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## Migration and asylum seekers: ESPON evidences

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► **To cite this version:**

Marco Cremaschi. Migration and asylum seekers: ESPON evidences. [Research Report] ESPON | Inspire Policy Making with Territorial Evidence. 2020, pp.26. hal-02978116

**HAL Id: hal-02978116**

**<https://sciencespo.hal.science/hal-02978116v1>**

Submitted on 26 Oct 2020

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Co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund

Inspire Policy Making with Territorial Evidence

TOPIC PAPER

# Migration and asylum seekers: ESPON evidences<sup>1</sup>

August 2020

<sup>1</sup> This report was written by Marco Cremaschi SciencesPo with the assistance of Flavia Albanese, IUAV Venice. The author would like to acknowledge his debt to several exchanges with Ch. Barwick (Mark Bloch Institute), C. Gardesse (Paris Est), H. Hanhörster (IRS), Ch. Lelevrier (Paris Est) and Liga Baltina (Fondazione Giacomo Brodolini).

The reception of refugees and migrants depends on the capacity of European states, regions and localities to respond to the double challenge of providing help for the first months they arrive and sustaining a long-term process in an often-heated political confrontation. Although the long-term effects are not always conclusive, national policies and local initiatives can achieve some results. Nation states have agreed on procedures and mechanisms for an equitable redistribution of refugees and cities and localities have implemented programmes and interventions for receiving and promoting the insertion of migrants.

However, evidence of the geographical structure of waves of migrants and refugees is not evident due to structural constraints. Flows and routes keep changing due to the hazards of international relations; the capacity of absorbing the incoming population of refugees depending largely on policy trade-offs and political interdependencies.

What is clear is that the geography of foreign-born residents, migrants and refugees do not overlap, the location choice of refugees being particularly constrained by national policy-frames. A need arises of a better understanding of the local variations and issues of the different policy responses and success stories.

Geography, spatial strategies and types of cities profoundly shape the distribution of arrivals, the transit routes, and destination hubs, creating a local overburden of the policies related to reception and integration of migrants. The economic performance and demographic dynamic of regions may appear as determinant factors that influence the absorption capacity of localities (MIGRARE, 2019, pp. 35-65; pp. 99-100). Yet, some localities, often small municipalities, engage positively in the reception of refugees in less performing regions. In that respect, case studies and qualitative analysis from MIGRATUP (2018, pp. 48-49) in line with the literature on the subject, suggest that the reception of migrants and refugees may provide positive economic impact to underprivileged regions and areas, if they are able to harmonize reception and local development objectives.

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## MAIN POLICY QUESTIONS

- What territorial features affect the reception of refugees and migrants?
- What typologies and regional specificities are to be considered?
- How do spatial, economic and qualitative impacts interact?
- How to harmonize inflows and their strategic policy and development objectives?
- How to manage integration and enhance the potential to cope with the migration and refugee inflows?
- What can be done in the landing, transit, and arrival points to face the challenges of unpredictable and large-scale inflows?
- What learning process and circulation of best practices are possible?

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## MAIN POLICIES/POLICY DOCUMENTS

- MIGRATUP
  - MIGRARE
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## KEY MESSAGES

- The lack of data at the regional level and the comparatively small numbers of refugees require simple and robust geographical models rather than a complex econometric approach. In fact, the “matching” of territorial needs with migrants’ skills requires a deeper understanding of migrants’ profile and background.
- A few member states have already implemented a policy of relocation that depends largely on political strategies. However, there are no conclusive arguments that favour the (relative) concentration or dispersal of asylum seekers and refugees, all solutions depending heavily on the qualitative aspects and the dynamics of people involved, including local communities.
- Cities, townships and even villages are key actors for the integration process; however, policies that are more effective require that communities cooperate in networks and have access to shared capacities (and a protocol for exchanging data).
- Cities and localities can play a crucial role in making migration an asset for local development; policies should promote integration and local development in a coherent way. In order to do so, policies should have a broad scope targeting the local system of resources (for instance, housing, language schools, education, basic community services...).
- The EU can play a strong role in financing and promoting special initiatives targeting localities and networks that engage in the reception of asylum seekers and refugees.

# 1. Introduction

This position paper on refugees and migrants capitalises on a few late ESPON territorial pieces of research and investigates the link between territorial evidence and policy questions. The paper also tries to extend this analysis to a wider literature reviewing empirical findings and policy implications in direct relation to the issue.

The position paper addresses the following questions: a) which are the territorial impacts of refugee flows, exploiting, looking at the results of two ESPON research activities in particular; b) what can be done in the landing, transit, and arrival points to face the challenges of unpredictable and large-scale inflows; and c) how to manage integration processes and enhance the potential to cope with the migration and refugee inflows.

## Territorial impacts of refugee flows

**Territorial evidence shows variable rates of concentration of the far larger number of migrants and foreign-born inhabitants. As a rule of thumb, such rates depend heavily on the spatial scale, and increase constantly (often doubling in size) from countries to certain cities, and from cities to certain neighbourhoods.**

Migratory movements have resulted in both challenges and opportunities, with various impacts. Local level burdens, for instance, may appear a benefit at a larger scale, for the regions or the EU-regional level. Conversely, localities may engage in reception policies for acquiring additional resources and better policy connections.

## Landing, transit, and arrival points

**Entry points and circulation networks are responsible for and are affected by (mainly) short-term reception policies. Metro-cities and some rural localities are in turn affected by (mainly) long-term integration/insertion policies. Member states are responsible for national policy frames that lead to the legal recognition of migrants and for redistributing flows and resources.**

According to the Dublin agreement, asylum seekers must apply for recognition in the European country of arrival. In 2015, a large inflow of asylum seekers overloaded countries such as Italy and Greece who allowed some refugees move on to other countries. Eventually, a few countries suspended the Dublin agreement, either by opening or closing their borders. Consequently, a few local communities have been under great pressure, while asylum seekers were stopped at some crucial nodes.

## Coping with inclusion

**The globally rising number has induced a shift in trends and policy orientations (Favell 2001; Strang, Ager 2010). In particular, the concentration/dispersal model seems to influence both national policies and political struggles. Subsequent resettlement agreements allowed for limited distribution of asylum seekers among EU countries, often on an ad hoc basis. National policies inside each country distributed seekers among regions, often based upon criteria like GDP and demography. However, there is a strong resistance to adopt a more structured common relocation policy.**

Alongside member states, localities play a crucial role in the different steps of reception. Cities, townships and even villages are, in fact, the key actors for the reception-integration process, while pursuing a local development strategy at the same time. Consequently, the need arises to balance reception and integration policies with local expectations and sustainability.

Refugees and migrants in Europe are at the same time a new emergent phenomenon and an old story. It is important to recognize both aspects in order to fully understand a complex dynamic that is taking place between an evolving spatiality and still-uncertain policy initiatives.

Europe has seen consistent flows of internal migrants at least at the beginning of the 20th century; vast relocation of refugees after the 1940s (Panayi, 2009); and in a renewed manner in the last decades of the 20th century.

As it has often remarked, Europe receives only a minor share of the number of people forcibly displaced all over the world. Looking backwards, however, the current wave of refugees in Europe does not appear entirely new, but it rather marks a further step in a wider immigration transition that has been happening in Europe for a long time.

Stressing the historical precedents is useful for retrieving the traces of not-entirely-forgotten stories as well as of useful practices: for instance, emergency camps and shared housing are part of the institutional memory that most of the cases are revisiting *de facto*, illustrated by current research.

## Working definitions

**In many political debates, we often refer to all categories under the generic label of ‘migrants and refugees’, although such categories are often questionable and have blurred boundaries. The analytical exercise in categorizing is awkwardly incomplete; it tries to capture selected features targeted by national governments. By combining relevant legal and social characterizations, a distinction is often made among foreign-born residents, between asylum-seekers and undocumented migrants or refugees, which allows for a better understanding of their distinctive geographies.**

This distinction is questionable and often differences are blurred. Some scholars have criticised the distinct categorisation of migrants and refugees (Crawley and Skleparis 2018) as people can fit into more than one category at the same time and, more often, move on from one condition to another. Labels are part of the state effort of controlling the movement of people across national boundaries (Sigona 2018) selecting specific social targets through legal categories.

For the sake of clarity, a descriptive distinction among three main characters can be useful; the ESPON research activity MIGRARE focuses on the asylum seekers and refugees, while MIGRATUP also studies migrants (though is also rapidly considering undocumented people).

a. Migrants or foreign-born residents live in a different country mostly because they look for a better combination of job and welfare for either themselves or their families. Statistically, migrants are individuals outside the territory of the state of which they are nationals or citizens, and who have resided in a foreign country for more than one year (irrespective of the causes, voluntary or involuntary, and the means, regular or irregular, used to migrate). In 2018, 22.3 million non-EU citizens were living in the EU (out of 512.6 million inhabitants), 4.4% of the EU-28 population. In addition, 17.6 million people were born in another EU Member State, about 3.4% of the total population. According to Eurostat, the largest numbers of non-nationals live in Germany (9.7 million people), UK (6.3), Italy (5.1), France (4.7) and Spain (4.6). These five Member States account for 63% of the EU-28's population and 76% of the total number of non-nationals. All in all, foreign-born residents account for about 7.9% of the citizens of the EU-28. To give an idea of the scale, migrants account for 13.4% of the U.S. population (nearly triple the share in 1970 which was 4.7%). Between 2000 and 2018, the increase in the foreign-born population was responsible for almost three-quarters of the total population growth in European OECD countries and for almost 40% of that in the United States (OECD 2019).

b. Asylum seekers are forcibly displaced people asking for the legal status of refugees according to the Geneva

declaration or to other national or European procedures. European asylum seekers and refugees are a minor share of the displaced people all over the world. Governments are legally bound by international treaties to take care of asylum seekers, though implementation of recent policies has been progressively eroding the right to claim in most countries (Darling 2016). However, the implementation of such complex legal-secitarian measures is prone to misuse and violence (Fontanari 2016; Fontanari, Artero 2019). At the end of 2018, the number of refugees in Europe was more than 3 million, plus 3.5 million in Turkey; a large share aspiring to become asylees. In 2015 asylum applications for international protection in the Member State of EU reached a peak of 1.3 million. Refugees are asylum seekers formally recognised as eligible for refugee status under the Geneva Convention or for ‘subsidiary protection’ according to EU Directive 2011/95/UE or other national laws. However, only a few asylum seekers received the status of refugees or some sort of temporary permits, while 39% of all asylum applications were rejected (according to Eurostat 2016). European and non-European OECD countries recorded a decline in the number of asylum applications in 2018 (OECD 2019). The main destination countries after the United States (254,000 applications) and Germany (162,000) are Turkey (116,000), France (110,000) and Greece (65,000). Afghanistan and Syria remain the top two countries of origin, followed by Venezuela. Asylum seekers present a very diverse group; however they are predominantly male and rather young.

c. Undocumented migrants are either rejected former asylum seekers or migrants that never had or somehow lost their legal status. They are often at risk of being repatriated by force or becoming trapped in an informal or illegal condition. Knowledge of what happens to these people and communities that support them is extremely limited. Informality takes many forms, often depending on the geographical contexts. The number of irregular migrants can only be guessed based on various estimates: 180-520,000 irregular migrants in Germany in 2014 (Vogel 2015); about 400-500,000 in Italy (CARITAS 2017); in France, about 350- 400.000 according to various sources (Rapport 2006). After regulation laws in Spain, Italy; Portugal, Greece, between 2001 and 2005, estimations were respectively 690, 700; 185 and 370,000 (Rapport 2006).

## 2. ESPON evidences

Two ESPON research activities, MIGRATUP and MIGRARE, analyse the distribution within EU and in the Eastern macro-region between Italy and Turkey. They focus on the impacts of socio-economic development but also provide some information on integration. A major concern for these projects is with the construction of typologies of regions and the relationship between selected spaces of migrants and refugees. Data provided are mostly at the national and regional levels, but a few case-studies are devoted to local contexts, mostly urban and related to the issue of integration.

### Policy questions

#### MIGRATUP

- What are the distinctive features of the new migration and refugee flows to the Adriatic-Ionian and Danube macro-regions?
- What are the socioeconomic trends in arrival, transit and destination regions and cities?
- What are the impacts of the migration and refugee flows on arrival, transit and destination territories at different scales (macro-regional, cross-border, regional and urban levels)?
- What types of regions and cities are the most attractive to migrants and refugees? Are there distinct features?
- How can integration be managed? How can integration policies be linked to already existing policies?
- How can cohesion policy instruments best be used to boost the integration process of immigrants and refugees and to enhance social and economic inclusion? How are both emergency management and medium and long-term integration best financed? Particular attention should be given to the strategic deployment of European Structural and Investment Funds in the present programming period 2014-2020 and the delivery of the Urban Agenda Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees objectives as well as the Europe 2020 objectives of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.
- How can the potential of migration and refugee flows be tapped as a development factor in contributing to reducing demographic and economic imbalances? How can a balanced territorial distribution of the migration and refugee flows be better facilitated in the two macro-regions, taking into account the different geographical scales (macro-regional, national, regional, urban), in order to reduce the negative impacts and enhance the positive ones.
- How should a balanced distribution of migrants and refugees according to territorial needs and potential attractiveness of the territories to migrants and refugees be supported? How can policy makers improve the attractiveness of their city or region by reconciling the interests of both residents and visitors in order to best overcome the challenges of reducing increasing demographic and economic imbalances?

#### MIGRARE

- What does the distribution of asylum seekers and refugees look like at regional and urban level and how has this been changing over time as a result of European and national policy decisions in recent decades?
- What skills and qualifications do the refugees possess and how does the influx of refugees impact the recipient countries' regional and local labour markets and demographic imbalances (especially concerning regions which are facing the challenges of losing population and ageing)? Do the skills and qualifications meet the needs of local labour markets and how do they compete with the local population and regular migrants?
- How are different European regions and cities located in arrival, transit and destination countries responding to the refugee crisis in terms of providing humanitarian aid, services (accommodation, material support, healthcare provision, education, language courses, labour market programmes), community building, internal distribution of refugees and medium and long term integration? What does the diversity within Europe in terms of integration policies at regional and local levels look like?
- What are the main challenges and what are the good policy responses and the best practices for successful integration of refugees into the local communities, societies and labour markets at regional and local levels? What



kind of support do they need? How successful have the integration measures been in the past? How to improve the use of existing funding opportunities? Is there a need to improve the legislation?

- What kind of impacts would the implementation of the proposal of the European relocation scheme generate to European countries regions and cities? How are countries redistributing refugees internally? What are the main concerns for the host countries and communities?

## 2.1. MIGRATUP Territorial and Urban Potentials Connected to Migration and Refugee Flows

The aim of the MIGRATUP project was to assess the impact of different, yet simultaneous, flows of migration and refugees in the Adriatic-Ionian (EUSAIR) and Danube (EUSDR) macro-regions. The area altogether includes countries of arrival, transit and destination.

Firstly, the study investigates the four different types of migration flows characterizing the two macro-regions: the patterns of internal flows within each country; and within the macro-regions; the external flows to the macro-regions; and secondary, or onward migrations.

Secondly, it explores territorial attractiveness and socio-economic typologies, in order to identify challenges and opportunities.

Remarkably, depopulation of rural areas and ageing populations are territorial developments that many areas in the macro-region are facing.

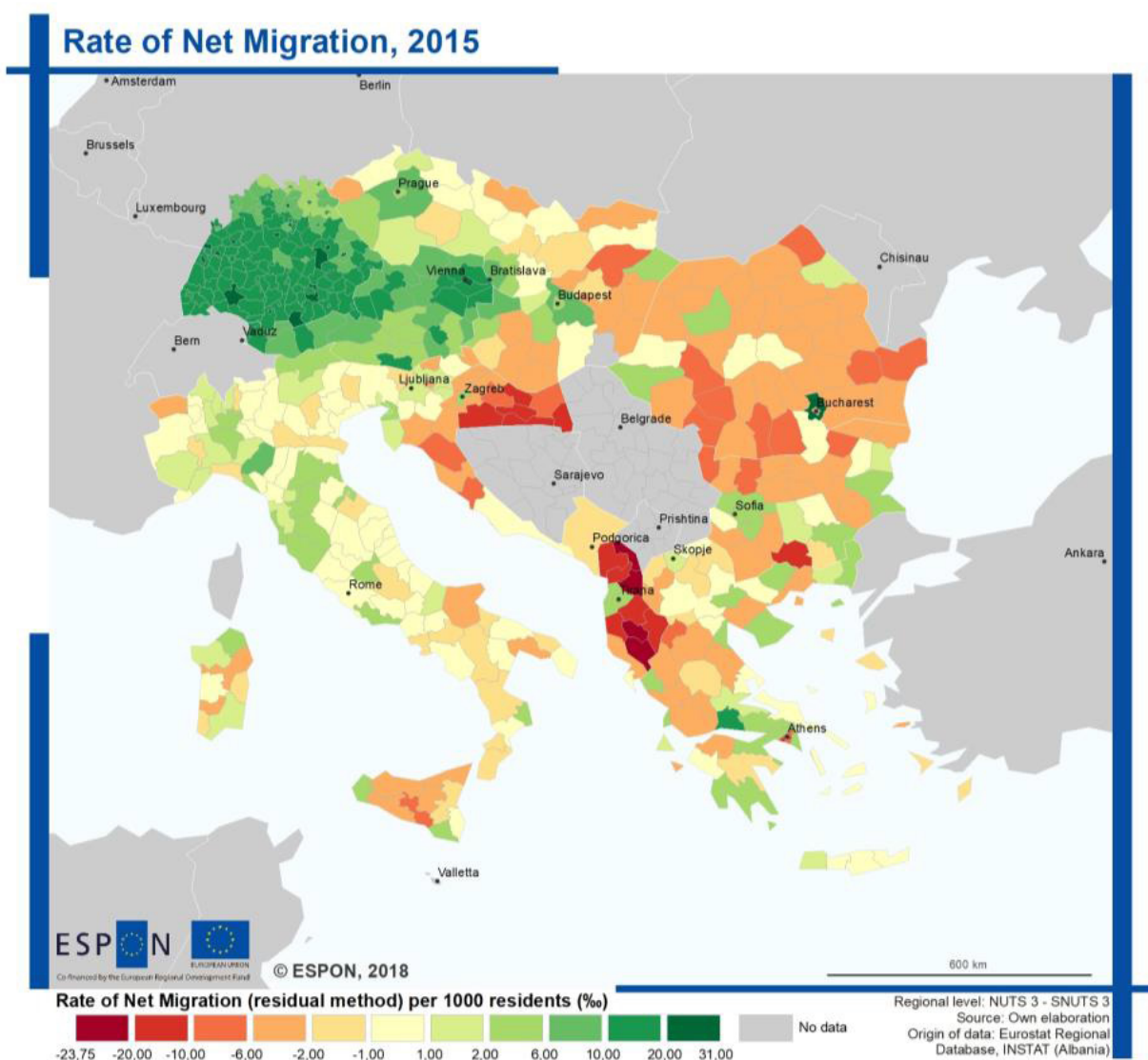
Through a comparative analysis of the recent migration and refugee flows in the two macro-regions, the target analysis provides a picture of the four different flows in the period 2008-2015 (and partly 2016).

When looking at the internal flows within each country (in 2015) following patterns of migration are observed:

- Internal migration along the south-north (or east-west) axis
- In the majority of cases, it is possible to note centripetal tendencies to the disadvantage of rural areas, corresponding to increasing urbanization. (e.g. Albania and Romania).
- In other countries, internal migration patterns are of a mixed kind because several NUTS 3 regions display positive values besides the capital (e.g. Bulgaria and Slovenia).
- Some countries (e.g. Austria) have positive and very positive rates of net migration in all NUTS 3 territories



Figure 1 MIGRATUP: Average rate of natural increase



Area 1. Very attractive regions (High life expectancy, low density, high employment rate). They show life expectancy over the average, low population density and thus opportunities for the settlement of newcomers, and high employment rate which shows a dynamic job market.

Area 2. Attractive regions (High life expectancy, high density, high employment rate) They show life expectancy above the average, high population density and high employment rate: the attraction of the dynamic job market is also high, exceeding the limits imposed by a high population density.

Area 3. Attractive regions with lower life expectancy (Low life expectancy, low density, high employment rate). Life expectancy is below the average, but density is low and employment high: it is believed that more job opportunities overrun higher life expectancy as a factor of attractiveness.

Area 4. Poorly attractive regions with a high employment rate (Low life expectancy, high density, high employment rate). Life expectancy is below the average, density is high, but the job market shows good performances.

Area 5. Poorly attractive regions with high life expectancy (High life expectancy, low density, low employment rate). Life expectancy is above the average and population density is low, while the employment rate is below the average.

Area 6. Scarcely attractive regions (High life expectancy, high density, low employment rate). Life expectancy is above the average, population density is higher than the average, but the employment rate is below the average.

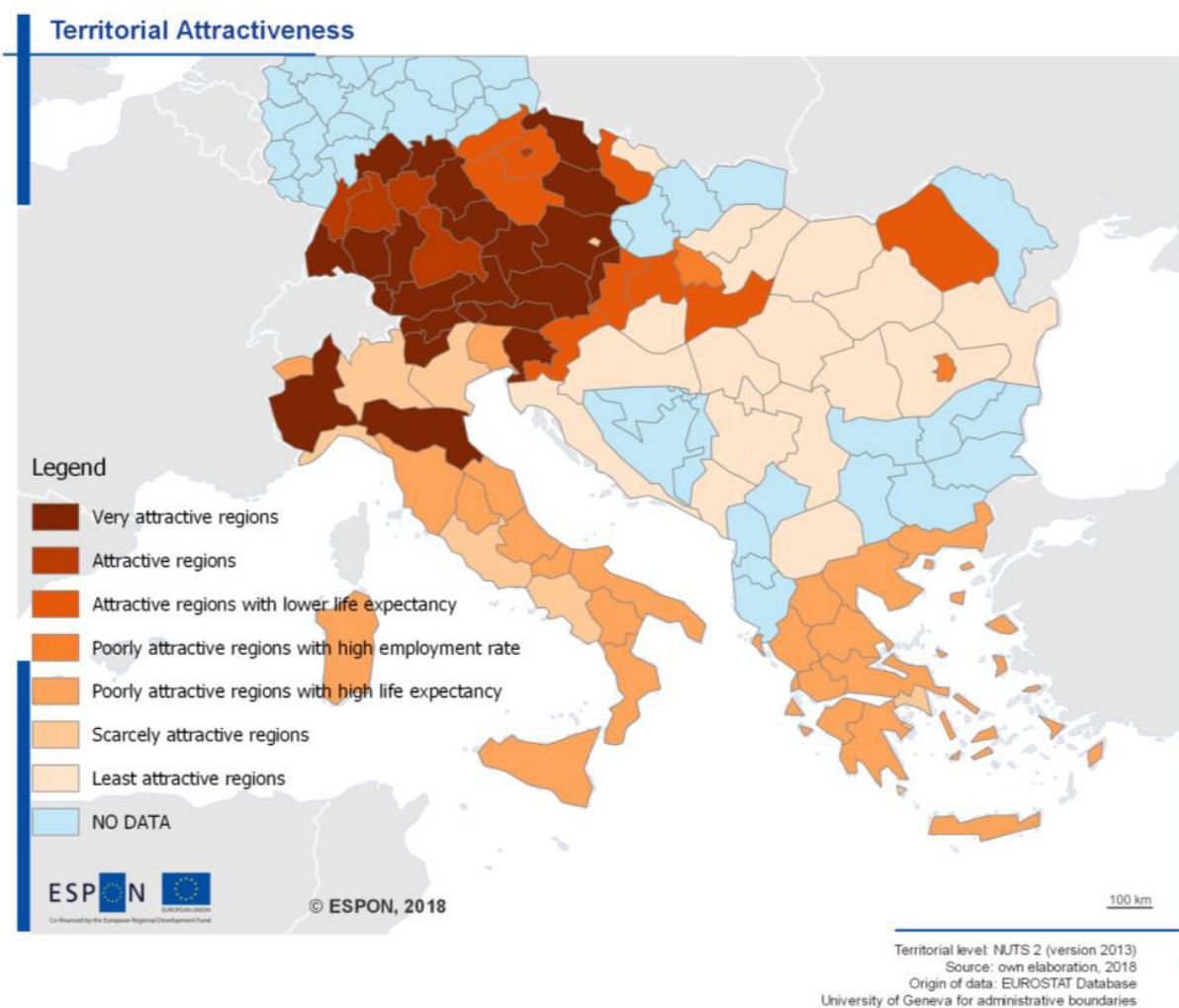
Area 7. Least attractive regions (Low life expectancy, low density, low employment rate). Life expectancy is low, population density is low, and the employment rate is very low, so these regions show very poor attractiveness.

Area 8. Non-attractive regions (Low life expectancy, high density, low employment rate). Life expectancy is below the average, density is high, and the job market shows poor performances.

Detailed analysis of internal flows within the macro-regions (2008-2015) highlights what was already summarised by the World Bank's Fall 2015 Regular Economic Report, that is that the six South-Eastern countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia) are "among the top migrant-sending regions in the world". However, migration

dynamics within the Adriatic-Ionian macro-region also include return flows. There are also substantial flows within the macro-region, triggered by regional differences in wealth and quality of life (the Adriatic-Ionian macro-region contains both the poorest NUTS2 region of the EU and also one of the richest).

**Figure 2 MIGRATUP: Map of territorial attractiveness**



External flows to the macro-regions: In the two macro-regions assessed in MIGRATUP research, the top-five receiving countries (Germany, Italy, Hungary, Greece, Austria) alone account for as much as 94% (around 1,950,000) of the total applications lodged in the area under scrutiny. Three of them are also accounted in the five top-recipient EU28+ countries throughout the 2008-2015 temporal spans: Germany (25.6% of the total); France (11.4%); Sweden (11%); Italy (7.1%); and Hungary

(6.2%). Data about the destination of secondary movements of rejected asylum seekers are scarce; however, MIGRATUP anticipated this as an important topic for the study of migration dynamics.

Many of the emerging issues are tackled in the eight case studies (one in Greece, two in Hungary, two in Italy, one in Serbia, one on the border area between Italy and Slovenia; a regional perspective in Western Balkans) complementing the project. The case studies identified reflect the contexts

of urban areas, rural areas, border areas, and regional spaces.

In order to identify territorial typologies aimed at highlighting the different socio-economic conditions and thus measuring the attractiveness of the sub regions, MIGRATUP proposes a model analysis that draws upon 3 Eurostat indicators at the NUTS 2 level. Based on a crossed analysis of the three indicators (life expectancy, employment of the active population (20-64), and population density) the resulting typology subdivided regions into 8 categories, each with a specific level of attractiveness.

When comparing territorial attractiveness with flow patterns, it emerges that economically dynamic NUTS2 regions also attract external labour-forces. The results are often a process of urbanisation that lead to

depopulating and weakening the peripheral areas. On the contrary, when the latter do manage to attract migrants, they also trigger regeneration and development processes.

In fact, MIGRATUP's evidence - from both analyses and case studies - highlights that rural areas may profit from migration that can be vital for supporting agriculture, counterbalancing ageing, and for preserving the environment. While some regions tend to show poor attractiveness, weak demographic trends and limited migration flows, others show instead an increase in population that may also potentially increase territorial attractiveness. Recommendations insist on empowering weak regions (in both fig. 4 and 5) involving the EU Regional Development and Cohesion Policy for the years 2021-2027.

## Inclusion

### Basque Country (MIGRARE)

In 2017, the Regional Government of the Basque Country aimed at reinforcing the national program: Refugees Reception and Integration System with a reinforcement mechanism called the Auzolana programme. In this region, migrants and refugees are not in transit anymore and a large part tend to settle or follow insertion policies, having a stabilising effect.

Local communities and a strong bottom-up commitment support the program notwithstanding the fact that reception is a national policy in Spain. The pilot program provides housing and social services.

Launched in March 2019, a renewed version receives the support of UNHCR and two regional NGOs, besides national and regional governments, and it is based on the Canadian model of community sponsorship. The case shows the importance of coordination and communication among the different stakeholders (regional government, municipalities, NGOs).

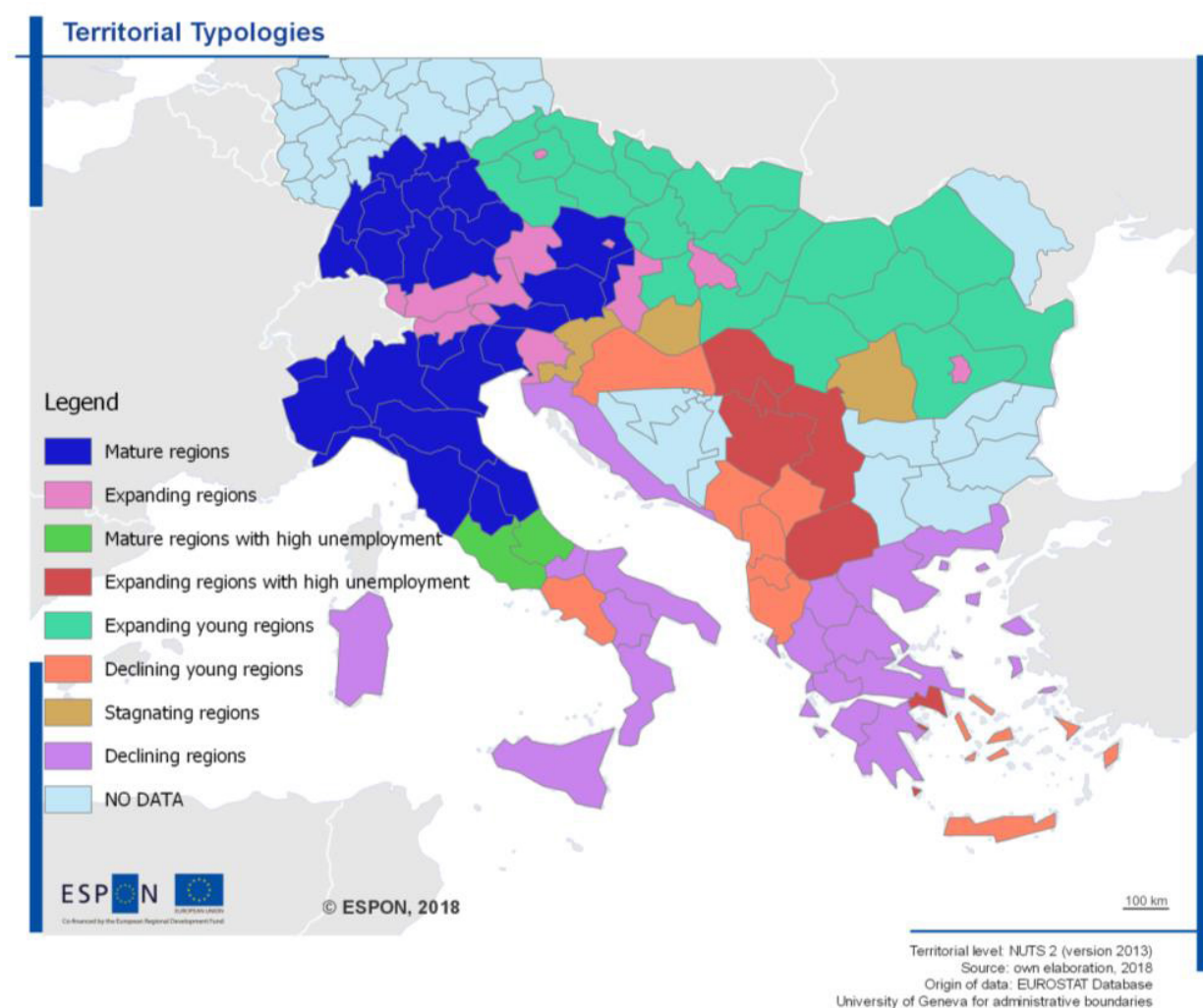
### Schwäbisch-Gmünd (MIGRARE)

The Gmünder Weg is a comprehensive approach to the long-term integration of refugees developed over several years and has come into fruition during the challenging years that came after 2015. It combines social housing and refugees' integration, language proficiency and employment.

The municipality established a strategy locating various private accommodations and motivating property owners to rent to migrants and being flexible in responding to regulations. Such a system anchored all other initiatives supported by a proactive approach, the involvement of local residents in volunteering activities, and the activation of asylum-seekers and refugees. In fact, when a large number of volunteers was needed in 2015/2016, there was already a broad support base in place.

The mayor sent a clear and supportive message of refugee integration. The message did not shy away from the challenges this entails and did not pretend that integration is a one-directional and self-evident process, yet underlined the benefits for the whole community in its social as well as economic dimension. His re-election in 2017 with 85% of the votes won demonstrates that this strategy was a clear success, notwithstanding conflicts between federal, state and local policies.

Figure 3 MIGRATUP: territorial typologies



Region 1. Mature regions. (High average age; low unemployment, high GDP). They possess a strong economy and show low unemployment and high per capita GDP; but are declining from a demographic point of view with an elevated average age.

Region 2. Expanding regions. (Low average age; low unemployment, high GDP) Their economy shows good performances, with high GDP and low unemployment, and their population is young so that, overall, they show an expanding trend.

Region 3. Mature regions with high unemployment. (High average age; high unemployment; high GDP) Like mature regions, they possess an ageing population, high GDP, but a high level of unemployment.

Region 4. Expanding regions with high unemployment. (Low average age; high unemployment; high GDP). They possess a young population with high GDP but show a negative trend with respect to employment.

Region 5. Expanding young regions. (Low average age; low unemployment; low GDP) They have a young population with a positive trend in employment but low GDP.

Region 6. Declining young regions. (Low average age; high unemployment; low GDP) They possess a young population but negative economic trends, connected to high unemployment and low GDP.

Region 7. Stagnating regions. (High average age; low unemployment; low GDP) They have an ageing population, with low GDP but a positive trend in employment.

Region 8. Declining regions. (High average age; high unemployment; low GDP). They possess an ageing population, with high unemployment trends and low GDP.



## 2.2. MIGRARE “Impacts of Refugee Flows to Territorial Development in Europe”

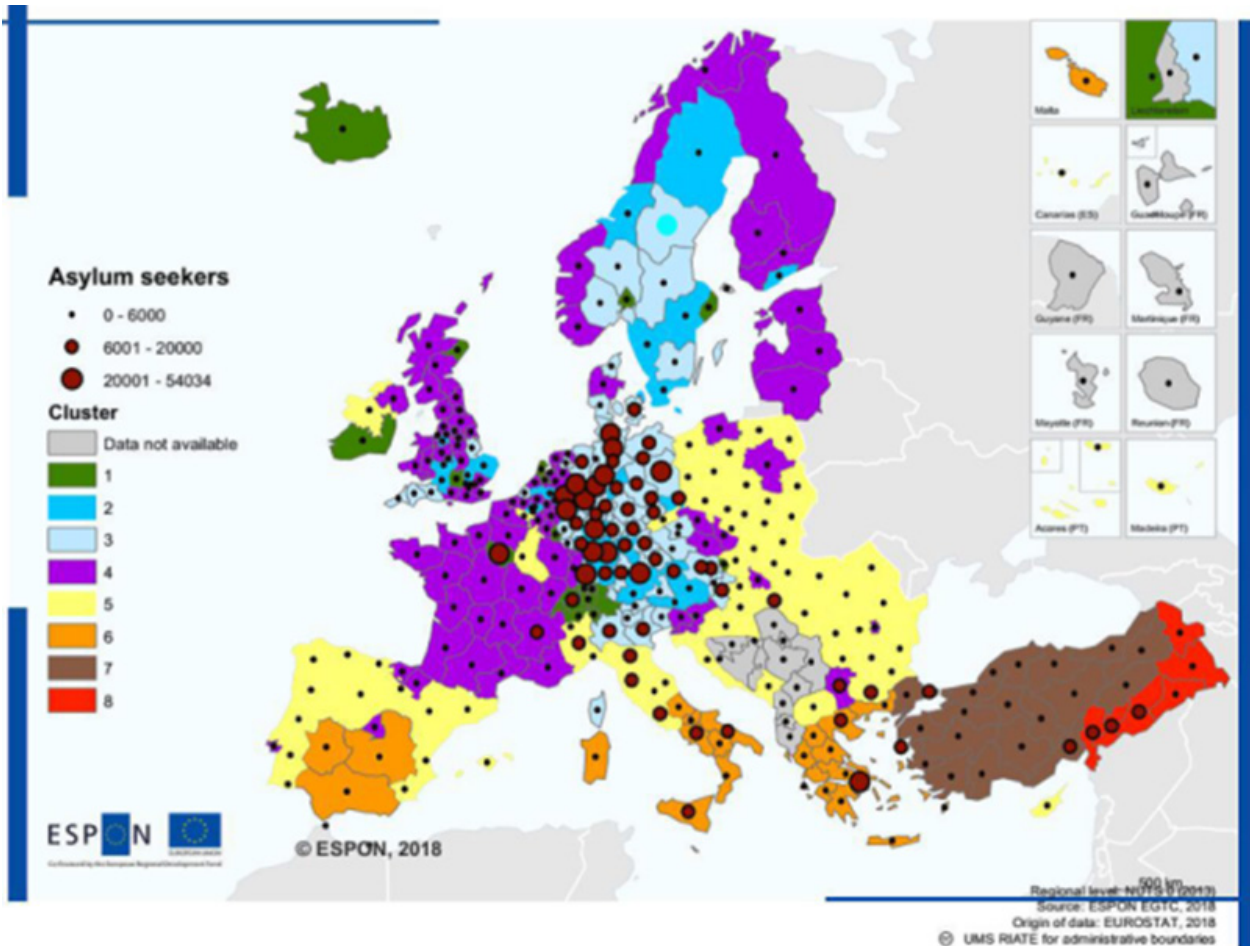
This ESPON applied research activity, **MIGRARE**, provides territorial evidence on the flows of asylum seekers and refugees, their distribution between and within EU countries, regions and cities, their influence on socio-economic development as well as information on crisis management and integration. It aims to provide relevant territorial evidence and policy recommendations.

The research includes all countries in the **ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme**, with an additional assessment of EU Candidate Countries and potential candidate countries. The data collection has been carried out at national and regional level, where possible up to NUTS 2 or 3 level.

In order to understand the extent to which countries can effectively facilitate the integration of asylum seekers and refugees, the **MIGRARE** research analyses the interplay between inflows characteristics, local performances and policy factors. For instance, data gathered and analysed suggests that the distribution of skills, age/gender balance and family status is very unevenly spread across European regions, and that this has affected social inclusion.

The absorption capacity of a territory depends on “the ability of a city, region, or country to integrate asylum seekers and/or refugees in their labour markets and local communities”. From an economic point of view, at least three variables affect this absorption capacity: (i) the socio-economic performance of territories; (ii) skills and qualifications of migrants and (iii) policies effectively in place to maximise the “matching” of local demand and incoming supply of labour.

**Figure 4 MIGRARE: Asylum seekers per NUTS2 region and regional typology**



Source: Elaboration based on Eurostat and country-level data from country research

In order to assess the absorption capacity of the European regions, the study has clustered regions based on the socio-economic performance. The resulting typology comprises six categories and two specifically related to Turkey: 1. Strongly attractive metropolitan areas and financial poles 2. Highly attractive, innovative and growing regions 3. Attractive manufacturing regions 4. Less attractive, average growing regions, demographically balanced 5. Growing but low income and depopulating regions 6. Lagging behind and depopulating regions 7. Western and Continental Turkish regions with strong demographic and economic dynamics 8. Eastern Turkish emigration regions. Then, the study overlapped this cluster with the regional distribution of asylum seekers per NUTS2 region and finally selected examples from the case studies are used to show evidence. The indicators are: total fertility rate, old dependency ratio, crude rate of natural population change, crude rate of net migration change, total unemployment rate, total employment rate, female employment rate, female unemployment rate, NEET rate, self-employment rate, total intramural R&D expenditure, population aged 30-34 with tertiary education, GDP growth rate, and merged GDP (PPS/hab).

Through the literature review and the interviews carried out at national and regional levels, the study highlights some social, political and institutional effects of the inflow of asylum seekers and refugees.

The research states that the support of current inflows in mitigating the direct demographic effects of an ageing society is still limited; and that fulfilling gaps in the job market are either positive or neutral. However, current flows have had a strong influence on increasing social tensions, fuelled by the negative portrayal of asylum seekers and refugees in the media and by the political discourse. Despite this increased public anxiety and increase in anti-immigration stances, there is little evidence that current inflows have led to illegal activities.

For most countries, the institutional impacts were positive. The influx of asylum seekers and refugees, in fact, fostered the building and the enhancing of institutional capacities to accept and accommodate.

Impacts on increased institutional tensions are also evident, mainly regarding different levels of government or different governmental actors. In most cases, the long-term impacts are negligible.

The research also assessed the potential returns on the investment made by European territories and local communities in supporting the requests of asylum seekers and refugees. The main findings underline that:

- integrating refugees generates limited yet positive fiscal returns over time;
- the overall volume of fiscal returns generated over time remains relatively limited across all regions, if compared to the total spending for reception and social support (only regions with strong economies, a steady demand for labour and relatively good quality of inclusion policy, experience large and increasing returns through time from the refugees' integration);
- other returns in the long term are generated by increased consumption of goods and services and indirect jobs generated in the private sector to provide reception and integration services;

- overall regional support to refugees appears to be financially self-sustainable over time – if not considering the high initial investment on reception stage, largely covered through EU contributions for the EU Member States.

The case studies are analysed in their demographic and socio-economic features, refugees and migration trends, geographic location on the routes (arrival, transit or destination areas), and different national policy approaches.

According to the case study findings, the main factors affecting the distribution dynamics are: (i) the socio-economic situation in the countries of destination; (ii) family and other social ties or language skills; (iii) the position on the migration route; (iv) the national redistribution policies.

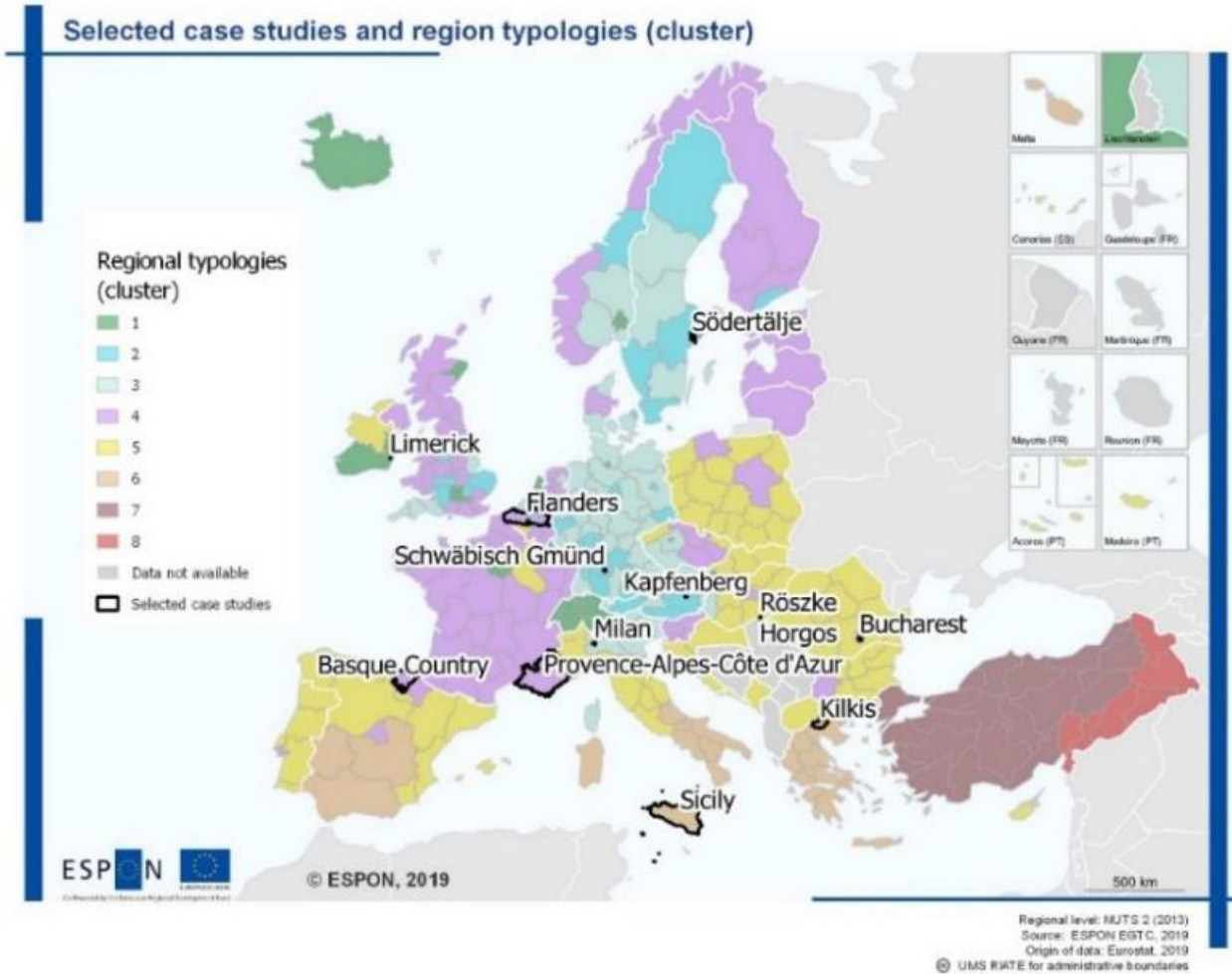
The case study has shown evidence on:

- the role of linguistic skills and education in supporting integration at the local level;
- the local practices in the inclusion of asylum seekers and refugees in the local labour market for more dynamic destination regions;
- examples of the employment restriction in national asylum procedures;
- the local challenge resulting in the mismatch of territorial needs and asylum seekers and refugees' characteristics in different (destination, arrival or transit) regions.

Evidence provided by the case studies shows the extent of the national differences in policy systems across EU countries. However, the legal and policy frameworks regulating asylum and subsidiary protection, dispersal policies and migration policies are always introduced on a national level, while local governments and stakeholders are usually in charge of the implementation of concrete measures for the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees in their territories, within the rules defined at the national level.

The participation of sub-national actors in reception and integration policies is rather differentiated across EU countries. In some countries, for instance, regions, provinces and municipalities are also involved in the design and planning of the migration policy.

**Figure 5 MIGRARE: Case studies and region typologies (cluster)**



Source: Elaboration based on Eurostat and country-level data from country research



The case studies show the crucial role of local institutions and non-state actors - often facing many legal, institutional and socio-economic challenges and constraints. Main policy challenges at the local level are also highlighted by these case studies: (i) legal challenges; (ii) institutional challenges, (iii) socio-economic challenges/difficult economic and social integration, (iv) difficulties to access social services and benefits, (v) difficulties to access education and training.

MIGRARE research suggests a few good examples of policy approaches and governance mechanisms:

- the adoption of integrated multi-sector and multi-actor approaches (based on a strong vertical and horizontal coordination among public institutions) tailored to the needs of asylum seekers and refugees;
- the strong role of international institutions and local NGOs, not only in concretely implementing reception

and integration measures, but also in supporting institutional capacity building where local institutions did not have experience in the management of large inflows of asylum seekers and refugees;

- the attention given to the direct involvement of local communities in order to avoid the rise of social conflicts and discrimination (in all the considered cases) and to the promotion of innovative ways to support social and economic integration;
- the efficient use of EU, private funding and resource-generating interventions, to ensure the long-term sustainability of integration measures. Economic activities can be set up in order to support the sustainability of integration measures, especially where no national or regional funding is available.

## Arrival and transit points

### Kilkis, Greece (MIGRARE)

Kilkis is located along the border of Greece and North Macedonia and, although not an arrival point, was heavily affected by a large transit of refugees on the way to other EU countries. However, Greece is an arrival country (the NEA Kavala refugee camp is located in the same region). In 2016, 23 thousand migrants were stranded in the Kilkis region, mostly near Kavala.

A group of volunteers established a non-governmental organization called OMNES Voluntary Association. The case study focuses on the Social Inclusion Centre established by that NGO in Kilkis, which provides language courses at beginner and intermediate levels.

The financial support is assured by activities that provide jobs for migrants and asylum seekers, as well as for the local population. The overall strategy aims at providing positive impacts for the whole region. Omnes also generated knowledge and proposals for improving national policies and resettlement programmes based upon the absorption capacity of different regions.

### Horgos and Roszke, Serbia (MIGRARE)

In 2015 and in the first quarter of 2016, more than 920,000 refugees and migrants (primarily from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq) passed through Serbia in the attempt to enter Europe. In March 2016, Hungary closed the whole border to asylum seekers.

The towns of Kelebija (2000) and Horgoš (5000), in the region surrounding the border crossing, hosted 1000 and 500 migrants respectively. The Reception Centre in Subotica was opened in 2015 (close to the abandoned brick factory where migrants informally stayed) and became a Transit Centre hosting 600 although the capacity was only for 130.

Serbia, through the Commissariat for Refugees and Migrations and local authorities, provided support to asylum seekers and refugees. Nevertheless, the crisis response would not be nearly as effective without the support of many international and non-governmental organizations. NGOs are generally directly involved in the distribution of humanitarian assistance provided to all migrants, regardless of status.

This case illustrates an example of multilevel cooperation between different actors, institutional and non-institutional; and it shows that even marginal or weak regions can adopt a proactive stance.

In conclusion, MIGRARE research activities set out scenarios focused on “one single factor affecting the refugees’ probability of integrating into the host society and an essential factor that determines their impact – on employment”. Four level variables are considered (inflows, territorial absorption capacity, micro- policy and macro-policy). Assuming baseline scenarios for the first two levels (no changes in the near future), two potential policy scenarios are outlined as follows:

- Micro-policy scenario. This option assumes a significant improvement in the quality of reception and labour market inclusion policies, within each regional cluster.
- Macro-policy scenario. The option assumes – alongside an improvement in reception policies – better performance of dispersal policies within each territory. Better dispersal policy could, in fact, maximise the matching between the skills of asylum seekers and the skills in demand in the local labour market, as well as minimise the existence of ethnic enclaves.

## MIGRARE and MIGRATUP

### Main evidence offered

- There is a lack of data on some migration dynamics and on specific characteristics of refugees and asylum seekers (e.g. skills and education level)
- The extent to which some regions face growing inflows of asylum seekers and refugees strongly depends on asylum policies of other European countries and regions
- The territorial distribution of refugees and asylum seekers across European regions varies depending on a number of factors. Regions are exposed to different challenges depending on their position in migration routes and on whether they are arrival, transit or destination areas.
- Absorption and integration of refugees and asylum seekers into local communities depends in equal measures on the profiles of asylum seekers and refugees and the socio-economic and institutional context. Urban and rural areas face different challenges
- Most of the integration measures are funded with EU and international programmes, which are project based, and therefore they do not allow long-term planning and activities
- International organisations and NGOs have an important role in supporting institutional capacity building at the local level
- Local integration is undermined by restrictions on access to welfare systems and the lack of labour market integration and housing support policies.

### Main resulting recommendations

- Improve data collection and establish an EU coordinated information system
- Promote a comprehensive multi-dimensional approach to integration that takes account of several dimensions (employment, housing, language, education, social rights, etc.)
- Improve policies (from European to local level) aimed at a better match between territorial needs and refugees' capabilities
- Give more attention to skills assessment and qualification recognition, and establish mechanisms for the matching of territorial needs with immigrants/asylum seekers' skills
- Increase the involvement of local institutions and civil society organisations in reception and integration policies, foster better networking among actors and promote vertical and horizontal coordination and public-private partnership
- Take into account differences between the various regions and thus differentiate integration (or reception) policies targeting urban and rural contexts.
- Increase EU funding support for the implementation and planning of long-term strategies. And ensure municipalities willing to welcome asylum seekers and refugees have direct access to EU funds
- Learn from the experience of others through the improvement of evidence-based knowledge

## 3. Discussion

In the last few years, the arrival of migrants and refugees in Europe has often been depicted as a global emergency. This point leads to interrogating what has changed in the geography, governance and local practices since then. What is apparent, is the critical difficulty in defining the object (migrants and refugees), the pertinent geographical scales, the variety of countries of origin and the spatial proximity/distance among different populations. These are qualitative issues that should be directly addressed by all efforts of evidence accumulation.

### 3.1. Territorial typologies

**During the post-war period, the geography of international migrations appeared very stable: a comparatively homogenous immigration flow targeted some countries (UK, Germany, France, Belgium) and localised mostly in a few urban-industrial districts. At the end of the 20th century, the international flows of migrations started to change, affecting more countries being generated by asylum seekers from an increasing number of countries and places.**

Yet a few crucial elements were considered stable, even when noticing that the “European migratory flows have been completely altered since the 1960s” (ESPON 2002): for instance, large metropolitan areas were the most favoured spaces, while older industrial areas were presumed less attractive. The spatiality of migrants was dominated by classical economic pull-push factors and by the rural-industrial divide (Pastore and Ponzio 2012).

Of late, the spatial geography of migrants and refugees is under pressure. Waves of refugees were generated from international conflicts. Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan, Somalia and more recently Syria and Libya have long yet different stories of civil unrest. In late 2010, the sudden Arab Spring originated consistent flows from countries in the Middle East and the southern shore of the Mediterranean Sea. In addition, environmental destruction and climate crisis brought to the appearance of new figures of migrants.

In all case studies, the history of previous reception of various populations influences the last refugees’ wave. For instance, the comparatively prosperous region of Baden-Württemberg (MIGRARE 2019) received a share of almost 10% of the actual population of wartime German national repatriates and post '89 'late repatriates' of German ancestry, 15%, of foreign born residents, mostly from Turkey, former Yugoslavia, Italy, Greece and former URSS. However, about 40% of the inhabitants of the main urban conurbations have a 'migrant background'. Asylum seekers, even in the peak years of 2015-16, made up an annual rate of about 0,6% of the population, mostly from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Gambia.

#### Regions, cities and localities

**Two prominent approaches to the construction of a pertinent typology give rise to equally fundamental issues. A first approach is qualitative and focuses on specific and pertinent categories that can, however, either overlap or are not operational. The second approach is analytical and coherent with all the previous ESPON typologies, and thus somehow redundant.**

**A first approach builds a territorial typology based upon interpretative categories.** Recent studies on the relationship between cities and refugees/asylum seekers, carried out within the Babels research program (Babels 2018) put forward an ethnographic comparison between “border-towns”, “crossroad-towns”, and “shelter-towns”. Territories involved are therefore distinguished into: a) thresholds: those territories that are adjacent to internal (between the EU Member States) and external borders, including coastal landing places; b) nodes or crossroads: transit and temporary stop places; c) destination/ arrival places: cities and regions that constitute the desired (or forced) destination of asylum seekers. Such a territorial approach has obvious limitations, since these categories are not clear-cut conditions, and there are some apparent overlaps: for instance, port cities like Marseille, Naples or Thessaloniki can belong to more than one condition. This is also the condition of most US gateway port cities (NY, Chicago, San Francisco and LA), metropolises on major bodies of water historically marked by recurrent flows of immigrants and a certain capacity of integration. It is noteworthy that European urban geography is historically different, and gateway centres and major urban metropolises do not coincide with ports.

**The second approach produced various typologies based upon some aspects of the performance of local systems that seem correlated to the capacity of receiving, inserting and integrating.** Most of the criteria depend on the dynamics of population and the specificity of the local economy. Other aspects considered are demographic density, the type of location, or the urban functions that relate cities and regions. Based on these urban, economic and growth dynamics, numerous typologies have been made distinguishing, for instance: (i) attractive/prosperous, (ii) industrial and administrative

cities or (iii) those which may or may not be included in a metropolitan process or far from urban amenities.

Several other ESPON projects have produced other comparable typologies based on different dimensions that may be useful compared and contrasted (for instance, form of urbanisation, knowledge economics, employment...). Following the logic of perfecting the 'matching game', it may be worth to consider what drives the local economy (prosperous cities with a strong tertiary sector, or a manufacturing industry etc.) in particular, which may be combined with a better understanding of refugees' and migrants' skills.

The first major limit of all these exercises is the availability of data, as is made clear by MIGRATUP in particular. A second limit is the sensitivity of these data to the issue of geographical scale: cities and towns do not always behave like the corresponding regions, nor they dispose of the same detailed data.

As a result, a variety of cases moves up to the forefront: intermediate-global cities like Amsterdam, shrinking cities like Detroit, capitals like Kiev and Buenos Aires... In Europe, cities as different as Athens, Budapest, Genoa, Malmö, Munich, Stockholm and Vienna have for instance become hubs for refugees (IOM 2015). Finally, the geographical structure of 'migrant friendly' or sanctuary cities suggests that the geographical structuration is not yet clear.

What is clear is that the geography of foreign-born residents, migrants and refugees does not overlap, the locational choice of refugees in particular being constrained by national policy-frames. A need arises of a better understanding of the local variations and issues of the different policy responses and success stories.

### Small and medium municipalities

The spatial impacts of migrants and refugees on the territorial development of cities and regions vary since the urban landscape is changing (Babels 2018). In particular, an increasing amount of studies and research points at the role of medium and small municipalities (Balbo 2015, Marconi and Ostanel 2016), often more porous and welcoming, and sometimes more attractive (or less restrictive) in economic-working terms.

Territorial evidence is clear for migrants and the foreign-born population. However, due to the relocation process, smaller communities receive a greater share of asylum seekers. The first consequence of these remarks is that both the geography of migrants and refugees follow the suburbanization process taking place in smaller municipalities (Albanese, 2017), and a ruralisation process that sees the insertion of many foreigners in the most "fragile areas" (Osti, Ventura, 2012).

More generally, the spatiality of migrants and refugees only partially overlaps the geography of foreign-born inhabitants and migrants; the departing and the arrival points are not the same, nor the spaces of transit. In addition, national policies to relocate refugees have restricted locational choices.

As a first remark, we can note that policy solutions to manage the reception and integration of asylum seekers do not necessarily correspond to those addressing immigration in general, nor to its peculiar urban/rural distinction.

From this point of view, reception policies should target the local system of resources (for instance, housing, language schools, education, basic community services...) rather than economic performance.

## 3.2. Arrival and transit points

In recent years, a few spots in different European countries (Lampedusa, Lesbos, Malta, Ceuta etc.) have been increasingly committed to providing hospitality to thousands of refugees. Of late, refugees' trajectories have changed. Large flows followed a few land routes, from Libya to Turkey towards Central Europe and Germany, Greece being the transit point for the Balkan route.

Researchers have pointed out the negative effects of the lack of EU policies towards migrants and refugees, or the incoherence of policies that are in place. Faced with an evolving international movement of persons (Bernardie-Tahir, Schmoll 2018), it is the lack of policies that is particularly responsible for the creation of either official camps or informal shantytowns (Agier, Bouagga, Barré 2017).

Geography, spatial strategies and types of cities profoundly shape the distribution of arrivals, the route of transits, and the hubs of destination, creating a local overburden of the policies related to reception and integration. However, evidence of the geographical structure of migrant and refugee waves is difficult to create due to structural constraints. Flows and routes keep changing due to the hazards of international relations; the capacity of absorbing the incoming population of refugees depending largely on policy trade-offs and political interdependencies.

However, very little research has considered the relationship between entry points and refugees' settlements or resettlement policies persons in particular (for a notable exception see: Bernardie-Tahir, Schmoll 2018).

### Concentration and dispersal

Policies of relocation depend largely on political strategies. Resettlement agreements allowed for limited distribution of asylum seekers among EU countries, often on an ad

hoc basis. A few member states have adopted a national measure to distribute asylum seekers among regions, often based upon criteria like GDP and demography.

On first viewing, there are trends in the rate of concentration of asylum seekers in urban municipalities or in core municipalities of metropolitan areas, due mainly to the relatively high concentration of infrastructures and housing in core municipalities. The presence of vacant public housing or empty buildings in other localities affects the choices of policy makers and may alter the geographical patterns of distribution.

Thus, the perceived concentration of refugees is often due to a high concentration of a vaguely defined population of 'migrant descent', while media representation of a few specific areas strongly influenced the overall image. In some cases, the refugees' inflows have stressed the public system of welfare provision and fuelled public

confrontation in an increasingly heated way: immigration ranks among the highest concerns in European public opinions, just after unemployment (28 and 33 percent respectively in 2016 Eurobarometer). Media often portrays the presence of migrants as a national or local crisis, framing the discourse as an emergency.

Therefore, reflexive public communication and spatial management of refugees are two crucial tenets of all reception policies that may alternatively lead to either exacerbating already existing social disparities (Eckardt 2018), alighting the political exploitation of latent social conflicts, or the opposite. There are no conclusive arguments that favour the (relative) concentration or the dispersal of asylum seekers and refugees, all solutions depending heavily on the qualitative aspects and the dynamics of people involved, including local communities.

### Arrival and transit points

#### Lampedusa (Baratier, Cremaschi 2019)

The island of Lampedusa is one of the arrival points in Southern Europe. Lampedusa e Linosa being a small town of 5000 inhabitants, any development policy is affected by the presence of a hot spot of migrant concentration. Migrants are tolerated to move freely although are, in principle, restricted to the hot spot. During the year, the pressure on public services and facilities is high due to the scarce resources of the island.

Any addition to the population, migrants as well summer tourists, put pressure on resources, water consumption for instance, or public facilities like hospital and pharmacies. Like any other weak region, there is a need for policies supporting local economic development.

Of late, some local initiatives have brought improvements enjoyed equally by migrants and residents, for example health care for pregnant women, and a new desalination plant.

The presence of new professional and social groups on the islands (police, border agents, international activists...) also had the unanticipated outcome of creating new global links for a geographically marginalised community.

The late mayor promoted a network of cities in order to manage the reception process of migrants entering the EU. Addressing the arrival of refugees has somehow encouraged the adoption of more ambitious local development policies, although they are not always implemented.

However, this link depends on the political leadership and it is thus prone to disruption. A change in the mayor has, in fact, interrupted some of the most interesting policy developments.

### 3.3 Inclusion

Research on integration or inclusion is vast; here, we concentrate only on a few topics related to the points discussed in the previous pages. In fact, neither scholars nor institutions have a clear-cut definition, much less a strategy, for inclusion which is a two-way process of encounter between newcomers and local society. Even the stronger notion of integration is a topic exposed to controversial discussions. In a broad sense, we can understand integration as both a societal condition and a process; yet, the dynamics of migration and the context of migrant reception are influential on the outcomes.

Researchers investigated a large variety of spatial settings and cultural topics where migrants and local populations

come together; and they equally explored a variety of methods and results (Babels 2018). Of late, a few have started to also include conflicts and refusal as indicators of the additional stress, sometimes politically exploited by extreme parties, put on marginal areas and often weak local economies (Eckardt 2018). Finally, researchers have also highlighted the importance of informal and reciprocal relations between migrants and the receiving local society.

In fact, a number of different actors have started to consider places and cities chosen by migrants as tools for integration rather than just a space for social conflicts. The context of the places matter (Cremaschi 2019) and this raises a considerable challenge to both national integration policies and local spatial planning.



## Job and economic impacts

An increasing number of studies addresses the economic impacts of the arrival of migrants and refugees, showing that some of the negative expectations are compensated for (for a few reviews: Kerr and Kerr, 2011; Dustmann, Fasani, Frattini, Minale, Schönberg 2017; Nijkamp, Gheasi, Rietveld 2011; Portes 2018). As far as jobs and welfare are concerned, the existing literature shows mixed results on job markets and no significant effects on welfare. In general, refugees seem to integrate more slowly into labour markets than ordinary migrants (IFM 2016), albeit there are variations in experience. The highest available scenario estimates the cumulative impact of the asylum seekers inflow by the end of 2016 at “no more than 0.4% for the EEA labour force” (OECD 2016).

Recent macroeconomic studies (Aiyar 2016) estimate that in the short-term there “is likely to be a modest increase in GDP growth” concentrated in the main destination countries (Austria, Germany, and Sweden). However, medium- and long-term impacts relate to non-economic factors such as social integration, cultural barriers etc. Consequently, the precise impact of refugee flows can be somewhat uncertain, either on the short or long term. This is particularly the case when assessing the territorial impacts of such flows.

Policy recommendations insist on the need to “match migrant skills with economic and job opportunities” at the local level (OECD, 2018: including a focus on 12 cities and additional surveys on the integration of migrants in 72 cities). Tackling the impact of migration on jobs (OECD 2019), after a 4% drop, both permanent and temporary migration flows to OECD countries started to rise again in 2018. On average across OECD countries, the unemployment rate of migrants decreased from 9.4% to 8.7%, although youth and the those with low levels of education experience difficulties in accessing employment.

Bringing together domestic research concentrating on the ‘receiving’ part of emigration, Europe in our case and international research covering a broader perspective and investigating the place and rationale of departure allows for a structuring of trajectories to produce comprehensive understanding of the subjective rationale and the network affiliations (or conflicts) that are eventually deployed in the arrival country.

Finally, there a number of refugee mapping projects set up by refugees for refugees to keep track of numbers and locations in order to help the newcomers integrate by providing details for services including language classes, counselling, doctors etc. These self-organized initiatives exist, for instance, in Germany, Hungary and Sweden (Youth Partnership 2016).

## Non-economic factors influencing reception policies

Researchers are also suggesting the need to revise the (rather obvious in the long run, yet critical) correspondence between economic performances and capacity of absorption. In fact, the relationship between localities and flows seem far more articulated and can lead to new regional typologies.

The spatiality of refugees follows a different logic, partly due to the national frame of relocation policies: flows are not (anymore) commanded by firms and industrial jobs, but rather by urban located networks that mediate the access to a variety of jobs in all sectors, from care, to commerce and agriculture.

In Italy, regions with higher unemployment are likely to host asylum seekers (that supposedly provide economic opportunities thanks to national funds), while regions with more social capital are not (Fratesi, Percoco, Proietti 2019). UK findings support this conclusion (Huggins, Thompson, 2015).

An even more important issue has to do with the presence of barriers and bottlenecks that hinder refugees’ access to local resources. An example of barriers is the policy fragmentation among member states. As the two ESPON pieces of research made clear, the success of regions facing inflows of asylum seekers and refugees strongly depends on asylum policies of other European countries and regions.

The economic performance and demographic dynamic of regions may appear a determinant factor that influence the absorption capacity. Yet, quite a few localities, often small municipalities, engage positively in the reception of refugees in less performing regions. Case studies and analyses suggests that the reception of migrants and refugees can provide positive economic impact to underprivileged regions and areas, if they are able to harmonize reception and local development objectives (MIGRATUP, 2018, pp. 48-49).

MIGRATUP and MIGRARE offer interesting evidence of the development opportunity that migration and refugees offer to weak regions. Complementing economic performance with other criteria, will lead to a more comprehensive understanding of both territorial features and policy-oriented commitment of localities in Europe.

A lack of adequate coordination with the central government is one of the main findings of an international survey on 72 cities (OECD 2018), while lack of reception facilities is the main issues of cities at the forefront (less so for the small and medium-sized cities). Case studies show various innovative approaches that involve local civil society groups to provide additional housing or complementary services (language, cultural and



vocational classes, skills assessments, internships and volunteering experiences, etc.).

### Arrival neighbourhoods

A few cities have adopted ‘immigrant friendly’ policies fostering regeneration strategies, similar to the US Rust Belt cities. These similar strategies have been adopted in Europe in specific cases, like the renowned village of Riace (Sarlo, Martinelli 2016; MIGRATUP case study 2019).

Researchers emphasized the importance of considering the urban context in all inclusion policies, as well as the activation of migrants and non-state actors in the public domain (Neis, Meier, Furukawazono 2017; Fioretti, Briata 2018).

However, scholarly research has also pointed to an increase in temporary forms of migration. The migrants’ location practices are influenced by multiple factors and increasingly by their access to information available on

digital networks and consequently the access to resources (Collins 2011; Faist 2015). Migrants might draw on resources which go beyond the neighbourhood or city level, for example via social media or transnational social networks, these networks allowing them to participate in various activities and access resources in different spatial contexts (Barwick et al. 2020)

The arrival city, far from being a natural output of informal arrangements, results from some form of political arrangement of different logics in a specific settlement. This process is exposed to risks and pitfalls, since people in receiving areas may be equally deprived (Eckardt 2018): however, “there is a dynamic interrelationship and a mutual dependency between the specific socio-spatial context of the city and migrants’ (Balampanidis, Polyzos 2016). According to WEF (2017): “The number of ethnic enclaves is rising in the urban areas of developed countries.”

## Inclusion

### Altena (OECD 2018)

A few cities have adopted ‘immigrant friendly’ policies fostering regeneration strategies, both in the USA and in Europe, such as in the renowned village of Riace (Sarlo, Martinelli 2016; MIGRATUP case study 2019).

A small industrial town (18 700) in a declining industrial region, Altena is losing jobs and population (-21%) while also closing public facilities and services. In this context, the municipality has come to approach migrant integration as a chance to revive the city, accepting an additional 100 asylum seekers and refugees than required by federal allocation during the 2015 influx. In Altena, migrants make up 11.3% of the total population.

The mayor shared a vision for migrants’ inclusion providing social care and counselling on an individual scale and through flexible structures, direct communication mechanisms and approachability of all stakeholders as well as the large civic engagement of citizens and a strong network of volunteers. For instance, ‘Kümmerer’ are local citizens who help newcomers with administrative work on an individual need-based basis.

The city established a so-called “integration center” as a meeting place offering workshops (e.g. cooking and art), book clubs, language classes and extended educational offers, meeting rooms for associations and working places with computers. In addition, the center offers guest rooms for emergency accommodation. It is important to note that the city accommodates migrants in individual private housing units and not in centralised shelters.

The city attempted establishing a skills assessment for newly arrived asylum seekers and refugees on a voluntary basis, taking stock of their education and previous professional experiences. Local political authorities made a public commitment to extended communication. All public servants, including the mayor, are easily approachable by every citizen through phone calls or individual meetings to discuss issues related to migrants. The federal government gave the city an integration award in May 2017 for its outstanding civil society engagement.

Formal and informal coordination mechanisms sustain the program, and regular meetings and coordination rounds are organised between the city and external stakeholders.

## 4.

# Policy recommendations

The survey of research and evidence reveals some features of the spatial effects of migration and refugees, although data and assessment are still scarce, particularly concerning the distribution and flows at the local level.

However, this position paper tried to piece together elements that describe the profile of three overlapping dimensions, that one should keep in mind when dealing with the topic of migration:

- Europe has gone through a global policy transition characterized by the emergence of novel practices, that national and local actors have learned to increasingly implement in networks and partnerships. In less than 15 years this transition has come to define a major cleavage in both the European and the US political debate, largely restructuring the political system.
- There is a contradictory spatial organization of refugees and migrants. Researchers have pinpointed three models:
  - a. the concentration in cities when refugees are free to select the destination;
  - b. a trend characterized by dispersion, according to key factors affecting the access to resources (for instance, housing costs);
  - c. a polarization of refugees in small ethnic enclaves following the logic of intra-community assistance and solidarity.

Those waiting for the status of refugee might often disperse according to the interplay between national and local policies.

- **The reception of refugees and migrants depends on the capacity of European states, regions and localities to respond to the double challenge of providing first help (a central affair that strongly affects localities); and sustaining a long-term process of integration (that requires strong multilevel cooperation).**

Taking this into account, the following recommendations and questions will be addressed during the ESPON workshops on migration.

### Combining local development with the inclusion of migrants

Cities and localities can play a crucial role in making migrants an asset for local development and policies should coherently promote integration and local

development. How to match migrants' skills and local specificities such as the economy, demographic dynamics and ageing or shrinking regions? There is no one-size-fits-all answer. This requires up-to-date knowledge of local economic trajectories and needs and in-depth knowledge of migrants' profile and background.

### Nurturing of the multi-actor and multilevel governance

The final recommendations cannot but insist on better governance, the involvement of local institutions and civil society organizations, networking, coordination, and public-private partnership. The need for reinvigorating the local level of policies as well as nurturing the multilevel exchange is somewhat underestimated.

Cities, townships and even villages are key actors for the integration process. If economic development and inclusion of migrants into the job market are two crucial steps of integration strategies, local policies are targeting increasingly indirect measures that help such insertion. They concern housing, language schools, education, and basic community services. Though not always conclusive, national policies and local initiatives have reached some results. Nation-states have agreed on procedures and mechanisms for an equitable redistribution of refugees, cities and localities have implemented programs and interventions for receiving and promoting the insertion of migrants. More effective policies require that communities cooperate in networks and have access to shared capacities and a protocol for exchanging data. The EU can play a stronger role in directly targeting cities and localities that engage in the reception of asylum seekers and refugees and by identifying best practices and experiences.

A special EU program supported by Home Funds has provided funds for a variety of aims, among which the support of the asylum system. AMIF is financially limited compared to the budget that member states deployed in emergency help. The EU assessment report deems that the activation of localities and cities has been one of the major limitations of this program. The European Parliament has proposed an expanded budget and the CoR has already suggested increasing them. Structural funds sustain cities fostering integrated development strategies. A possible suggestion would thus be to develop a program in the EDRF with reserved funds and tools that may sustain those localities willing to engage and experiment in the reception of migrants.

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Co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund

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The ESPON EGTC is the Single Beneficiary of the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme. The Single Operation within the programme is implemented by the ESPON EGTC and co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund, the EU Member States and the Partner States, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland.

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