

Case Study 2: Impacting Public Policy Collectively in the Field of Migration in Europe

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Introduction

For close to 40 years, Ashoka has been selecting social entrepreneurs with a systems-changing idea and then accelerating their social impact through strategic support. One of the side effects of the selection process (in which Ashoka staff and partners interview hundreds of diverse candidates around the world) is that we gain a “birds-eye view” of emerging trends in specific sectors and geographies, as well as in social innovation and entrepreneurship more broadly.

Due to Ashoka’s large and diverse network of partners encompassing media, corporations, schools and universities, and academic institutions, we are uniquely positioned to give our network access to new thinking and opportunities to leverage their collective impact for the global good. With the thought leadership and partnership of Fellows, we are able both to isolate emerging trends as well as to help our network to seize the opportunity to collaborate on the most urgent and pressing social

problems.

Migration in Europe

In the European context, this process has helped Ashoka identify migration as an emerging trend, and to think about how we are able to help accelerate Fellows' impact in this sector in the context of a broader ecosystem. In the 2018 Global Fellows Study, 18 percent of Fellowship reported that migrants and refugees are a central focus of their work -- in Europe, that number jumps to 28 percent (the highest of any of the geographic regions). In a separate question, we asked Fellows whether migration and refugees were an "emerging issue" that is affecting their work. Half of European Fellows said yes, compared to 38 percent globally.

In the European context, we see that Fellows working with migrants and/or refugees are often working towards "systems changes" in public policy and legislation.

Generally, social change always involves some degree of systemic transformation, or, systems change. This can be defined as creating "fundamental change in policies, processes, relationships, and power structures, as well as deeply held values and norms."¹ In other words, it's not just about providing a service, but changing the way the entire web of relationships work.

In the Global Fellows Study, we found that 93 percent of Ashoka Fellows reported that they have achieved changes

in public policy.² In political contexts with developed institutions, public policy change can often be a core component of sustainable systems change for Fellows. For the issue of migration, given that it affects almost all major systems such as education and healthcare, any kind of sustainable and long-term change requires complex systems change thinking and strategies. Within that systems change, public policy can often play a large role, directly affecting processes such as freedom of movement, documentation to be employed, access to healthcare and education, how and who receives subsidies to help with basic needs, as well as how host communities are encouraged and allowed to participate in actively welcoming newcomers.

Below is a brief case study of how this type of systems change can take place in the area of migration, integration, and refugee movements in Europe, and how we foresee this kind of work spreading to other sectors across the globe.

The Hello Europe Initiative

The Hello Europe³ initiative was launched in 2016 to scale proven solutions to challenging underlying migration to European countries. Since then we have found that many Fellows and leading social entrepreneurs involved in the initiative have had significant impact on public policies at national levels. There are many examples including Inge Missmahl's IPSO Context,⁴ which has been adopted by

the Afghani government as the official methodology for trauma therapy in refugee shelters, and David Lubell's *Welcoming America*,⁵ which has led processes to design policy at municipal and even federal level in the U.S. and other countries. However, in the process of supporting these entrepreneurs to scale to European countries, we realized that there was a need and potential for deeper engagement in public policy.

As mentioned above, migration affects not one or two systems, but rather a "system of systems," touching on many different processes at once. In fact, as we mapped out shared challenges and solutions within the sector, we found social entrepreneurs working in fields as diverse as healthcare, education, employment, human rights, and even urban design. To achieve true impact, though, there often needed to be deep collaboration and coordination amongst the social entrepreneurs themselves as well as with policymakers. For example, even when a highly qualified migrant and a company seeking new talent are matched,⁶ if the migrant does not have access to adequate housing or the right paperwork to be legally employed, the impact of the first solution will be completely lost. Because migration is by definition an issue spanning borders, we found that effective solutions often needed to involve not only municipal and local governments, but also international bodies at the EU level.

Through a European-wide partnership, based on the

success of our national accelerators, we designed a roadmap to connect citizen sector solutions with policymakers and together build better policies that could accelerate collective impact. Here are some of the learnings, insights, and recommendations that we have gained from Fellows and other social entrepreneurs on the “front line” of social change efforts:

a) Make policy change an aim for the initiative from the start. Hello Europe included conversations and spaces for social entrepreneurs to think about policy change throughout the program. Further, rather than merely encouraging social entrepreneurs to think about what policy change would help their initiative, we began conversations to identify what kind of policy they could address alongside other social innovators in their cohort.

b) Provide better training on how to affect policy and connect social entrepreneurs with technical experts. One lesson we learned was that social entrepreneurs are not necessarily experts in writing policy (and should not have to be). Rather than asking them to draft complex legislation, we began bringing technical experts into the conversation who could help translate between the two sectors, as well as broaden social entrepreneurs' imagination as to what kind of policy changes are possible and how to get there.⁷

c) Gather policymakers and social entrepreneurs to work together. One hypothesis we had when we started this

work was that policymakers at the EU level were not aware about the extent to which social entrepreneurs could help accelerate systems change. The same is often true for social entrepreneurs: they often have not had the opportunity to speak with policymakers to understand the kind of work they do and challenges they face. To bridge this gap, Hello Europe organized a summit with 20 social entrepreneurs and 150 key policymakers and experts in Brussels.⁸ Both policymakers and social entrepreneurs confirmed that this summit had been instrumental in allowing the two sectors to learn from each other, particularly in finding new ways of working together (e.g. multi-stakeholder platforms, scaling initiatives across borders) across topics and countries.

d) Transform conversations into specific recommendations. Based on feedback from social entrepreneurs, we have learned that it is not enough to have conversations and to open doors for collaboration. The ideas must be translated into policy language and shared with the key players in the system. To achieve this, we are creating collaborative groups with social entrepreneurs and policy experts to boil down the ideas generated at the summit to simple and applicable recommendations that can become roadmaps for change for the key policy decision-makers in the EU, hungry for ideas with proven impact that they can champion into laws, funding mechanisms and know-how for their respective stakeholders.

Our hope is to provide new tools and possibilities to policymakers in the European Union who aim to improve processes around migration, integration, and refugee movements for the good of the newcomers and host communities. This process is also quickly impacting the social entrepreneurs involved who are improving their ability to understand and impact policy at all levels.

The Framework Beyond Migration

In addition to the specific impact on migration, similar models are also emerging within other areas within our network including topics such as media, education, or combatting corruption and organized crime. We see these groups as opportunities for Ashoka to support social entrepreneurs to collectively connect and work with policymakers to impact systems and make the world a better place for all. This effort requires not only coming up with creative programs to support social entrepreneurs, but also involving other organizations in building an ecosystem that permits and encourages this kind of participatory and collective work to improve policy at all levels. This goes from funders from private and public entities to bolster the ability of social innovators to impact policy, fixed spaces for collaboration between Social Entrepreneurs and policymakers, research to show best practices in building this kind of collaboration, and backbone organizations to keep these networks active.

Solving social problems is difficult, and it can often be

overwhelming, especially when these problems affect so many systems. The only way to continue advancing towards sustainable solutions is to work together and to involve all key stakeholders in the conversation. In fact, developing these collaborative models between social entrepreneurs, policymakers, and other key stakeholders is a systems change in itself, aiming to unlock a world where Everyone is a Changemaker, contributing actively to solve our most pressing problems. This, I believe, is indeed the end game that we are working towards, one system at a time.

Works Cited

¹ Srik Gopal and John Kania, "Fostering Systems Change", Stanford Social Innovation Review, Nov. 20, 2015 (URL= ssir.org/articles/entry/), accessed 11/5/18.

² Of these, 31 percent have achieved change at an international level, 75 percent at a national level, and 53 percent at a regional/local level. How this impact happens varies, including contributing directly to legislative change or new government policy (74 percent); bringing research or missing data to policymakers (74 percent); advising policymakers or legislative bodies as an expert (76 percent) or, less frequently, convincing governments to allocate funds to a particular cause (59 percent) or representing marginalized populations or challenging laws in court (37 percent). In this survey we also found that Fellows selected in the past five years are achieving policy

change faster than their elder peers (40), which indicates, at the very least, an increase in intentionally changing policy more quickly.

³ For more information see <http://hello-europe.eu>.

⁴ For a short summary of IPSO Context, see www.hello-europe.eu/cause

⁵ For a short summary of Welcoming International (the global arm of Welcoming America), see www.hello-europe.eu/cause/

⁶ See Jane Leu's Migration Ventures for more on this solution www.hello-europe.eu/cause/.

⁷ Thankfully, there are more and more organizations helping to bridge the gap between citizens and citizen sector organizations and policy makers. One great example of this is The Good Lobby in Brussels (<http://www.thegoodlobby.eu/>), who are partnering with us to give policy tools to social entrepreneurs.

⁸ A longer summary of the Summit can be found at www.hello-europe.eu/

Author bio

Kenny Clewett is the director of Hello Europe (Ashoka's Migration, Integration, and Refugee Initiative) and of Strategic Development for Ashoka in Spain, where he is based. Also, at Ashoka, Kenny has led search and

selection, founded Jóvenes Changemakers, an initiative to activate youth as changemakers across Europe, and helped launch the Start Empathy program in the U.S. Before his current role, he served as a pastor in the United States focused on cross-cultural faith-based initiatives. Kenny has a degree in Humanities from the University of Alcalá de Henares and Durham University (UK), and a Master's degree in Divinity from Trinity International University in Chicago.