



## Regions and cities for Integration

Regions getting results



### DRAFT AGENDA AND CONCEPT NOTE

#### Seminar - *Integration of Migrants and Refugees in Small Territories: A factor for local development*

*25 June 14:30, European Committee of the Regions (VMA 2), Brussel*  
*Interpretation: FR, EN, IT, PT, SV, PL (speaking)*  
*FR, EN, IT, PT (listening into)*

#### Background

Today, two-thirds of the foreign-born population live in predominantly urban regions across the OECD. Place matters when it comes to the integration of migrants. As shown in the 2018 OECD report *Working Together for Local Integration of Migrants and Refugees*<sup>1</sup>, there are a variety of differences across OECD regions in terms of migrant presence and integration. Statistical and qualitative results<sup>2</sup> suggest that challenges and opportunities regarding migrant integration differ according to location and size of cities as well as in terms of policy and governance. Of the entire sample over 90% of the 72 EU cities experienced a large influx of asylum seekers and refugees in recent years, however it seems that asylum seekers, based on preliminary observations, are more equally spread across regions than migrants and are not predominately hosted in urban regions. Moreover, the report proposes a *Checklist for public action to migrant integration at the local level*, structured into 12 key objectives. The objectives reflect the need for multi-level governance and adequate public capacity to formulate and implement integration policies, which should in turn take into account time and space specifics and feed into sectoral policies.

The large number of migrants over the recent period required responses from cities and regions that had not previously dealt with this phenomenon, in particular smaller sized cities in less urban areas. Their concerns with and objectives for migrant integration differ from those of large cities. For example, emergency reception facilities are mostly lacking in large cities, while only 11% of intermediate and regional cities

<sup>1</sup> The report has been co-financed by the EU. It may be found here: [https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/working-together-for-local-integration-of-migrants-and-refugees\\_9789264085350-en#page1](https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/working-together-for-local-integration-of-migrants-and-refugees_9789264085350-en#page1)

<sup>2</sup> OECD findings are based on a review of migrant integration policies and practices in 72 cities in Europe of various sizes across urban (43%), intermediate (36%) and rural areas (21%) – including ten city case studies: Amsterdam, Athens, Barcelona, Berlin, Glasgow, Gothenburg, Paris, Rome, Vienna and the small city of Altena in Germany

indicated this as a concern, in the survey for the OECD report. Moreover, while almost 90% of the OECD city sample consider an information gap across levels of government to be a crucial concern, coordination across different policy fields (e.g. housing, education, health, labour) is an important challenge for large cities and much less so for smaller municipalities.

Even the objectives set for integration may differ. When looking for solutions to address ageing and/or limited attractiveness of their job markets, some rural areas consider that migrants could be an answer to their challenges. In such cases, their key concern is “how to make them stay?”

Designing a suitable response to the integration of migrants in host communities requires carefully matching regional development characteristics with migrant needs and skills in order to attract migrants and to benefit from initial investment made in providing shelter, language training, education, administrative support, etc. In addition, strong interaction with local businesses and NGOs is needed for successful long-term integration of those who arrive. Experience has shown that it is also key: a) to better link early reception and integration policies, considering future local opportunities for hosted asylum seekers; and b) not to focus on one policy field (e.g. housing) but rather adopt a holistic approach to the integration of people based on the integration of all relevant policies.

The case of the city of Altena, in Germany, is of note. The small city, experiencing demographic change and a decreasing population, draws on assets such as low housing prices, short administrative pathways and a vibrant well-structured civil society to integrate migrants with a shared vision of fostering regional development. How could this work for other cities and regions experiencing de-population, demographic change and difficulties in responding to local employment opportunities?

## Objective

The seminar will present the data available on the integration of migrants and refugees in small and medium sized cities and rural areas. The seminar will then discuss how sustainable refugee and migrant integration in small and medium sized cities and rural areas could become a factor for regional development, by rehabilitating empty housing, contributing to the demand for public and private service provision (e.g. education, healthcare, leisure, and commerce), reducing skill shortages for specific industries, and by creating new economic, social and cultural activities that enrich community life and well-being. Making integration happen in small and medium sized cities and rural areas is also a way to incentivise ‘large cities de-congestion effects’ and the challenges linked with housing costs, overcrowding and segregation that are sometimes associated with sudden arrivals in large cities. Regional authorities can play a key role in supporting integration in such territories, for example by improving urban-rural linkages, incentivising shared services for integration among neighbouring municipalities, increasing capacity building, etc. National authorities can also support the smooth integration of migrants in these communities by taking into consideration local realities when designing the reallocation and resettlement schemes as well as long-term integration measures.

This seminar aims to identify and advance knowledge on effective integration in small and medium sized cities and to increase awareness of and appetite for migrant inclusion as a contribution to local development in these areas.

## Participants

- Public authorities: European regions; Small and medium sized cities; Member States; Associations of subnational governments; the EU
- Businesses
- NGOs and migrant representatives
- Banks and donors

## Format

The seminar is organised by the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) in partnership with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB), the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), the SHARE network and the Urban partnership for inclusion of migrants and refugees.

It is part of the *Cities and regions for integration initiative*<sup>3</sup>, launched on 10 April by the CoR President Lambertz, and it is the first of a series of events for local policy-makers and experts to discuss how to support the integration of migrants in Europe.

A follow-up workshop with regional and local practitioners and decision-makers from small and medium sized cities and rural areas will be organised in October 2019, during the European Week of Regions and Cities.

## AGENDA

13:30      **Registration and light lunch**

14:30      **Opening**

**Karl Heinz Lambertz**, President of the European Committee of the Regions  
**Beata Gminder**, Director Migration and Security Funds, European Commission

14:45      ***Setting the scene: what do we know about integration of migrants in small and medium sized cities and rural areas?***

Chair: Marek Teplansky, Head of Unit, DG REGIO, European Commission (tbc)

Speakers :

- Fabrizio Natale, Policy Officer, Joint Research Centre
- María Gafo Gómez-Zamalloa, Head of Unit, DG Agriculture, European Commission
- Anna Piccinni, Policy Analyst, OECD
- Franziska Ziegler, Researcher, Migration Policy Research Group, University of Hildesheim
- Matthieu Tardis, Researcher, Institut Français des Relations Internationales (IFRI)

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<sup>3</sup> Cities and Regions for Integration is a Committee of the Regions initiative in collaboration with the European Commission and a number of European associations (Eurocities, CEMR, CPMR and AER) to support the integration of migrants and to present positive narratives of solidarity, showcasing the potential benefits of integration of migrants in EU cities, towns and rural areas. Cities and regions can join this initiative here: <https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/IntegrationInitiative>

Questions for this session:

- What does the evidence on migrant (including refugee) presence and integration in small and medium sized communes suggest?
- In what way does proximity to a larger urban area influence the attractiveness of a small city and the long-term impacts of its development?
- Does the size of small v medium sized communes influence the integration result?
- What can small and medium sized cities teach large cities in terms of inclusion? Participation of host communities in refugee reception in small villages that could apply to neighbourhoods in large cities and viceversa.
- What about national (and regional) dispersal mechanisms: Do they take into account the integration potential of small and medium sized municipalities - how to attract the “right” migrants, meaning that best match local needs-? Do they involve the participation of local governments? And do they consider multi-sectoral public actions?
- How can cities benefit from migrant families whose economic contribution might be less direct and who need specific support but who can stimulate the re-emergence of service provision for the whole community? In depopulating areas how can they compensate in terms of bringing new public service users and local economy consumers?
- How to make them stay after the initial investment? What type of conditions supports long term inclusion?

16:00 **Coffee break**

16:20 ***Video screening : experience of integration in smaller municipalities, produced by ICMC and the SHARE network***

16:30 ***Political debate: how to make integration of migrants in small and medium sized cities and rural areas a factor for regional and local development***

Chair: Dr Laura Colini, EU URBACT Programme Expert (tbc)

Speakers :

- Philippe Bruyère, Mayor of Meymac (Corrèze), France
- Deolinda Seno Luis, Deputy Mayor of Odemira, Portugal
- Pehr Granfalk, Mayor of Solna, Sweden, CoR member
- Monica Hernando Porres, Director Human Rights, Secretary General de Peace and Integration of Basque Government, Spain
- Laura Corrado, Head of Unit, DG HOME, European Commission
- Sinthujan Varatharajah, Member, European Migrant Advisory Board

Questions for this session:

- To what extent do regional strategies include migrant contribution to small and medium sized cities' economic development?
- To what extent do the vision and talent of local leaders in engaging their local community compensate for the existing limited local diversity<sup>4</sup> and contribute to initiating integration processes? How is it possible to maintain this momentum?
- Do NGOs in small and medium sized municipalities play a different role in migrant integration than in large cities?
- What appropriate responses can be provided to the multi-level governance challenges faced by these communes?
- What type of services for integration can efficiently be shared among small-sized municipalities?
- Can the integration of small and medium sized municipalities in transnational networks and partnerships for integration of migrants (i.e Urban Partnership for Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees) contribute to better integration in these territories?
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17:50 Concluding remarks

Petra Hueck, Director International Catholic Migration Commission Europe

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<sup>4</sup> The more diverse a region (in terms of number of foreign-born people) the more positive the perception vis a vis migrant impact (OECD, 2018)