in a position that would allow them to help promote your research findings to their networks can help you reach new audiences.²¹ Working with these influential actors can also help enhance the credibility of research findings, build trust, and facilitate the use of evidence. In some cases, representatives from communities of practices and other influential people have been engaged to act as ambassadors for evidence-based policymaking and disseminate research findings (see Box 4.2). Ideally, specific guidance should be provided to ambassadors on what is expected of them (that is, their role and target audience) and how they should engage (bilateral meetings, a presence on social media, etc.).

BOX 4.2

Case study: What Works for Children’s Social Care’s evidence ambassadors

What Works for Children’s Social Care, a UK-based research organisation, introduced an Evidence Ambassador Programme to bring evidence to social work teams and encourage its application in practice. In doing so, the organisation aims to help social workers who are busy working with children and families and may not have time to explore new research themselves integrate the latest evidence into their work.

The programme’s ambassadors are practitioners who already work with local authority social work teams. In addition to sharing evidence from What Works for Children’s Social Care with their colleagues, the ambassadors also share evidence produced by other organisations within the What Works Network. The role of the ambassadors includes:

- organising events (such as lunch and learns, discussion groups) to share research findings and facilitate discussions with social workers;
- sharing practitioner feedback with What Works for Children’s Social Care about how the practitioners receive the research and what research they would like to see undertaken in the future; and
- fostering an evidence culture by promoting the use of research evidence in every practice.

Sources: Anna Bacchoo, ‘[Introducing Our Evidence Ambassadors](#)’, What Works for Children’s Social Care, 23 June 2021; UK Government, Evaluation Task Force, ‘[What Works Network](#)’, updated 28 June 2013.

Working with knowledge brokers

Knowledge brokers are individuals and organisations that aim to promote interaction and dialogue between researchers and end users (in this case, mostly policymakers and practitioners). They do so by making sure that information reaches the target audience in a clear, accessible, and appropriate way, tailoring information to end users’ concerns, culture, and goals. They also often ensure researchers receive feedback from end users and incorporate it into their work in order to support the production of timely and relevant evidence. By acting as intermediaries, knowledge brokers are one of the most immediate and effective ways to bridge the

²¹ Jonathan Breckon and Jane Dodson, *Using Evidence: What Works?* (London: Alliance for Useful Evidence, 2016).

gap between experts who produce evidence and the various parties involved in the policy cycle who are in a position to apply it.²²

For instance, policy-oriented research institutes can act as knowledge brokers to close the research-policy gap. The Migration Policy Institute Europe (MPI Europe) is one example, in that its researchers work with policymakers to engage them in the research process, facilitate their access to evidence, and inform the design of policies. Similarly, MPI Europe researchers have worked and collaborated with other researchers to ensure they understand policymakers' priorities on certain issues and the context in which they make decisions. Several other organisations within the SPRING Consortium also act as knowledge brokers, including the Migration Policy Group (MPG) and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD).

The role of knowledge brokers can be institutionalised by creating coordination bodies or mechanisms that facilitate the alignment and sharing of practices across institutions, within and beyond the government, or by simply setting bilateral meetings with relevant stakeholders. A case study illustrating lessons learnt from working with knowledge brokers can be found in Box 4.3.

BOX 4.3

Case study: Using knowledge brokers to improve Canadian policies on children's health

In 2005, a study conducted in Canada sought to test the effectiveness of knowledge brokers in enhancing policymakers' uptake of effective public-health strategies for promoting healthy body weight in children. The knowledge brokers in the study were in charge of making sure relevant research evidence was put in the hands of public-health decisionmakers in the way that was most useful for them, and of assisting them in adapting evidence to their local context and practice. Interactions took place through online and telephone discussions as well as some site visits. The knowledge brokers documented these interactions in a journal, and the impact of working with knowledge brokers was measured using a randomised controlled trial.

Key lessons from the study include:

- Early and one-to-one interactions were key to building relationships between knowledge brokers and decisionmakers.
- Setting up mechanisms (e.g., networks) for interaction between knowledge brokers and decisionmakers facilitated knowledge-sharing and collaboration on literature searches, critical appraisals, and discussions on the interpretation and implications of the research evidence.
- Building trusting relationships and capacity for evidence-informed policymaking often takes more time than anticipated.
- The way knowledge brokers interact with policymakers and their knowledge about context matters. Face-to-face interactions were an important part of developing relationships and promoting capacity. Knowledge brokers' understanding of competing priorities, political and organisational issues, and confidentiality considerations also helped in this regard.

Source: Maureen Dobbins et al., 'A Description of a Knowledge Broker Role Implemented as Part of a Randomized Controlled Trial Evaluating Three Knowledge Translation Strategies', *Implementation Science* 4, no. 23 (2009).

²² OECD, *Building Capacity for Evidence-Informed Policy-Making: Lessons from Country Experiences* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2020).



Want to learn more about knowledge brokers? Check out:

- ★ [Engaging with Knowledge Brokers](#), published by the University of Cambridge, is a booklet containing information on what knowledge brokers are and how to engage with them.
- ★ The article [Knowledge Brokering: The Missing Link in the Evidence to Action Chain?](#) provides more information about how knowledge brokering works, three different brokering models, and some of the challenges involved.

Becoming a policy entrepreneur to raise awareness of evidence and enhance its implementation

Policy entrepreneurs are political actors who seek to change the status quo in certain areas of public policy. They can come from various backgrounds. They may be representatives of international, nongovernmental, or private organisations, politicians or civil servants, or even independent researchers.²³ Policy entrepreneurs are distinct from knowledge brokers and policy advocates in that they typically invest resources and take risks on something because they expect something in return. For instance, a policy entrepreneur involved in implementing an integration programme may seek to convince policymakers that the programme is having a positive impact in order to secure greater resources and buy-in to scale the programme up.

Becoming a policy entrepreneur typically requires collecting and disseminating evidence about the positive impact of a specific programme. This can be done through videos, outreach campaigns, speaking at events or seminars, or simply by having one-on-one chats with policy leaders to advocate in favour of a programme. Unlike knowledge brokers, policy entrepreneurs do not typically work with policymakers at the design stage of the policy cycle but rather focus on setting the agenda. Box 4.4 highlights an example of how policy entrepreneurs can increase evidence-related outreach and impact.

²³ Andrew Gunn, 'Policy Entrepreneurs and Policy Formulation', in *Handbook of Policy Formulation*, eds. Michael Howlett and Ishani Mukherjee (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2017).

BOX 4.4

Case study: The VIA programme in the Netherlands and the use of policy entrepreneurship to build interest in a cause

The VIA programme (Verdere Integratie op de Arbeidsmarkt, or Further Integration in the Labour Market) in the Netherlands aimed to promote the labour market integration of people with a migration background. Evidence experts involved in the programme acted as policy entrepreneurs to promote the programme. They raised awareness among policymakers about the problem the programme aimed to tackle by compiling and sharing data on how labour market opportunities differed between Dutch natives and people with a migrant background. By doing this, they created momentum and interest around their programme and facilitated discussion on how relevant stakeholders could help address the gaps the research showed. The success of this communication strategy was also due to the fact that money was allocated early on for dissemination and a plan was created, supporting activities such as this.

Note: The VIA programme’s full name was changed to Voor een Inclusieve Arbeidsmarkt (For an Inclusive Labour Market) in December 2022. Because most of the reports and other sources available still refer to the programme by its old name, this toolkit does as well to avoid confusion.

Source: author interview with Jürgen Wander, Programme Manager, VIA Programme at the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, 1 March 2022.



Want to learn more about policy entrepreneurship? Check out:

- ★ The chapter on [Policy Entrepreneurs and Policy Formulation](#) from the *Handbook of Policy Formulation* offers a collection of examples of policy entrepreneurship.
- ★ The article [So You Want to Be a Policy Entrepreneur?](#) analyses the role and skills needed to become a policy entrepreneur.

4.4 Further reading and resources

Resources on influencing policy through evidence dissemination:

- ★ The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)'s [Policy Advisory Systems: Supporting Good Governance and Sound Public Decision Making](#) describes the set-up and role of policy advisory systems (see Chapter 2). Understanding how policy advisory systems work may help you to identify not only your audience but also third parties that could facilitate your access to them.
- ★ The [Framework for Skills for Evidence-Informed Policy-Making](#), by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre, describes the set of collective skills needed for the research community to inform policy through evidence.
- ★ The UK Overseas Development Institute's [Tools for Policy Impact: A Handbook for Researchers](#) provides researchers with a comprehensive selection of tools, including communication tools, that can be used when attempting to turn research into policy influence.

Resources to help you set and advance a communication strategy:

- ★ [Plan Your Pathway to Impact](#) by the UK National Institute for Health and Care Research provides links to toolkits that help users devise an engagement and impact plan.
- ★ The toolkit [How to Communicate Research for Policy Influence](#) addresses different aspects of and tools for research communication designed to have policy influence, including engaging with the media, writing policy briefs, and creating online tools and data visualisation. It is also available in [Spanish](#).
- ★ The UK Overseas Development Institute's [Tools for Policy Impact: A Handbook for Researchers](#) includes chapters on communication tools and on policy influence tools, providing guidance on developing a communication strategy and strategies to secure policy impact.
- ★ The UK Treasury's [Magenta Book: Central Government Guidance on Evaluation](#) includes a chapter on the use and dissemination of evaluation findings that provides a list of key questions to create a dissemination plan (see Chapter 6).
- ★ [The Complexity Evaluation Toolkit](#), from the Centre for the Evaluation of Complexity across the Nexus (CECAN), provides guidance on how to achieve impact and build connections with other policy leads who want to apply evidence-based lessons in their own areas (see Chapter 5).
- ★ [Communicating Research for Evidence-Based Policymaking](#), published by the European Commission Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, covers how to write a policy brief, communicate findings in a carefully thought-out way, and leverage various means to engage an audience (e.g., websites, flyers, conferences).

© 2023 Migration Policy Institute Europe and SPRING Project.
All Rights Reserved.

Layout: Liz Hall
Cover photo: iStock.com/Valentyna Ivashchenko

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic or mechanical, or included any information storage and retrieval system without permission from Migration Policy Institute Europe. A full-text PDF of this document is available for free download from www.mpieurope.org.

Information for reproducing excerpts from this publication can be found at www.migrationpolicy.org/about/copyright-policy. Inquiries can also be directed to communications@migrationpolicy.org.

Suggested citation: Slootjes, Jasmijn and Maria Belen Zanzuchi. 2023. *Toolkit for Evidence-Informed Policymaking in Migrant Integration*. Brussels: Migration Policy Institute Europe and SPRING Project.