

Excellence, Diversity and Growth

A historical biography of the IMISCOE Research Network

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1. Introduction

IMISCOE was established in 2004 as a Network of Excellence in the field of Migration, Integration and Social Cohesion in Europe. Since then it has developed rapidly into an International Research Network, growing from nineteen founding member institutes in 2004 to 35 member institutes in 2014 and around 500 individual members from all over Europe. IMISCOE has also provided seed funding to numerous research initiatives, which have been at the basis of many international research projects. Furthermore, IMISCOE has established a book series with now over 65 titles, which have become a key reference in the field of migration and integration studies. Also, IMISCOE has been offering various activities in the area of PhD training, including a series of summer- and winter schools.

These activities have, beyond any doubt, contributed significantly to the development of a more interdisciplinary and comparative orientation in migration and integration studies. IMISCOE has been a catalyst of the rapid development of migration and integration studies in Europe. Whereas this field originally had a strong national orientation, comparative research has now become much more widespread, contributing significantly to the theoretical development of the field. Furthermore, from originally a mainly sociological and anthropological field, migration and integration studies at large as well as IMISCOE in particular have become much more interdisciplinary, with contributions from political science, policy sciences, demography, social geography, law, economics, history, and various other disciplines.

This study was written at the occasion of the tenth anniversary of IMISCOE, in April 2014. This was a good time to look into the history network, which is what this paper will do. Not only the history of the network itself, but also its structure, its research and publications will be described. This was done by studying the minutes of the Board of Directors meetings, interviews with key persons involved in the development of IMISCOE, and a survey amongst directors of institutional members as well as individual members.

2. Origins and development of IMISCOE

The formal establishment of IMISCOE was in April 2004, when the European Commission decided to finance it as a Network of Excellence. However, plans for the network originate from earlier dates. The first steps towards an international migration and integration research network started around 2002, initiated by Prof.dr. Rinus Penninx. This was initiated in response to an open consultation of the European Commission (EC). The Commission wanted to gain insight into the academic research field and they asked academics to formulate possible research questions. In 2003 the EC published its plans for the Sixth

Framework Program (FP6), which included comparative research of migration and integration. Subsequently, Penninx started to bring together academics and institutes that were willing to join the network. The aim was to include institutes from all over Europe, trying to cover as many member states of the EU as possible. All in all, in 2004 the Network of Excellence started with 19 institutes from different European countries; these institutes were the founding fathers of IMISCOE (see table 1).

Table 1: Institutes that founded IMISCOE in 2004.

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|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CES, University of Coimbra, Portugal • CEIFO, University of Stockholm, Sweden • CEDEM, University of Liège, Belgium • CEG, University of Lisbon, Portugal • COMPAS, University of Oxford, United Kingdom • DEUSTO, University of Deusto, Bilbao, Spain • EUR, Erasmus University Rotterdam • EFSM, University of Bamberg, Germany • FIERI, Turin, Italy • ICMPD, Vienna, Austria | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ISR/EIF of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna, Austria • IMES, University of Amsterdam, Netherlands • IMIS, University of Osnabrück, Germany • INED, Paris, France • MIGRINTER, University of Poitiers, France • NIDI, The Hague, The Netherlands • SCMR, University of Sussex, United Kingdom • SociNova, University of Lisbon, Portugal • SFM, University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland |
|---|---|

In 2004 IMISCOE received 4,5 million euro from the EC, for a five year period (2004-2009). This money had to cover the expenses for five years. Most of this money was spent on a number of research clusters. In the period 2004-2009 four institutes were included in IMISCOE as ‘associated members’: HWWI, CMR, CEFMR, and CESS. Due to this enlargement, more countries in Europe were represented in the network.

EU funding for IMISCOE ended formally on April 1st 2009. Due to a no-cost extension, the network could however use unspent funds for another year, until April 2010. However, in the mean time the network had to decide on its future, which was the topic of several important meetings of IMISCOE’s Board of Directors. The founding member institutes as well as the four new (associated) members decided to continue IMISCOE as an International Research Network (IRN), independent from EU funding. The member institutes decided, first, that the programming of research on a European and global level as well as building and maintain an infrastructure for training and education should be IMISCOE’s core tasks from now on. Secondly, the structure of IMISCOE would change into that of an International Research Network, to be founded by a consortium agreement that was signed by all member institutes. Also, the member institutes allowed IMISCOE to expand in terms of the number of institutes involved, though preferably in an incremental manner. Finally, the members agreed that the network would from now on be funded by membership fees, from individual as well as institutional members.

In the period following this turning point in IMISCOE's development, IMISCOE welcomed several new member institutes, the first amongst whom were Mirekoç in Istanbul, MIM in Malmö and IEM in Madrid. The Network grew rapidly to over 20 member institutes from all over Europe, which, according to several leading figures within IMISCOE in this period, was quite unexpected due to the fact that member institutes now had to pay a fee to be a member (rather than benefiting from part of the EU funding). The number of individual members grew rapidly as well in this period. Several commentators on IMISCOE's development in this period explain this growing interest in IMISCOE by the establishment of IMISCOE's reputation in this period as well as the shift in focus from a policy orientation in the early years to an orientation on member institutes and their interests and ideas relating to research, publications, events and training.

Since its establishment in 2004, IMISCOE had been led by the Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies (University of Amsterdam), with Prof.dr. Rinus Penninx in the role of coordinator of IMISCOE. Due to developments within the University of Amsterdam, the retirement of Rinus Penninx, and a more general desire to change IMISCOE's leadership more often, the decision was taken to move the coordination of IMISCOE to another member institute. After several rounds of discussion amongst the Board of Directors and several bids by member institutes, a decision was taken to grant the coordination of IMISCOE to Erasmus University Rotterdam.

Erasmus University Rotterdam took over the coordination of IMISCOE as of April 2014. The role of network coordinator was now shared by Prof.dr. Maurice Crul and Dr. Peter Scholten. This reflects the fact that the Erasmus bid for IMISCOE was a joint effort of the departments of Sociology and Public Administration within this university. The bid was also supported by the City of Rotterdam, the Erasmus Trustfund and the Erasmus University Board. EUR provided a specific outlook for the future of IMISCOE. First, it wanted to strengthen IMISCOE's [publication strategy](#). A priority of the coordinator was to find a new publisher with a better arrangement, which was found in Springer. EUR would also add a journal to IMISCOE's publication program, which was the journal [Comparative Migration Studies](#). Secondly, the outlook included efforts to strengthen the annual conference, by attracting more scholars from more disciplines and at the same time enhancing its program and quality. The third point was research, involving a continuation of the provision of seed-funding to research groups in a competitive way. Furthermore, EUR intends to strengthen the role of IMISCOE in the European lobby for research funding. Fourthly, PhD training will be continued to be supported, in particular the summer- or winterschools and the development of an IMISCOE PhD Network. And finally, the coordinators wanted to professionalize IMISCOE's communication strategy, specifically with a new website, using social media and a new format for the newsletters.

In 2014 IMISCOE also experienced a new period of growth. The number of individual members increased to around 500 after the largest IMISCOE conference thus far (Madrid 2014). Furthermore, several new member institutes joined the network in 2014, bringing the total number of [member institutes](#) at a record number of 35 as of 2014.

3. Research

At the establishment of the IMISCOE, policy and research were its main topics. When IMISCOE became an IRN, the focus shifted more primarily to research and the interests of research institutes. When IMISCOE started as a Network of Excellence (NoE) nine research clusters were designed. Each cluster had a different focus ranging from the effects of international migration (cluster A1) to the different dimensions of migration, such as political, economical, cultural and social dimensions (clusters B3-B6); and from causes and consequences of migration (A2) to comparative perspectives of politics and policies related to migration and integration (C9) or the interaction between immigrants and the receiving society (C7).

During the first year of the existence of research clusters, each cluster wrote a State of Art Report (SoAR) of the corresponding subject. After these reports, clusters further developed their ideas, tasks and goals for the next five years. Besides the different clusters, there also were several cross-cluster initiatives, which were stimulated by the Board of Directors from the beginning. Furthermore, several feasibility studies were done: INTPOL, EUROLINKS and SOCO; each focusing on specific cross-cluster topics on which IMISCOE wanted to develop further initiatives.

While the network itself extended, not only the organization itself changed but also the focus of the research clusters. The directors of institutes were dissatisfied with the research clusters that were established in the first years of IMISCOE: they were seen as too rigid and not open and flexible enough. This started to change when IMISCOE became an international research network in 2009.

Since 2010 IMISCOE provides seed funding to selected research clusters based on an open annual call for [research groups](#). In the IRN's first year there were seventeen new initiatives proposed for research groups. Six of these initiatives were former clusters under a new label and a new name, the other eleven proposals were new. All in all, this has led to 48 research groups that were provided seed funding in the four calls between 2010 and 2014. Also, if a group remains active within the network for at least four years, it can be awarded the status of [Standing Committee](#) (see table 2). This means that the group will receive a special position within IMISCOE's research strategy, at the annual conference and on the website.

Table 2: Overview of IMISCOE Standing Committees (as of April 2014)

- Multi-Level Governance of Migration and Integration in Europe
- Migration, Citizenship and Political Participation
- International Migration and Social Protection: Mobility and Diversity as Challenges to Welfare Rights and Provision
- Education and Social Mobility
- Research-Policy Dialogues on Migration and Integration in Europe (DIAMINT)
- Ageing Migrants: demography, welfare and agency

- Transnational Practices in Migration
- Popular Art, Diversity and Cultural Policies in Post-Migration Urban Settings (POPADIVCIT)

Another important development in IMISCOE's research orientation was its increasingly interdisciplinary orientation. Whereas originally the network attracted mainly sociologists and anthropologists, especially since 2009 its disciplinary focus has broadened significantly. This is a reflection of a broader trend in the field of migration and integration studies toward a more multidisciplinary orientation. A survey amongst IMISCOE members showed that the following disciplines are involved in IMISCOE (in order of total number of participants): sociology, political science, geography, anthropology, economics, education, law, demography, migration studies, policy studies (incl. public administration), history and various others.

4. Publications

Since 2006 IMISCOE has developed several publication series, oriented at academic as well as policy-oriented dissemination of research done in the context of the IMISCOE network. The policy-oriented publication series, in particular the policy briefs that were published online at the IMISCOE website and distributed in hard copy, was discontinued in 2009. Whether or not to re-launch a publication series aimed at knowledge utilization has remained a topic of debate in the IMISCOE board of directors ever since.

The more academically oriented publication series have, however, expanded significantly since 2006. Especially since the transformation of IMISCOE into a Research Network, these have become the main focus of the network's publication strategy. A key part of IMISCOE's strategy is to promote Open Access publishing, to make sure IMISCOE's work can be promoted and disseminated in the broadest possible sense. Besides hard copy publishing, IMISCOE has always and continues to provide support to make as many of its publications as possible available in Open Access, making IMISCOE the market leader in Open Access publishing in the field of migration and integration studies in Europe. Most books in the IMISCOE research series as well as IMISCOE's journal *Comparative Migration Studies* are available in Open Access.

IMISCOE's [book series](#) was launched in 2006 together with the publisher Amsterdam University Press. At first, IMISCOE developed several parallel series, including the Research Series, the Dissertation Series and Research Reports. In the dissertation series, eighteen books have been published, while in the reports series only eight books were issued. In 2009 it was decided that both the dissertations and the reports series would be merged with the IMISCOE-AUP Research Series. Besides the Research Series, IMISCOE has also developed a very successful Text Book Series. By 2014, three books have been published in this series.

Besides the book series, IMISCOE is also associated with the international double-blind peer reviewed journal [Comparative Migration Studies](#) (CMS), since 2014. This journal, established in 2012, was a good match with IMISCOE because of its equally comparative and

multidisciplinary orientation. Furthermore, CMS is also involved in Open Access publishing. The decision to broaden the scope of IMISCOE’s publication strategy to journal publications reflects a broader trend in the academic world to appreciate journal articles as key parts of academic careers.

In 2014 both IMISCOE publication series, the books and the journal, moved to another publisher: Springer. This transfer is meant to strengthen the academic reputation and positioning of IMISCOE’s publications. Also with Springer, IMISCOE continues to support Open Access publications in the book series as well as for the journal.

5. Events

Besides research and publications, the organization of events such as conferences, symposia and PhD schools has been a key part of IMISCOE’s activities. Especially IMISCOE’s annual conference has become a key part of the agenda of migration scholars from all over Europe (and increasingly also beyond). Since 2004, 11 annual conferences have been organized (see table 3). In the coming years, the IMISCOE annual conferences will be held in [Geneva](#) (2015), Prague (2016) and Rotterdam (2017).

Table 3: IMISCOE annual conferences

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|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 2004 Coimbra (CES) | 2011 Warsaw (CMR) |
| 2005 Osnabruck (IMI) | 2012 Amsterdam (IMES) |
| 2006 Vienna (ICMPD) | 2013 Malmö (MIM) |
| 2007 Sussex (SCMR) | 2014 Madrid (IUEM) |
| 2008 Bilbao (DEUSTO) | 2015 Geneva (SFM, nccr) |
| 2009 Stockholm (CEIFO) | 2016 Prague (GEOMIGRACE) |
| 2010 Liège (CEDEM) | 2017 Rotterdam (EUR) |

The first two annual conferences were organized according to a fixed format with two day plenary sessions followed by afternoon cluster workshops. However, this format changed at the third conference, when more time was granted to other activities of IMISCOE, like feasibility studies workshops, cross cluster workshops and policy events. When IMISCOE became an IRN, there was less budget for the annual conferences. However, the member institutes decided to continue their support for the conferences at the own cost, and they decided to install a conference fee. Since 2009, the academic format of the IMISCOE conferences has become most prominent, with open calls for papers and panels and a quality review board for assessing submitted proposals. In 2014, IMISCOE also re-introduced workshops besides panels at the annual conferences; this included book workshops as well as policy-oriented workshops. IMISCOE’s research groups and standing committees have a ‘fixed’ place at the IMISCOE conferences.

6. Training and awards

A final category of IMISCOE’s activities involves training & awards. Both are oriented at promoting excellence in the field of migration and integration studies, at various career stages. Many activities focus at the level of PhD training, but there are also training activities and awards (the Rinus Penninx Award) that aim at more advanced stages of academic careers.

A key activity aimed at PhD training involves the organization of [PhD conferences](#), or winter/summer schools. The first IMISCOE summer school was organized by Migrinter in Poitiers in 2006. Since then, these PhD schools have been evaluated so positively, that in some years (2008, 2009) there have even been two PhD schools in one year. Also when IMISCOE became a Research Network, the PhD conferences were continued. Every year the Board of Directors decides to allocate support to one of the IMISCOE member institutes for organizing an IMSICOE winter or summer school. Since 2006, 12 PhD conferences have been organized (see table 4). Currently, IMISCOE is exploring opportunities for the organization of a transatlantic PhD summer school in 2016.

Table 4: IMISCOE PhD conferences since 2006.

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|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| 2006 Migrinter, Poitiers | 2010 Deusto, Bilbao |
| 2007 IMES, Amsterdam | 2011 Mirekoç, Istanbul |
| 2008 HWWI, Hamburg | 2012 GRITIM-UPF, Barcelona |
| 2008 CEG, Lisbon | 2013 CEMIS, Antwerp |
| 2009 INED, Paris | 2014 CEDEM, Liege |
| 2009 CMR, Warsaw | 2015 EUR, Rotterdam |

Furthermore, IMISCOE has also been at the foundation of several other initiatives related to PhD training and even education at the masters level. For instance, the INTEGRIM project was prepared in the context of the IMISCOE network, promoting the exchange of PhD students between IMISCOE’s partners. Furthermore, the IMISCOE training committee developed a proposal for a joint masters program with six IMISCOE partners. This led to a joint master in international migration and social cohesion (MISOCO) focusing on migration flows and social cohesion strategies.

Finally, IMISCOE has installed several awards to celebrate and promote excellence of research and publications in the field of migration and integration studies. In 2010 the [Maria Ioannis Baganha Dissertation Award](#) was installed. It was named after Maria Baganha, one of the founding members of IMISCOE, former chair of the Board of Directors and leading migration scholar at CES at the University of Coimbra, who passed away in June 2009. The award goes to the best PhD thesis defended in the two years preceding the award. The nominated PhD theses are evaluated by an independent MB award committee. The award includes a sum of 2500 euros and a full fee for Open Access publication in the IMISCOE research series.

Table 5: Winners of the IMISCOE Maria Baganha Dissertation Award, since 2010

| | | |
|------|--------------------|--|
| 2010 | Juljana Vullnetari | Dynamics between Internal and International Migration: A Development-Oriented Ethnographic Study in Albania |
| 2011 | Justus Uitermark | Dynamics of Power in Dutch Integration Politics |
| 2012 | Zana Vathi | The Children of Albanian Migrants in Europe: Ethnic Identity, Transnational Ties and Pathways of Integration |
| 2013 | Alistair Hunter | Retirement Home? France's Migrant Worker Hostels and the Dilemma of Late-in-Life Return |
| 2014 | Ruben Andersson | Clandestine Migration and the Business of Bordering Europe |

The second award is the [Rinus Penninx Best Paper Award](#), which was installed in 2014. This award honors the founding father of IMISCOE, Rinus Penninx. It is awarded to the best paper presented at the IMISCOE annual conference. The winner receives €750 and has the opportunity to publish the paper in *Comparative Migration Studies*. The first award went to a paper by Marie-Laurence Flahaux and Hein de Haas on "*Migration from, to and within Africa: the role of development and states.*"

Finally, in 2014 IMISCOE also launched a [PhD network](#). This involves a network of PhD's from all over Europe working in the field of migration and integration studies. This network will be involved in determining IMISCOE's strategies regarding PhD training, and will also contribute to the organization of specific events for this category at the IMISCOE annual conferences.

7. Conclusion

This paper has provided an historical biography of IMISCOE from the establishment of the Network of Excellence, the change into an International Research Network, and the recent move of the network to a new coordinator. This biography shows several key developments. Firstly, the orientation of IMISCOE has changed from a focus on policy towards a focus on membership. It has become an academic network of which the focus is primary on the importance of research institutes. Secondly, there has been a diversification trend. When IMISCOE was a Network of Excellence especially research was important, research with a policy orientation since IMISCOE was funded by the EC. Nowadays, as an International Research Network, the focus has become broader; research, publications, training and events are all important. This diversification has been reinforced by the new coordinators of IMISCOE at Erasmus University. Thirdly, IMISCOE has grown significantly. From a network of excellence founded by 19 institutes, it is now by far Europe's largest research network in the field of migration and integration studies with 35 member institutes and around 500 individual members.

Due the establishment of IMISCOE, institutes in and around the EU have found each other for research, training, and events. European wide research and publications have been

supported by IMISCOE and over the years there have been more than sixty publications. From this paper, can be concluded that IMISCOE has combated fragmentation of European migration and integration research and continues to do so in its future.