

Summary PhD project

**Sustainable labor market integration of first generation migrant groups:  
The quest for the 'migrant-organization fit'**



Supervision team:

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## Societal problem & scientific contribution

Europe is experiencing a substantial influx of first time migrants. In 2015, 2.6 million first residence permits to third country nationals were granted<sup>1</sup>, whereas in 2016, 1.2 million first time asylum seekers were registered<sup>2</sup>, many of whom are expected to be granted asylum. Many call to speedily integrate these migrants in the labor market, for social and moral reasons, and to counterbalance host societies' costs for reception and integration, estimated to range between 17 and 22 billion Euros in 2016 in the EU.<sup>3</sup>

However, migrants experience barriers in entering the labor market and in their career trajectories (Fang et al., 2009). Studies show that migrant group characteristics influence their chances in the labor market (Blommaert et al., 2014) and that diversity management approaches to migrant workers in organizations differ (Zanfrini & Monaci, 2017). Nevertheless, little is known about *which combination(s) of individual and organizational factors* facilitate the successful recruitment and retention (R&R) of migrant employees in European labor markets. This PhD project aims to fill this gap by combining *sociological* knowledge on (in)formal diversity management practices in organizations with *social psychological* knowledge focusing on cultural differences of first generation migrants.

## Theoretical approach

This project starts from the *person-organization fit* concept (Caplan, 1987): the degree to which (future) employees are perceived to be compatible with an organization's culture, values, goals, and employees. This concept has also been applied to study migrant employees (Horverak et al. 2013), the 'migrant-organization' fit. To understand both organizational practices and person characteristics as facilitators of labor market integration of first generation migrants we will investigate two interrelated levels (see Figure 1).

### 1. *Within/between-organization differences*

We expect organizations that

- a. are multi- or international might be better equipped to facilitate integration of migrants than national organizations;
- b. have more (in)formal diversity-oriented HRM management practices are more successful;
- c. enforce equal opportunities and affirmative action through formal control will be less successful than organizations that influence social norms and create shared perceptions;
- d. apply certain types of social categorizations in organizational practices will induce biased, category-based thinking (Gaertner et al., 2000) that hampers R&R.

### 2. *Cultural differences of migrant groups*

The impact of organizational practices will differ for ethnic groups. Cultural norms and values reflect people's internalized cultural systems (Smith et al., 2013). The

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<sup>1</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Residence\\_permits\\_statistics](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Residence_permits_statistics)

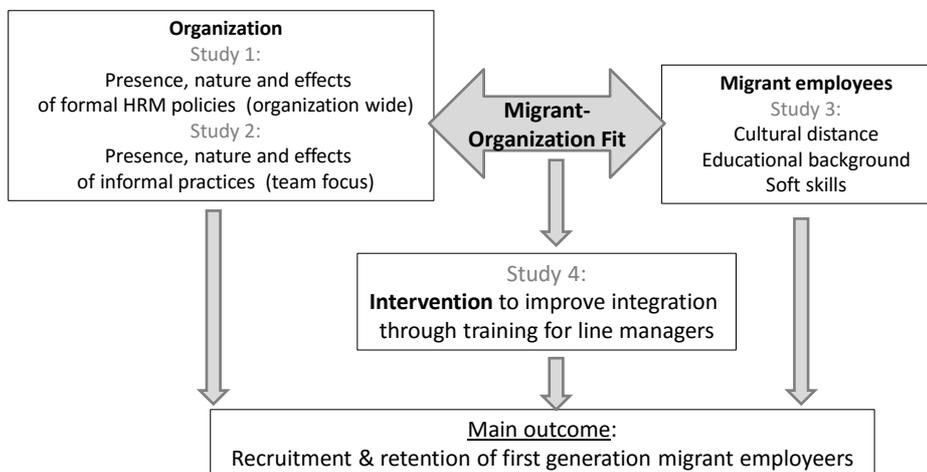
<sup>2</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-press-releases/-/3-16032017-BP>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/578956/IPOL\\_STU\(2016\)578956\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/578956/IPOL_STU(2016)578956_EN.pdf)

cultural distance regarding norms and values between migrants and native (Dutch) managers and colleagues will influence R&R differently (controlling for educational background, soft skills). We expect that

- a. greater perceived cultural distance between HRM manager and a migrant applicant should decrease the likelihood of being hired (prejudice, Blommaert et al., 2014 );
- b. greater perceived cultural distance by a migrant worker should influence willingness to integrate and increase retention (Zhang et al., 2013);
- c. only organizations that implement (in)formal practices that fit the migrants' needs will successfully retain and recruit migrants.

Figure 1. Research model



## Research design

This four-year PhD project consists of four studies (see Figure 1), based on multiple case studies (organizations), different samples (ethnicity, migrants' length of stay in host society), and mixed method research. For Study 1-2, data will be collected in two case study organizations. Studies 1 and 2 are qualitative: document analysis and qualitative semi-structured interviews with HRM managers ( $N=2-6$ ); middle managers ( $N=8^4$ ); and first generation migrant and native employees ( $N=30$ ) in 8 teams. Both studies will analyze the cultural distance of managers and native employees compared to those of first time migrant employees to identify combinations of organizational and individual determinants of the migrant-organization fit. Studies 3 and 4 are predominantly quantitative.

<sup>4</sup> Preferably two diverse and two less diverse teams, as well as two high skilled teams and two low(er) skilled teams (or: mixed).

**Study 1: Formal organizational practices**

Analysis of the presence, nature, and effects of formal organizational practices regarding the R&R of first generation migrant employees (document analysis) as perceived by HRM/middle managers and first generation employees (semi-structured interviews).

**Study 2: Informal organizational practices**

Analysis of the presence, nature, and effects of informal practices to support migrant R&R based on a structured comparison between diverse versus hardly diverse teams (semi-structured interviews with middle managers, migrant & non-migrant workers).

**Study 3: Cultural distance**

A survey ( $N=400$ ) will compare perceptions of HRM/ middle managers and native Dutch workers with perceptions of different ethnic migrant workers regarding their cultural distance, in one blue and one white color organization (not the case study organizations).

**Study 4: Impact evaluation of training line managers**

THP is currently developing an intercultural training for line managers aimed at preparing companies for receiving migrant employees, within the framework of the Migrant Training and Placement Programme (see THP, 2017). Study 4 will be a qualitative and quantitative impact evaluation of this training's effectiveness ( $N=4$ , with control groups).

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