



MATILDE

Migration Impact Assessment to Enhance
Integration and Local Development in
European Rural and Mountain Regions

10 COUNTRY REPORTS ON QUALITATIVE IMPACTS OF TCNS



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1. OVERVIEW OF COMPANIES SELECTED FOR THE INTERVIEW, METHODS AND KEY FEATURES OF THEIR EMBEDDING CONTEXTS

The policy report (Deliverable 3.1/4.1) introduced and discussed the most important legal acts and policies regarding TCN integration in four policy areas: residence & asylum, integration (with focus on language support), labour market, and social welfare (social protection, housing, health) (Baglioni et al., 2021). While the focus was on policy development on a national level, regional implementation, and interpretation of the regional level (Federal state) has also been taken into consideration. As two case studies, Carinthia (with focus on Villach and Villach Land) as well as Vorarlberg, are implemented for Austria, the regional dimension is crucial and reflects the varied experiences of interviewees due to diverse regional background.

Based on the legal foundations this report focusses on the **social** impacts of migration regarding local development. Considering this, the empirical work in this section was carried out on a regional and local level in both case studies, with the aim of enhancing insight into the work of the respective social stakeholders and political representatives. Special attention was placed to understand TCN's social integration and inclusion processes, evolving perspectives on social dimensions, namely social polarization, social cohesion, active participation, and access to and quality of services in the context of the case studies Carinthia (with focus on Villach and Villach Land) and Vorarlberg. Semi-structured interview guidelines organized around these main themes aimed to raise topics and questions of interest and enabled at the same time to conduct the interviews in a flexible way responding to the interviewees particular background and interests.

Owing to the Covid-19 pandemic all focus groups and interviews had to be carried out online. On the one hand this certainly led to shortcomings because online interviews focus more strongly on the spoken word and other, non-verbal expressions, which underscore the context of the interview, are side-lined. It is also more difficult to create a supporting atmosphere and to appreciate the specific surroundings of the interview or focus group. This is even more so when technical problems (trouble with internet connection etc.) arise. On the other hand, coordination and travel arrangements, particularly for focus groups, were much easier to handle, travel expenses are not incurred. Building on stakeholder analysis, the following focus groups and interviews have been carried out:

In both Austrian case studies, all together 11 interviews (six in Vorarlberg, five in Carinthia but with six interview partners as in one interview two interviewees from the same organisation took place) and three focus groups (two in Vorarlberg and one in Carinthia) with social actors and local political representatives were carried out between 18th of February and 19th of March 2021. The selection of focus group attendees and interviewees in the case studies is built on close cooperation with the respective local partners of both case studies. All interviewees and focus group participants were eager to discuss their personal and even more likely their institutions' contribution to social integration of TCNs/migrants. They used to stress the importance of this issue and were happy to reflect and discuss thoroughly in this empirical stage.

Case study work in **Vorarlberg** started with a focus group with **regional coordinators of refugee care** of different sub-regions of Vorarlberg. In 2015 with the high influx of asylum seekers arriving in Vorarlberg¹, integration activities were shifted towards the responsibility of the "State Minister of Integration" and aimed at accommodating asylum seekers at a proportional share in all 96 municipalities

¹ In 2015 about 4,600 persons and 5,200 persons in 2016 were in basic care.

of Vorarlberg. This decision implied the allocation of refugees also to small and remote municipalities at the early stage of the integration process. The resulting comprehensive challenges at the local level for all the “regular administrative” system and service provision (e.g. local administration, kindergarten, schools, organization of voluntary work etc.) required support by newly founded local and regional coordinators of refugee care who have been financed by the social funds of the Federal State (currently extended to December 2021). In this new organisational structure, the specific feature is inter-communal cooperation among many small municipalities. In the focus group three refugee coordinators of the southern part of Vorarlberg represented some of the remote valleys and regions of Vorarlberg (Montafon, Klostertal, Brandnertal, Gr. Walsertal), and another refugee coordinator from more central municipalities (but not towns) of the Rhine Valley completed the focus group along with our local project partner.

The selection of social actors to be interviewed in one-by-one interviews were designed to give a good overview of the relevant institutions and institutional backgrounds as well as to cover important topics like basic care, employment opportunities via competence check, housing and livelihood as well as youth work. Within all these topics people with migrant backgrounds (particularly working in migration or forced migration areas) are either the target group or directly or implicitly affected by the work of the organization.

To gain deeper insights into the organization of **basic care** in Vorarlberg, a representative of the refugee aid of Caritas, which is the main institution of basic care in Vorarlberg, talked about the specific Vorarlberg approach of “integration from the first day”, which asks for high social integration efforts (for asylum seekers as well as for the local population) at the local level. To secure the livelihood of people in need (among others recognised refugees) is one of the aims of the institute for social services. The interviewee, whose social work focuses on a specific rural area of Vorarlberg (region of Bregenzerwald) has also experiences as coordinator of refugee care in the same region in the years 2015-2019, enhanced our knowledge of the specific circumstances and challenges of refugee care in a rural region. Among others, **housing** is a very important issue in Vorarlberg, because renting is particularly expensive and access to social housing is limited. We asked the head of the competence centre of settlement work about their activities in social housing and housing assistance. To complement these insights a project leader (with migrant background) discussed a two-year pilot project with the aim to smooth difficult (material and immaterial) circumstances in a multi-ethnic social housing complex. To gain more knowledge about employment issues, the project coordinator of the **competence check** in Vorarlberg was interviewed. He gave valuable insights into the challenges of recognition of formal and informal qualifications of migrants (since September 2020 not exclusively refugees). Another important aspect of social integration is **youth work** with the aim of supporting young people in difficult circumstances (who often have a migrant background). Particularly for young people from disadvantaged families, youth work may result in better chances for inclusion (socially, educationally, in the labour market) as it is the intention of various activities, programmes and projects.

To complement the empirical approach in Vorarlberg a **focus group with mayors** from different rural parts (region of Walgau and Bregenzerwald) was conducted. As mentioned above refugees were allocated at the local level to all municipalities, thus shifting responsibility for first accommodation and start of the “integration process” to mayors. The discussion with the four mayors provided important insights into different local approaches and experiences, but also revealed the strong interaction and dependence from small-regional cooperation activities. Repeatedly it was referred to the coordination tasks of regional refugee coordinators (see other Focus group).

Regarding the **Carinthia case study**, a total of five interviews with six interview partners and one focus group were conducted, which enabled a holistic picture of the four dimensions to be gained. The interview partners are selected in that way, so they represent the most important integration-political action fields (housing, employment, language, and education) as well as integration counselling and outreach integration work. The interplay between rural and urban areas in relation to migration has also been explored. In the following, the backgrounds, fields of work and target groups of the interviewees are explained.

Case study work in Carinthia started with the interview partner WP3ATK001, who has been working with the topic of migration and refugees for 20 years. His work started with German language courses at

ASPIS (Psychosocial Centre for Refugees and Victims of Violence – Psychotherapy, Research, Counselling) and later added family work, where he was able to respond more to the needs of the target group. The target group of ASPIS generally includes people with a migrant background and the interviewee's approach is to understand cultures holistically, hence he was able to enrich the MATILDE empirical research work with his wide range of knowledge about the cultural specificities of the different migrant (refugee) groups. Currently, he is managing the ASPIS project “integration initiative family”, which installed different outreach activities to foster the inclusion of mainly refugee people.

The area of housing and accommodation was represented by interviewee WP3ATK002. She has been a civil servant of the City of Villach for 31 years and is specifically responsible for housing allocation. She was able to provide insights into access to the housing market, the City of Villach's points system for housing allocation, living together in a multinational neighbourhood, challenges with migrant applicants and local tenants, as well as potentials for improvement.

To gain a deeper insight into the labour market, the head of the Institute for Labour Market Integration (Institut für Arbeitsmarktintegration – IAM) was consulted. IAM's aim is to ensure sustainable integration into the Carinthian labour market for their migrant clients. The target group consists of people with a migrant background, mainly EU citizens, people under subsidiary protection, refugees according to the Geneva Convention and partly asylum seekers. She described the obstacles and potentials of labour market integration for her target group as well as the development of the response of the labour market to migrant workers in recent years.

Interview partner WP3ATK004 also provided many years of experience on migration in general. She is the head and chairperson of the Project group integration of foreigners (Projektgruppe Integration von Ausländerinnen und Ausländern – PIVA) and has been active in this association for 20 years. PIVA was already founded in 1991 and is one of those NGOs in Carinthia that has been active in the field of integration for the longest time. In addition, a further employee of PIVA (WP3ATK005) took part in the interview. She herself has a Bosnian migrant background and was able to tell us from her own experiences, what challenges she encountered in her personal integration history in Carinthia. Both were able to give us a broad overview of the challenges for migrants and the potential for the Carinthian region through migration.

In order to cover the field of language, education and the school context as well, WP3ATK006 was interviewed. She works as teacher at the elementary school Friedensschule, located in the city of Klagenfurt (city district of St. Ruprecht) for over 10 years. She teaches German as a Second Language (DaZ for short) and gives lectures on topics such as interculturality at the Klagenfurt University of Pedagogic. Moreover, she also works as a psychotherapist. She explained everyday school life in a school with a high share of pupils with migrant background (about 95 per cent) and those parents often have a low educational level themselves, belong primarily to the working class or are unemployed at all; only a few children of academic parents attend this school. Furthermore, she answered to the complex issues that arise from the interface between Austrian society, school, migrant pupils, and their families. In addition, a focus group was conducted in the Carinthia case study with the focus on “Women and Migration in Carinthia”. Six women from different sectors but with the same target group participated:

- WP3ATK007 represented the Women's project group (Projektgruppe Frauen), located in Klagenfurt, the capital city of Carinthia. WP3ATK007 has been working in this field for about 20 years and has led the Women's project group until her retirement. In this context, she has built up the focus on migration within the project group which originally focused on women issues in general and accompanied many projects in this field.
- WP3ATK008 has also been working in the field of migration for over 20 years. Since 2009, she has been responsible for counselling migrant women at the Upper Carinthian Girls' and Women's Counselling Centre (Oberkärntner Mädchen- und Frauenberatung). The association combines a women's shelter and women's counselling.

- WP3ATK009 was already very interested in gender issues during her studies, which also led her to her work at the Klagenfurt Girls' Centre (Mädchenzentrum Klagenfurt). The focus of the Girls' Centre is specifically on young migrant women.
- WP3ATK010 was born in Styria, has lived for years in the Austrian capital city of Vienna and has settled down in the rural district of Hermagor for family reasons since 2021. She describes herself as an internal migrant. Since April 2018, she has been the head of the women's shelter in Villach (Frauenhaus Villach) and is confronted with migration issues in this context on a daily basis, especially as violence against (migrant) women has increased in times of COVID-19 pandemic. The service areas comprise the districts Villach, Villach-Land and Hermagor. 70 per cent of her clients are women with non-Austrian citizenship. Gender and gender in connection with violence are the organisation's main focus.
- WP3ATK011 is also working with the Women's project group (Projektgruppe Frauen). She provided primarily experiences from migrant women she is working with and personal experiences as she can refer to her own migration experience. She came to Austria from Bosnia with her parents 30 years ago (as a refugee of the war in Ex-Yugoslavia). She completed her (pedagogical) studies and is now in the Women's project group mainly responsible for a project that offers parental work in kindergartens. In her second project, XENIA, women meet fortnightly to exchange experiences and topics and to establish contacts.
- WP3ATK012 worked at the Foreigners' Counselling Centre (Ausländerberatungsstelle) from 1996 to 2018, which is now the Institute for Labour Migration (IAM). In this field of work, it was noticeable that women have difficult access to integration opportunities and lower chances of attending language courses. This results in a lack of language skills, which in turn has a negative impact on the integration process. Based on these experiences, she founded the Intercultural Centre (IKZ) in Völkermarkt (a rather rural district in Carinthia) in 2013 and focuses in her work on integration specificities in rural areas. IKZ's target groups are migrants and the Austrian population, as integration can only succeed if the local population also participates in this process.

A fruitful discussion arose in the focus group, which was well complemented by the backgrounds of the participants. All participants were also able to report on the topic of rural areas. Together with the interviews, a comprehensive and multidimensional picture of the case study Carinthia could be created.

After reviewing and thematically analysing the in-depth interviews of the two case study regions together, it became clear that different issues per region were emphasized to a greater extent. In order to adequately process the topics raised, the two case studies will be discussed separately to ultimately better address the similarities and differences in the common conclusion.

2. SOCIAL INCLUSION/POLARIZATION

VORARLBERG

The legal situation of TCNs, their rights and opportunities compared to the resident population with regard to residence and asylum, integration, labour market and social welfare has been thoroughly discussed in the policy report (D3.1-4.1) of Austria. The following sections therefore extend to the history of immigration in both case study regions to better understand the relations between different migrant groups and focus on recent and prospective changes in the legal preconditions.

In many parts of Austria, including the two case study regions, immigration is an important part of the overall (positive) demographic development since World War II. In Vorarlberg, in the 1950s, internal labour migrants from economically weaker provinces of Austria (Carinthia and Styria) dominated, and since the 1970s, labour migrants from Turkey and to a lesser degree from former Yugoslavia were

attracted. They were required particularly for the booming textile and construction industry, at that time. Since then, the population of Vorarlberg has become more diverse regarding immigrants from old and new EU member states and more recently from other third countries than Turkey (inter alia refugees). These developments are manifested in the population data. With 21.3 per cent of all inhabitants, Vorarlberg has the second highest share of people with foreign backgrounds (after Vienna with a share of 35.7 per cent) (OEIF, 2020). The largest proportion, almost one quarter of all people with foreign background, comes from Germany (24 per cent), almost one fifth from Turkey (19 per cent) and about 12 per cent from countries of former Yugoslavia (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia with the exclusion of Croatia, which is now an EU member state).

Concentrating on TCNs, data show that they do not only settle in the urbanised region of the Rhine Valley but also in smaller mountainous valleys with a share of the whole population of 6.4 per cent (in 2018) in the rural and remote parts and 9.1 per cent in the urban parts of Vorarlberg. The number of Turkish nationals highly dominate in the urban part (Nuts 3-region Rheintal-Bodenseegebiet) but also, albeit to a lesser extent, in the rural part (Nuts 3-region Bludenz-Bregenzerwald), with a declining proportion since 2015.

Compared to the rest of Austria, people in Vorarlberg are generally better off, with the highest annual net income (median) of about 27,300 EUR in Austria (Austrian average is 25,900) (ibid.). And more importantly (as cost of living is also higher in Vorarlberg), people with foreign citizenships may expect less income differences, they earn about 90 per cent of the Austrian citizens which represents a much smaller income gap towards the average income level (for Austria foreign citizens only attain 80 per cent of national average). Differences between various groups of people with foreign citizenships are smaller, with people from old EU member states and EFTA States (“old” EU member states) earning almost as much as Austrian citizens, and Turkish nationals coming as second highest group. Other TCNs (including recognised refugees) earn the least but are still better off compared to the national situation. Data show that employment of recognised refugees and people entitled to subsidiary protection is also in times of the Covid-19 pandemic comparably good as many of them work in industry, the number of persons who draw minimum benefits was even slightly decreasing at the end of 2020 (WP3ATV006, Management Summary Flüchtlingswesen December 2020)

Although the median income situation may suggest less differentiated perceptions towards different groups of foreigners (at least with regard to earnings), according to the interviewees this seems not generally to be the case. In several interviews and in the Focus Group with mayors, particularly integration and inclusion of people with Turkish background have been mentioned to be difficult and failures are widespread. Many **“reservations”** by local people with regard to the strong Turkish community have been reported by interviewees, e.g. it was mentioned that for social housing complexes with high shares of people of foreign background (i.e. Turkish) the reputation is very bad, even so when there are no more problems (e.g. police operations) reported than in general (WP3ATV007). This is confirmed by an interviewee with a Turkish background, who states, that the Turkish community often has a bad standing in the local society. Although those groups are often already part of the second or even third generation living in Vorarlberg, from her point of view *“there are still many prejudices against Turks”* and *“it is difficult to change behavioural patterns of local inhabitants”* (WP3ATV009). While the *“fear of a parallel society”* is often deplored by “local inhabitants”, she does not feel that there is a widespread, real interest to change this situation.

From the interviews it arises that many difficulties between people with Turkish background and locals are probably to be ethnically assigned, although they may have completely other roots and causes. Examples of violent disputes regarding women between Turkish and local youth might look differently at first sight (WP3ATV011), but they may rather refer to the socio-economic background of the involved persons than to the ethnical background. In particular, the different educational levels and parents’ employment types are crucial factors in this regard. Youth observers argue that many (even violent) disputes have a tradition among local youth in rural villages and should not be transferred to an ethnic issue (only because migrants are involved).

However, social positioning is dynamic and with new arrivals *“lowest strata of migrants have moved up (in the social hierarchy) because of more recent arrivals, the asylum seekers and refugees”* (WP3ATV011).

And within this group, people of colour, namely people from Somalia, are confronted with most negative attitudes (WP3ATV005). This is especially notable in the search for housing or jobs. In this regard ethnic communities offer solidarity and are also very helpful when it comes to job placement, particularly regarding employment in low skilled jobs in industrial enterprises. *“If persons from Somalia get the permission to stay (as recognised refugees), they have a job right after (recognition). These are mostly low skilled jobs, but they know somebody who already works and thus gets a job mediated”* (WP3ATV006).

It is commonly asserted that **ethnic communities** rather rarely mix up, they are of high importance with regard to social connectivity, support in finding accommodation and job placement for members of their community. However, it is stated that *“with strong ethnic communities integration is much more difficult to achieve”* (WP3ATV012). A statement which was shared directly or indirectly by many interviewees.

When it comes to gender relations, ethnic communities are perceived in a strongly ambivalent way. Particularly during the discussion with mayors, it was stated that access to and participation of female asylum seekers and refugees is much more difficult to achieve than for males. Female social contacts are in many cases focused on their community, participation in local associations is seldom and needs an active approach from the hosting community. This is related to difficulties in learning the German language, and even more so when women have childcare duties and/or are illiterate. *“The difficulty lies more with the women, who often do not speak or write their own language; then it is also difficult to learn German”* (WP3ATV013).

Several interviewees argue that in more rural and remote municipalities exchange between migrants and locals might be easier to achieve (WP3ATV001, WP3ATV008, WP3ATV010). Ethnic communities are not so dominant and *“integration is much easier because structures are smaller and easier to manage”* (WP3ATV010). Particularly in the beginning of the recent high influx period (2015) locals’ readiness to help and support newly arrived asylum seekers was particularly expressed in rural municipalities. The organization of voluntary help of locals was one of the main occupations of regional coordinators of refugee care. However, the great enthusiasm and voluntary support by locals waned and could not be maintained in the long run. Cultural, social, and economic difficulties in “integrating” and feeling accepted of the newcomers (to a later date recognized refugees and people entitled to subsidiary protection) seem to predominate and rather lead to the tendency to assemble in the community of their origin. One mayor also refers to the difficult administrative requirements that hinder local integration efforts from both sides:

“If the municipalities had been allowed to do it in an uncomplicated way, more could have been achieved. Trying to standardise everything, uniform paperwork, costs etc., that creates high and complex costs. At the beginning (note: of the asylum process), families would have liked to do something, but then they were not allowed to. In the end the ethnic community gets stronger than the link to the local population” (WP3ATV015).

The situation of not being able to work for a living and being highly dependent on subsidies is difficult to accept also by local people in the long run. With many barriers confronted (not least the difficulties for many adults to learn a completely unfamiliar language), it is still difficult also for recognised refugees or people with subsidiary protection to get an adequate job which is above minimum care or social aid. And particularly in rural settings the attitude to rather receive subsidies than to work in a low paid job for about the same amount of money is met by a limited understanding by local people who themselves have traditionally a high working attitude.

Recent legal changes or tightening of rules make exchanges between newcomers and the local community even more difficult and in certain cases lead to the poverty trap of TCNs. The following examples were mentioned by interviewees, for example a project of the Caritas Vorarlberg that aimed to facilitate employment opportunities for asylum seekers. As they are not allowed to work (except for self-employment, seasonal work and domestic service, in which case they lose basic care provisions), the aim of the project **neighbourhood-aid** was to ameliorate the exchange between asylum seekers and locals and simultaneously provide asylum seekers with a modest remuneration. However, there happened to be breaches of the law (regarding exceeding the minimum payment and withholding of basic care), thus the

project was cancelled officially. The subsequent project (Caritas Vorarlberg, 2021) that aims to facilitate “integration activities” is far more administratively burdensome, but still important: *“These are such important projects in which we try to take the first steps towards integration, to make initial contact with the population. Not to the same extent as before, unfortunately”* (WP3ATV006).

A further setback for integration activities was the stop of **apprenticeships for young asylum seekers** and the stop of the **integration year for recognized refugees** (see Baglioni et al. 2021), people entitled to subsidiary protection and asylum seekers who are likely to be granted asylum doing a job training for example in agriculture or care facilities. Both were promising initiatives with high recognition from both the beneficiaries and the local inhabitants.

CARINTHIA

COEXISTENCE OF THE LOCAL AND IMMIGRANT POPULATION AND CULTURAL EXCLUSION

A frequent topic in counselling settings is how TCNs can get in touch with the local population. In general, TCNs often ask why certain things in Austria are the way they are and function the way they do (cf. WP3ATK003). In everyday life, the first contacts are usually with neighbours or colleagues at work. This is easier for EU citizens, because they have an (assumed) more similar cultural background (cf. WP3ATK004). In the focus group, however, the participant WP3ATK010 names herself as an internal migrant (moving from Vienna to the rural district of Hermagor in Carinthia for family reasons) describes a different picture. She reports from her own experiences that **it took years even for her to be accepted in the rural district**. To achieve this, she consciously participated in local community events. She is very critical of the rigid culture of acceptance in rural areas because there are few points of contact as an immigrant. **Establishing contact for women with headscarves is also a special challenge**. Focus group participant WP3ATK11 wears a headscarf herself and knows that people look at her differently when she is visiting her parents, who live in a rural Carinthian municipality than in the city of Klagenfurt, where she lives. The **coexistence of the local and immigrant population in Carinthia is not always appreciated** and may be also related to Carinthia's difficult handling of the foreign/foreigners in general (for detailed information see MATILDE Deliverable 6.2 “Report on integration-political goals, programmes and strategies”, policy country report Austria: Dax, Gruber, Machold, 2021).

In general, cultural diversity in Carinthia is higher in the more urban areas (smaller towns and Klagenfurt, the capital city of Carinthia). Especially in urban areas, an increase in religious and cultural diversity can be observed as well as, like interview partner WPATK006 states, a sort of living in parallel communities is mentioned for some city districts. Newcomers are explicitly asking for accommodation in city districts where people of their own nationality already live (cf. WPATK002). These **people form a sort of ethnic community and prefer to stay among their ethnic community**. They support each other (e.g. in the religious cultural centres and mosques), so that learning the German language often is no longer necessary, even in such smaller and rurally tinged towns and cities as Villach and Klagenfurt (cf. WPATK006). The city of Villach, for example, tries to meet the migrants' wish to live close to people from their own ethnic community. At the same time, Villach tries to limit the concentration of people of the same ethnic background, e.g. in apartment buildings, because Villach perceives such ethnic concentrations neither helpful for the migrants nor for the local population, as it has often led to various problems with respect to housing. When it comes to housing and living together, according to interviewee WP3ATK002, the most serious problem is the issue of correct waste disposal: *“We have massive problems, really massive problems, with waste disposal. Unfortunately, in many cases it doesn't work at all with migrant families. (...) So this is a problem that should really be addressed more in the integration courses.”* (WP3ATK002)

In the case of the city of Villach, it has become clear that the competences of civil servants working in the housing department and operative housing management (e.g. housekeeping) must be very broad, even in the direction of psychological knowledge (cf. WP3ATK002).

Interviewee WP3ATK001 learned through his work that TCNs with traumatic experiences are very sensitive. Migrants (respective refugees) often feel offended even by trivialities due to their former experiences, which often lead to misunderstandings. Interviewee WP3ATK006 describes that in the school context, especially TCN parents with a low level of education often fall back into religious structures as a form of psychological stabilisation due to the diversity of values they are confronted with. At the same time, however, this has an impact on their children, as it shapes and influences their sense of identity as well as their behaviour at school. The rejection of the Austrian value system among young pupils is not very noticeable, but **the older the children get, the more conflicts arise**. The question of whether one is Muslim or not, which is posed by pupils to each other, supports belonging to an ethnic/religious community or exclusion (also in classroom context) (cf. WPATK006). She explains: *"As a teacher, however, you are in the second row and notice it through conflicts. However, we try very hard to give space to all religions and to communicate this to pupils and parents."* (WPATK006)

For a living in a fruitful coexistence, openness is needed from both sides (cf. WP3ATK004). **Integration processes need time:** e.g. time for language acquisition and (bi-/multi-)lingual development or for personal development (cf. WP3ATK003). Interviewee WP3ATK003 noted that Austrian society also needs time to become open for contacts, whereby the political position is also decisive.

According to interviewee WP3ATK001, COVID-19 is currently a central topic in TCN families and in counselling conversations. But he sees no differences between migrants and locals when dealing with COVID-19 issues. The same worries, fears, anger, and conspiracy theories are prevalent. For focus group participant WP3ATK007, the COVID-19 pandemic only made the deficits of recent years visible. For example, personal meetings between people with a migrant history and the local population were a rarity and established contacts completely broke off by the pandemic outbreak, because such contacts are rarely maintained with the help of online settings. The contact between the target group and the local population was also an important part of his project, especially through the football matches and the excursions. *"At the moment, there are no organised meetings due to COVID-19. 2020 was a weak point in this respect, as bringing people together through sports and leisure is very desirable."* (WP3ATK001) WP3ATK006 also explains that **"the Lockdown has increased 'speechlessness' and withdrawal tendencies"** and WP3ATK003 points out that the *"accumulation of mental health problems due to COVID should be addressed."*

Focus group participant WP3ATK012 explains that she generally perceives that locals and TCNs act quite in the same way: wait-and-see (this attitude could be seen as typical for the Carinthian population). Each other thinks that the other side should take the first step. Many migrants find contact through their children in school settings or at work. But in social life, such as club activities or mixed friendships, there is a need to catch up (among children in the school context, the exchange between local and different migrant group children works more easily, they visit each other e.g. to celebrate each other's birthdays; cf. WP3ATK006). The focus groups participants stress the *need to create spaces for informal encounters* (cf. WP3ATK012, WP3ATK007). Focus group participant WP3ATK011 explains that while "coming together" may sound simple, this requires a high level of commitment to be realised. But, according to focus group participant WP3ATK010, care must be taken to do not reduce difficulties to cultural differences alone. It is also about allowing common ground to emerge and needs a lot of personal efforts. Especially in rural areas, this enables bringing people together and creating relationships.

DISCRIMINATION AND ACCEPTANCE

Discrimination takes place in many different forms and is considered an ongoing experience of everyday life. Depending on the political situation, or even as now in times of COVID-19 crisis, racist tendencies are observed to be intensified (cf. WP3ATK004). According to interviewee WP3ATK004, **discrimination in daily life is already so what "normal" that it is not even addressed**. For example, TCN adults are often automatically called by their first name without being asked for permission. Focus group participant WP3ATK010 is also upset that her own neighbour with Turkish roots is only called "the Turk" in the rural municipality (cf. WP3ATK010).

In addition, intersectionality further exacerbates this problem, especially for TCN women. Focus group participant WP3ATK012 distinguishes between a "visible" and "invisible" migrant background.

People having an "invisible" migrant background are more accepted than those who have a "visible" one. The "visible" are often not accepted even in the third generation. Focus group participant WP3ATK011 is herself affected by this dilemma as she is a headscarf wearer. She describes multiple cases of discrimination based on her own appearance. She notices the looks that people give her. Sometimes it is almost expected, or locals look for that women with headscarves make mistakes or fulfil stereotypes. Focus group participant WP3ATK012 always has to justify herself and feels reduced to her headscarf. Because of this negative perception the headscarf has among the local population, many decide against the headscarf in the hope that it would improve their living situation. Others withdraw into their private sphere and only show themselves in public when it is necessary. Focus group participant WP3ATK012 reports that in most cases, wearing a headscarf is a conscious decision made by the woman themselves. In Austria, it is rather assumed that their husbands or their cultural belonging force women to wear it.

Interviewee WP3ATK003 also perceived great scepticism towards TCNs until 2014, for example when looking for accommodation. Especially (large) immigrant families had to face hard times at the private housing market. Many private landlords were afraid of problems with migrants because of the different ideas of lifestyles (cf. WP3ATK002). Some families were not able to get a flat because of their Chechen nationality (see also the political discourse on a Chechen-free Carinthia: ORF Kärnten, 2006). Other landlords, however, wanted to support refugee families and deliberately opened their flats to them (cf. WP3ATK001). In addition, **discriminatory behaviour by employers and work colleagues is also observed**. Sometimes the experience of discrimination at work would force the migrant to leave the job. A lack of awareness of discrimination is observed, and very few people take legal action against it. Interviewee WP3ATK003 explains that her migrant clients often tell her that they just want to live calmly without troubles, and they wish to be accepted and valued. The situation for TCNs in the labour market, however, has improved in general. But this also depends on the openness of employers. Some employers already have good experiences with migrant staff and want to recruit migrants again. They really look out for migrant staff with a similar cultural background. On the contrary, some employers are known to prefer EU nationals. The overall problem is that **many employers have too little knowledge about other cultures, which leads to fears**. The employment service IAM (Institute for Labour Migration), is an AMS spin-off and offers information materials and contacts to alleviate the fears. Nowadays, however, companies are already more prepared to ask openly and request information about certain migrant groups. Religion, however, is a particularly frequent topic asked about by employers (cf. WP3ATK003): *"And a lot of questions were asked, some of them really about religion: What is it like? Do they pray five times a day or do they have fixed times for pray? (...) Do we have to give them permission for that? (...) They are simply curious and there was a lot of ambiguity."* (WP3ATK003) Companies are increasingly recognising the potential of TCNs (not least due to the lack of supply of local labour). Whereas a few years ago companies hung up immediately when called by IAM or declared that they would only hire locals. Today, many good, trustful company networks exist on a long-term basis (cf. WP3ATK003)

COMPETITION AND ENVY BETWEEN LOCAL AND IMMIGRANT POPULATION

Regarding envy and competition between the local population and TCNs, interviewee WP3ATK001 recognizes an increasing struggle for resources. Especially **in the area of social welfare, locals feel that something could be taken away from them** (cf. WP3ATK005). The minimum income is mentioned as an example. Although it is set at a very low level and is associated with massive restrictions, there are discussions about cutting it (cf. WP3ATK001): *"The demands in the working world are unbelievably diverse, and if you are older, sicker, and psychologically burdened, then your job is gone within a very short time. For many people, the minimum income is a good thing because another income is simply not possible for these people."* (WP3ATK001) Nevertheless, the minimum income often triggers envy and accusations of preferential treatment of families with a refugee or migrant background. Often, the envy debate is also politically boosted, as the interview partner explains: *"When I am in contact with Austrians, I try to explain that someone who does not have Austrian citizenship can never get more than a national. Then there are always these rumours that a refugee family would get much more than an Austrian family, which is not possible anyway."* (WP3ATK001)

VORARLBERG

There is a widely shared view among stakeholders in Vorarlberg that **building social cohesion already starts at the very beginning of immigration**, in the case of forced migration with the organization of basic care. Caritas Vorarlberg who is the main provider of basic care in Vorarlberg (according to its federal structure every Federal State is organized differently) pursues certain approaches which support the principle *“integration should happen from the first day”* (WP3ATV006). The most pressing aspect is accommodation which is favoured in small-scaled structures in Vorarlberg, particularly through placing families in adapted apartments and private accommodations, which are distributed in almost all the 96 municipalities (93 of 96 municipalities) of Vorarlberg. This approach of not settling asylum seekers in few large facilities but rather distribute them throughout the Federal State was mentioned by almost all interview partners as a forward-looking decision which was, in the end, very well received by local actors and which led to a high engagement in voluntary work by locals. Another approach of Caritas Vorarlberg is self-catering also in the very few larger facilities, which is a small, but first step into more independence and self-responsibility. To some extent this supported also finding first “occupation”, e.g. activities of community services or other public action, which is now largely made impossible due to stricter regulations.

At the interface of municipality, local population and (recognized) refugees the regional coordinators of refugee care have been established to **support social integration efforts in the municipalities** in Vorarlberg. Particularly for more remote municipalities the reception of asylum seekers in 2015 was a huge effort. In that regard the professional support by the regional coordinators of refugee care has been described as *“indispensable”* for the protection against overload by mayors (cf. WP3ATV014). Tasks include the following: counselling of refugees; recruitment, coordination, and support of the voluntary engagement of locals; cooperation with municipalities and other service facilities (e.g. education facilities) and ‘information hub’ for all regional and local institutions involved. One refugee coordinator summarized it as follows: *“mediation is everything”* and *“bridges have to be built”* (WP3ATV005) since it is not self-evident that people of different backgrounds with different resources and ideas start a joint activity or some sort of productive exchange. To support and maintain social integration processes it needs responsibility and accountability from a long-term perspective since locals as well as newcomers constantly look for guidance, support, and organization again. A regional coordinator put it like that: *“The support and accompaniment of different offers and structures is very important. This kind of ‘relationship work’ is very important to create trust”* (WP3ATV002). This is not only valid for newcomers, but also for locals and local and regional institutions. Thus, besides cooperation and coordination of different levels of social actors (municipalities, care facilities etc.) there have been many activities at a low-scale level, not least festivities to involve also local inhabitants. Certainly, this is no longer possible in times of pandemic - *“We have taken many steps back”* (WP3ATV001). However, there have been numerous activities to keep in contact with asylum seekers and refugees and help to inform about and adapt to the disturbing new situation. Particularly, to organize learning support for children was a huge effort, one regional coordinator stated, *“no contact was lost over time”* (WP3ATV005).

Regarding **labour market participation** migrants have been since long an important workforce in industrial sites of Vorarlberg and are in this respect well perceived and respected. Many of them (formerly “guest-workers” from Turkey and Ex-Yugoslavia, now e.g. Somali) work as unskilled workers, a range of job types that are often no option for locals. But Vorarlberg also needs skilled workers and people with qualifications, and for a few years firms increasingly demand better language knowledge. To enable job uptake and mitigate obstacles in this process (and therefore facilitate social mobility) in 2017 the Centre of Migration Support in Vorarlberg has implemented the project “Competence Check” (ZeMit, 2021a), which has been very well received from the beginning. Recognized refugees and people with subsidiary protection status get administrative support, in particular with providing documents, understanding of formal requirements and cultural specificities, training and skills development, counselling and support in verification and matching of job experiences:

"Many are simply registered with the Employment Service as auxiliary staff because they just have taken on any job. During the interview, it turns out that the lady from Brazil has Portuguese citizenship and a Master of Science in Technical Chemistry. She just doesn't know German yet" (WP3ATV008).

With the end of 2020 the project "competence check" has been reorganized into "Check In" (ZeMit, 2021b) and is extended to all people with migrant backgrounds to enhance their employability.

Social cohesion and integration in housing are also big issues. In general, there is no strong spatial concentration of certain nationalities in private housing, which is by far the main possibility of renting an apartment. To get a subsidized apartment citizenship is not an issue (all people allowed to work have also access to social housing), criteria refer to income level or current housing situation (number of children, overcrowding rate), indicators by which migrants are more affected. Therefore, many problems regarding cultural differences and an overly concentration of certain national backgrounds in social housing complexes are reported (as noise and in particular children's noise, or waste separation) (cf. WP3ATK002, WP3ATV009). However, WP3ATV007 is of the opinion that if one takes a closer look, these problems *"mostly refer to being in different life situations rather than having different origins*. On the other hand, municipalities are also able to determine certain criteria which often refer to the duration of living in the municipality. For incomers, possibly with a migrant background, this is a major obstacle.

Since social housing does not have a very good reputation in Vorarlberg (although the standard is above average) and there are always manifold challenges of living together, the "Competence Centre for Settlement Work" (Kompetenzstelle für Siedlungsarbeit) has the declared aim to handle all kinds of problems in social housing complexes. The institution pursues two main approaches: either providing information and awareness raising already during the planning phase, in any case before the building of social housing is completed, to reduce prejudices (talk to political representatives, initiation of town meetings to inform local inhabitants), or to get active in an existing social housing complex and deal with upcoming problems. This is pursued via support and accompaniment during the "moving in phase", by dealing and mediating conflicts between neighbours, and in the accompaniment of a social housing complex for a longer period (one to two years). Theoretically based on the "contact hypothesis" (Landmann et al., 2017) these housing assistance projects with a long-term commitment are led by a voluntary worker (in close cooperation with and support of the competence centre) who seems to be mostly female with migrant background. The aim is to bring people together, start exchange and work for a common target and simultaneously reduce prejudices. An interviewee talked about her experiences with housing assistance in a pilot project on social housing (WP3ATV009) which was finalised three years ago. Confronted with material problems (mould etc.) and immaterial challenges (language problems, problems with the neighbourhood, childcare etc.) she was also confronted with anti-migrant sentiments and lack of trust in particular cases which led her to the conclusion that *"there are still prejudices"*, and later *"there are still many barriers, we have not yet achieved to openly coming together"* (WP3ATV009). However, during the project many initiatives were carried out, like reading afternoons for children, learning support, parties, women's talks, speeches on different topics etc., but the most sustainable action was the claim, joint renovation and design of a particular room open for all inhabitants and in particular for children and families. As noise, and above all, children's noise was one of the recurrent topics of complaints this led to a tangible mitigation of social tensions. In conclusion, she is of the opinion that many fears and concerns notably of the local inhabitants can be solved or at least mitigated through communication in an open and approving manner, *"personal talks and encounters are of crucial importance"*, however, she also stresses that such encounters and open talks across ethnic boundaries, different groups and generations need organization and some basic conditions. *"There is always the need that somebody organizes such things, it doesn't work by itself!"* (WP3ATV009).

As mentioned above, children and particularly **young people** are often a stumbling block and cause the rejection of different groups of society. Therefore, the representative of the Youth Centre in Dornbirn and chairman of youth centres in Vorarlberg sees himself as a *"mediator and facilitator"* (between policy representatives, administration, other social facilities or initiatives, neighbours, and other young people) towards the general aim of the centre to achieve *"peaceful coexistence"* of different groups and generations

in society (WP3ATV011). The centre is an “Open House” oriented at all young people but particularly relevant for TCNs and refugees as they can find a place of “*no obligatory consumption*” and peer group contacts. This is important because their economic situation is mostly precarious and in complete contrast to the general “economized” offer for leisure time. The manager stresses that the challenges are not the specific and diverse origins of most of the young people but rather the unfavourable socio-economic situation, determined through low education and low social role of the parents’ generation and in many cases language deficiencies. In this situation it is crucial to get access to young people, which is facilitated by the engagement of voluntary young migrants. The manager states that “*the involvement of migrants in youth work is crucial. They are able to contact young people as native speaker and build trust*” which is a first step in the integration process (WP3ATV011). Applying the principle of voluntary engagement, the youth centre builds its activities primarily on providing an attractive offer for the leisure time of young people and favours integration through cultural activities (e.g. graffiti painting, concerts, trips, performances, multi-ethnic parties or by and for different cultural backgrounds). Moreover, the centre nurtures linkages to job placement, vocational training, and education. It deliberately focuses in its supportive work on the strengths of young people, the manager quotes the following:

“We do have success stories here, for example when enterprise praise their apprentices (coming from the youth centre) enthusiastically. Particularly young people with migrant backgrounds have a high work ethic, enthusiasm, and stamina” (WP3ATV011).

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed all aspects of life and has a detrimental impact on social integration and cohesion in all its aspects. Although social institutions claim to have continued to work as good as possible, keeping to the changing requirements and rules of pandemic (work has been made difficult particularly in the first complete abolishment of physical social contacts, and thereafter). It is hardly possible to establish new contacts or maintain exchange, German language classes are now online which decreases success rates, and it is not possible for literacy courses, and contact to authorities is more complicated etc. What is missing most is the support of teams and groups, be it in social housing assistance (enabling the approach of conflicting parties “*on neutral ground*” (WP3ATV007), educational work or more casual meetings, “*activities are constrained to online offers and only those are reached, who already had confidence in such offers before*” (WP3ATV001).

CARINTHIA

As already noted in the case of Vorarlberg, building social cohesion starts from the very beginning of the immigration process. An important focus, which was emphasized several times during the interviews in Carinthia, is the early **acquisition of German language skills**. This is seen as an essential constituting factor of social cohesion to gain a foothold and is even described as the “key to a successful integration”, since otherwise the ability to communicate with neighbours and locals (cf. WP3ATK002) or participation in social and cultural life might be limited (cf. WP3ATK003).

When examining differences between rural and urban areas in Carinthia, it was often observed that participation in social life and establishing contacts is easier for families in rural areas (cf. WP3ATK004; WP3ATK006), whereas individuals prefer urban regions (regardless of the available support and language offers) to connect to already existing TCN communities in these areas (cf. WP3ATK006). Nevertheless, the opposite is also reported in some cases, with **TCNs specifically seeking housing in more rural areas and small municipalities in order to gain distance from their ethnic communities**, in which a sort of social control (e.g. if the woman wears a headscarf or why she does not wear one) is perceived as a burden (cf. WP3ATK001).

Language courses are offered by many different institutions in Carinthia and have become an integral part of the integration process, as the requirements for language skills that TCNs are expected to meet in a wide variety of fields have increased over the last few years. Some of these services do not focus exclusively on language acquisition, but are directly linked to other efforts, such as the provision of support in

challenging situations such as job hunting, administrative formalities, applying for financial aid or clearing up misunderstandings that might have arisen (cf. WP3ATK004). However, language courses are not only a way of improving German proficiency and acquiring a certain level of communication skills, but also offer the opportunity to establish new relationships and thus represent an important social component. Contact with locals and other integration support services can also be facilitated, as interviewee WP3ATK001 reports. Thus, through language courses, access to individual TCN groups and an ongoing exchange could be established, which resulted in gaining a better insight into people's everyday lives and surrounding environments (cf. WP3ATK001). Another important aspect of this process of exchange is so-called "home visits" (**out-reach activities**), which WP3ATK001 carries out, even in times of COVID-19 taking into account the necessary safety precautions. Contacts of this kind even create real friendships.

Yet, language proficiency is considered most important when looking for permanent employment, which is another area of focus discussed (cf. WP3ATK002). Although recent evidence of greater openness on the part of potential employers to TCNs is noted, it can generally be concluded that TCNs are more likely to face difficulties in the labour market (cf. WP3ATK003). As interviewee WP3ATK005 puts it: *"Migrants always have to work harder to achieve something. They always have to give more than 100 per cent"*. Concerns from potential employers are recounted, as well as attempts to educate and provide appropriate support to promote integration into the labour market, as TCNs represent great potential (cf. WP3ATK003). Nevertheless, immigrant workers are indispensable, especially in the tourism sector, where the versatile language skills often possessed by TCNs are a particular advantage, and in manufacturing, which depends heavily on their specific tasks (cf. WP3ATK001). As interviewee WP3ATK004 states: *"Carinthia would impoverish without immigration, culturally, socially and economically."* But because of the recognition of existing education and qualifications is very difficult and TCNs are regularly confronted with the need to find work quickly, they are oftentimes driven into the low-wage sector. However, like all areas of daily life, major constraints and setbacks have occurred in the area of labour due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which particularly affects essential workers and workers in lower-paid occupations, which in Carinthia often are TCNs. Some are affected by short-time work or have lost their jobs, which in some cases leads to severe financial hardships for entire families (cf. WP3ATK001; WP3ATK003).

In the area of education, the COVID-19 pandemic also led to major changes and challenges, which particularly affect TCNs and their families. As it can be seen from the interview with WP3ATK006, who is among the teaching staff of a school with a very high proportion of students with a migration history (about 95 per cent are pupils with migrant background), pupils from these families are more often confronted with factors that have an adverse effect on social cohesion and integration, such as unemployment, flight trauma and low educational backgrounds of the parents. Due to the pandemic a certain level of disengagement and a withdrawal into local TCN communities can be identified (cf. WP3ATK006). **Social contacts have been reduced, and students in particular suffer from this, which can also be seen in a decline in academic performance due to insufficient support structures** (cf. WP3ATK001).

VORARLBERG

Compared to EU citizens, who are allowed to vote in municipal elections and EU elections, TCNs do not have a right to vote for their political representation, not even on municipal level. Accordingly, they do not have a right for co-determination in these political bodies or parties. Albeit voting is open for example for all employees (irrelevant of citizenship) in the Chamber of Labour, Chamber of Economy, or for staff representatives. Interviewees did not mention these options in their statements, although a special list for migrants with Turkish background has been established for Chamber of Labour elections since long. The migrant party “home of all cultures” (“Heimat aller Kulturen”) has been founded in 2019 and participated in state elections and nine municipality elections in 2020 in Vorarlberg (WP3ATV004). However, confronted with questions about participation and migrants and refugees’ knowledge of rights and opportunities, interviewees mostly focus on the very local level, namely on their options of participation in their immediate surroundings.

Associations and clubs are traditionally of high importance in Austria. There are a wide range of opportunities from voluntary fire brigade, music associations, customs care associations, sports clubs, church choirs etc., even in the smallest municipality. Besides, there are also many ethnic communities, particularly the Turkish community in Vorarlberg has ethnic oriented associations and clubs, which are more dominant in the urbanised regions of the Rhine valley. Also new associations sustained by refugees are situated predominately in this urbanised area.

Regarding the traditional offers described above, it is widely acknowledged that participation is open to everyone, although in practice various hurdles and difficulties are perceived. Only one example regarding sports clubs, who generally welcome new participants with open arms, describes the fine-tuned cultural fabric, which determines social interaction: there are, for example, some unwritten laws which are often not known by newcomers, e.g. if children participate in a sports club parents are expected to support the club with clothes washing routines, cake donations at competitions, selling coffees etc.

It is reported by the interviewees that migrants and refugees are in many cases interested in participation and voluntary work, particularly if addressed actively and in a personal way. WP3ATV007 for example stresses the fact that “*personal contact is essential*”. TCNs are particularly interested in voluntary work for “blue light organisations” (like Red Cross or Red Crescent societies), also because this would shorten the time necessary for naturalisation (now at least 10 years of lawful and continuous residence in Austria). But in many cases language knowledge and/or (medical) competences are too limited to start voluntary work in these particular organizations, even if arrangements with the voluntary fire department can often be managed, as the coordinators of refugee care tell.

However, the linkage between traditional associations and TCNs still remains rather weak and on a basic level (participation is commonly not related with any decision-making power), with exceptions to activities like a church choir lead by Armenians in a small municipality. Many of these associations, particularly in the remote regions are in need of trainees and junior staff and one interviewee (WP3ATV007) even pleads for a quota of migrants when it comes to subsidies for associations (Vereinsförderung), which would motivate them to actively invite migrants rather than pursue the general attitude that people may come if they like. In the view of WP3ATV009 it is also important to differentiate in which way someone is approached and if it is an honest welcome: “*There are associations that claim to be open, but the question is, how open are they really? Nobody goes to a club where they don’t feel comfortable... the question is, am I welcome, do I feel good?*” Coordinators for refugee care recognise this topic and plan to actively work with associations to support them in making contact and sensitizing them for cultural differences and needs of newcomers. “*The regional coordinators want to devote more time to associations and want to offer them support. Especially in remote areas and small villages, it is an important process to sensitize associations that they show more willingness and open up opportunities for refugees*” (WP3ATV001).

CITIZENSHIP

The issue of "citizenship" still plays a role, but has been, according to interviewee WP3ATK003, less mentioned in counselling situations in recent years. TCNs who aspire Austrian citizenship would prove themselves that they can do it. Many **migrants want to give something back to the Austrian state by obtaining the Austrian citizenship**, because they e.g. appreciate that they had the chance to get a good education or a job. With citizenship they want to show that they are now also a part of Austria (cf. WP3ATK003). Interviewee WP3ATK001 mentions that many TCNs get citizenship, which is sometimes referred to as the "**completion of integration**", as it comes with a permanent place in the Austrian labour market. Others, however, are not able to obtain citizenship as their language skills are not good enough. This fact would mainly affect the older generation. WP3ATK011 also distinguishes between those TCNs who just live in Austria (Carinthia) and those who want to participate:

"Many who came to Austria in the 1990s (...) [as refugees from Ex-Yugoslavia] lead an 'in-between life' in Austria and live and work only for the day when they can return to their country of origin. They link this date to (...) the beginning of their pension. In the end, however, they do not go back because their children and grandchildren stay in Austria. Then they regret their personal attitude and lack of participation and wish they had built something in the past." (WP3ATK011)

Focus group participant's family (WP3ATK011), for example, would have deliberately chosen to take part in social life because they also live in Austria. Interviewee WP3ATK001 also refers to the Hazara families, for example, who, in contrast to the dichotomy of other families with a migrant or refugee background, would see Austria as their hope, especially because they are subject to persecution in Afghanistan and Iran. According to interviewee WP3ATK001, the different attitudes also have to do with different importance of citizenship for the TCNs. On the one hand, it is a final farewell to their own homeland, on the other hand, they long for a new homeland. Many parents, especially fathers, are so strongly connected to their homeland and transfer this to their children, which often results in difficult socialisation paths, as the following quote shows: *"Many of these children had a difficult socialisation path, which they unfortunately also owe a little to the statements of their fathers: 'This is not our home, our home is there!' That has already had a fatal effect."* (WP3ATK001) Interviewee WP3ATK006 also explains that before COVID-19 there were many discussions with parents, which showed that dual citizenship has become more important because people do not want to give up their home nationality. Austrian citizenship can also be a symbol of belonging for migrant pupils.

VOLUNTARY ENGAGEMENT

Even after the huge engagement of locals, which has been observed also in Carinthia during the strong refugee immigration in 2015/16, volunteering by local people has remained the same, as it is evaluated by PIVA. They still have many volunteers (e.g. for learning support, accompaniment of individual families or individuals) who have been with them for many years and new ones are always joining. This would result in stable relationships as well as opportunities for TCNs to gain access to the private level of the local population. In general, integration volunteering work by locals in Carinthia decreased after the refugee crisis. According to interviewee WPATK001, an enormous willingness to help in 2015 (refugee crisis) has been observed. This, however, has declined over the years for a variety of reasons. Interviewee WP3ATK001 cites the incidents of New Year's Eve (2016) in Cologne as an example for the decline. Nevertheless, it is emphasised that the commitment of individuals does not change as a result of public incidents and refers to families who have taken in TCNs and support them. Those people who were able to build positive connections with TCNs in 2015/2016 have also maintained this. If they experienced negative contacts, they, of course, started to reject it (cf. WP3ATK004). In general, volunteering is very important.

Volunteers were also irreplaceable for IAM's work during the refugee crisis, as volunteers accompanied clients to authorities, interpreted, explained documents, or helped with forms (cf. WP3ATK003)

Voluntary work and active participation in associations and clubs on the part of the immigrant population is difficult, especially in the first few years: *"People want to work, have peace and quiet, settle in. Often it is only the second generation that integrates more. (...) They tend to organise themselves more in their own community."* (WP3ATK004) **It is also a question of the financial situation whether participation in social life is possible**, as for example, club memberships for children are cost-intensive (cf. WP3ATK004). However, also in Carinthia, e.g. many young Afghans volunteer at the Red Cross food bank or at Caritas. Some **examples of taking over leadership tasks in associations and clubs by migrant volunteers** could be found, e.g. a Chechen man who volunteers as football coach in the multinational ASPIS football project or the Hazara woman, to whose initiative a women's football team has been installed (cf. WP3ATK001). In addition, interviewee WP3ATK001 tells us about another voluntary activity, which, however, is prevented due to the COVID-19 pandemic: *"At the moment, a women's self-help group, especially for Chechen women, is being organised by my colleague [she is migrant for herself]. These meetings will take place in Russian. The prerequisite for implementation is that personal meetings become possible again"* (WP3ATK001). Contrary to some assumptions and motivations, however, job opportunities for TCNs rarely result from voluntary work. But career aspirations or perspectives often develop based on their voluntary work and vocational training is pursued in the following (e.g. working in the care for the elderly, as interviewee WP3ATK003 mentions).

5. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF SERVICES

VORARLBERG

In principle access to "foundational economy" (The Foundational Economy Collective 2018) facilities (educational facilities, schools, health services, social housing, public transportation etc.) should be equally accessible for all groups of people. They might constitute a core stepping-stone for local economic development *and* integration strategy aspects. However, there are substantial restrictions, not least when it comes to digital or language barriers, cultural norms (punctuality) and socio-economic access to regional services and life opportunities. One example described by a regional coordinator of refugee care was not only the lack of German language skills, but also the lack of knowledge in the field of health. *"Questions were asked such as: What is a virus? What is a vaccination? What are vitamins? There is a lack of translations and explanations in a simple language or also in the form of video material"* (WP3ATV005). She continues describing the complex access to the language course, which should be quite simple. *"It is so difficult because you are sent around, there is an appointment, another appointment, computers don't work, we are talking about people who need an A1-course. It needs a lot of mediation work from us here."*

With regard to accessibility in rural and remote areas distance is an issue. Even if overall public transportation is assessed as comparably well-developed, it is nevertheless quite complicated to reach a certain facility from a remote part of Vorarlberg by public transport in a decent time. There might be a bus connection from the remote area which links it to centres in a reasonable travel time, but it takes time and requires changing buses etc. to actually reach the destinations given very different schedules (up to 2,5h one way). Public authorities are located in the urban areas of Vorarlberg and also most language courses offered, or medical specialists are concentrated in that "urban" area. During Covid-19, especially language courses were held online, which might be time saving, but it could be seen also as a substantial barrier to participation. *"You have to install Zoom, you need an email address etc., for many it's not accessible. You have to have digital skills"* (WP3ATV005).

During this period the numerous difficulties for integrative pathways and stronger participation with local inhabitants encountered by migrants were aggravated to a large extent. Repeatedly, language is mentioned in the first place as *the prime* obstacle, meaning not just German language but quite often extending to dialect understanding and expressions. This links tightly to cultural and identity understanding which dissociates newcomers from local inhabitants. Even if that is true also for incomers from other Austrian regions, additional distance is felt towards "foreigners", people from different cultures

and different “appearance”. Overcoming these fundamental obstacles to entering local society is crucial also for access to the labour market, improving skills and educational qualifications and arranging decent housing facilities. Again here, close contact with mentoring personal is inevitable and might help to achieve much faster and more adequate individual solutions. Mediation by contact persons links to available opportunities in the region and is bound to intensive personal familiarity of life situations, personal aspirations, capacity and qualities. In particular, access to housing facilities is often not transparent and due to the high housing cost (particularly in Vorarlberg) a big concern for migrants (as for the local population). Social housing availability is very limited and has been restricted for migrants in recent years, e.g. in Carinthia since 2017 a decent command of German language is a core requisite (Stadt Villach, 2017).

With regard to spatial access to services, respondents argued that public transport is well developed and (theoretically) services would be available also from more distant locations, particularly in Vorarlberg. Although this might reflect a rather positive interpretation that might be biased by large car-dependency of the majority of the population, the difficulties in accessibility do not seem the main obstacle. Nevertheless, a considerable part of migrants placed in remote municipalities tend to re-locate towards centres over time.

On the other hand, remote rural areas are described as places also **offering the advantage** of small social structures with more direct linkages between newcomers and local inhabitants. This may start with a welcoming culture with many local volunteers (at least in the years of 2015 and 2016) offering easy social contact and support and goes to a much easier school integration with only four-five new newcomers in classes. Also, labour market integration seems to work very well, particularly in those cases when a local contact person takes care of job placement of migrants and/or refugees: *“The rural area is characterized by short distances. People know each other, they know where to find a job. (...) If a volunteer calls an employer and thinks he could place someone he knows (a refugee for example), that carries much more weight than a job application through the employment service. Personal mediation counts for more.”* (WP3ATV010). An inclusive development is moreover favoured by including refugees and newcomers in voluntary organizations or by entrusting specific social “tasks” with them. Examples are linked to personal details and linkages, particularly referring to language exchange, personal services, garden work and other “helping” tasks that are not bound to formal knowledge or contracts. Many actors involved with “integration” strategies refer to such exemplary first contacts to start building trust and providing a “bridge function” towards other migrants.

All those drawing on several examples of voluntary involvement stress the positive influence of reciprocal interaction and the need to overcome a “dependency culture” which is all too often created by activists, integration regulations and support mechanisms (Focus group of Vorarlberg mayors). Again, narratives are needed that frame such an active role of migrants and engage in an “open and mutual” social exchange. But limiting regulation frameworks are detrimental to such developments. In general, respondents showed great confidence in younger migrants if they achieve to find desired education and work integration. Most argue (or hope) that future generations of descendants of migrants would not face the same degree of persistent difficulties as previous cohorts of migrant groups. This long-term positive assessment should not mask the big challenges observed, even in conditions of rather favourable economic situation and a prospering labour market.

CARINTHIA

As WP3ATK001 notes positively, there have been many “quantum leaps” in migration support in Carinthia since the year 2000. Particular attention was also drawn to the positive approach of State Governor Peter Kaiser to minorities (cf. WP3ATK001).

As discussed in the chapter on social inclusion and polarization, an **increase in competitive behaviour between locals and TCNs** is evident, which also includes access to certain services. One currently by NGO representatives hotly debated example is access to minimum income, as access to it has been restricted for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection in Carinthia. It is precisely this public, often negative, discourse that contributes to the fact that access is associated with stigma and that it is necessary

to raise awareness among TCNs that they are entitled to receive this benefit and that they are on an equal standing with the local population, that there is no preferential treatment (cf. WP3ATK001).

There is also **growing competition for access to publicly owned housing**. Using the example of housing allocation by the city of Villach, this is due to the existing scoring system, which is used to allocate housing to individuals and families most in need of housing assistance for social reasons. The criteria taken into account for housing allocation are, for example, income status, current housing situation, and other factors such as the number of family members, single parents etc. (Stadt Villach, 2017). Many TCNs receive high scores based on these defined criteria (e.g., low income divided among many family members), which in some cases leads to a sense of envy and perceived inequality among the local population (cf. WP3ATK002). This is a climate that harbours great potential for aggression, which has increased according to interviewee WP3ATK002. On the private housing market, however, TCNs again often face exclusion because there are landlords who do not want to rent their apartments to them or terminate rental agreements because too many people live together in too small spaces (cf. WP3ATK001). Additional obstacles in the area of housing are house rules, which are often available only in German, as well as the communication with property managers and housekeepers. The housing department of the city of Villach tries to provide information and to organize interpreters, since necessary documents and forms can be difficult to understand, not only for TCNs. The public administration also cooperates with local NGOs or often counts on them implicitly to assist migrants in providing the necessary documents (cf. WP3ATK002).

Particularly precarious is the situation perceived for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, who have to return to basic care, when they face financial hardship e.g. due to loss of employment. This may entail a dissolution of the current housing situation, but the financial support received afterwards is not sufficient to pay for a housing deposit again, a mechanism pointedly described as a "trap" (cf. WP3ATK005).

TCNs also face considerable **obstacles in accessing the labour market**. The Public Employment Service Austria, AMS, which is responsible for job placement in Austria, has largely transferred the expertise for job placement for TCNs in Carinthia to the Institute for Labour Integration, IAM. After the referral of individuals by the AMS, the IAM seeks to ascertain their education, wishes and informal competencies in order to accurately record the resulting needs and to be able to act and support them accordingly in their journey to establish themselves on the labour market. In addition, IAM is responsible for organising the competence check (Kompetenzcheck), where also informal competences and skills not certified by certificates are recorded (comparable to the activities in Vorarlberg) (cf. WP3ATK003). It was critically noted that it is difficult throughout the whole of Austria to have previous education from third countries officially recognized, as it is a very bureaucratic and time-consuming process (cf. WP3ATK004). **To succeed and pursue a career that corresponds to actual interests and, in some cases, also qualifications, requires a lot of initiative, resistance to frustration, and motivation** (cf. WP3ATK005). IAM offers its support throughout Carinthia, in rural as well as urban areas, but a trend can be recognized that **job seeking in rural areas is perceived as more difficult** (due to less job opportunities in remote areas) and a movement to urban areas becomes necessary (cf. WP3ATK003).

COVID-19 pandemic again presents challenges in this area, as it has not only led to a loss of jobs, especially in the auxiliary sector, but has also permanently reduced the number of vacancies and complicated the application process. In addition to IAM's regular support services, **it became necessary to provide and communicate fundamental information about the COVID-19 pandemic in a variety of languages** (as it is shown also for the case study of Vorarlberg). While some TCNs were happy to be able to maintain contact with the IAM during the COVID-19 crisis, or they use the pandemic time to educate themselves further, contact completely ceased in some other cases. Still, a positive development initiated by the pandemic is the improved access to language courses through online offers. However, this requires the availability of the necessary technical equipment (cf. WP3ATK003). Nevertheless, the situation in the job market remains tense.

An important fundamental prerequisite for success in this area, however, is in any case school education and thus access to it. **German as a second language programs**, which are integrated in schools such as that of WP3ATK006, **are not only concerned with the linguistic aspect of integration, but rather aim to address all areas of daily life, as well as specific issues that affect TCNs**. The aim is to positively influence the development of pupils in order to enable them to pursue further and higher

education and to achieve successful careers. The pandemic also complicates this area, and the social withdrawal already described is particularly detrimental to the development of pupils. Holding an online class was not possible because many TCNs did not have the resources to participate. Here, homework packages had to be bundled together and contact with parents as well as pupils had to be actively sought in order not to lose touch. Technical equipment represents an area in which the educational institution would like to see support from policymakers in the future (cf. WP3ATK006).

6. CONCLUSIONS

Even in a small country like Austria it is a challenge to summarize in a national report the diverse pathways and host of activities contributing to inclusion and the various obstacles rendering life of TCNs, integration and understanding of diverse views on community life rather difficult. Our assessment here is supported by the fruitful contributions from the empirical work in the two case study regions Vorarlberg and Carinthia (with special focus on Villach and Villach Land).

Drawing from the experiences of involved actors of main institutions supporting the integration process in the years of 2015-2016, we experienced an increased level of enthusiasm for welcoming refugees across large parts of all the regions and municipalities in Austria. Voluntary support by local inhabitants spread at that period and suggested a change towards swift inclusion and acceptance of in-migrants (of all types) among the majority of the population. That period is exemplary for exaggerated expectations for “successful integration” processes which all too often encounter substantial difficulties at later stages. All over Austria, including our case study regions, support disposition subsequently faded away, particularly expedited by regressive national support for migrants and the rise of a political discourse favouring hostile positions towards migrants and neglecting their positive social contributions to local and regional communities and economic benefits to national economy. Nevertheless, particularly at the local level, a strong commitment for “integration” objectives and practical support for inclusive strategies persisted.

The peculiarity of the case of Vorarlberg is that asylum seekers or at least one asylum-seeking family were accommodated in almost all municipalities, even in very small and remote ones. This made organization of professional care sometimes more difficult for the regional provider Caritas and has been reduced also due to fewer number of incoming people from 2016. Although a migration trend of people with a refugee background from the remote to the more accessible municipalities has been noticeable on a low regional level, between 2015-2016, the number of TCNs, who are largely composed of people with a refugee background, increased by almost 900 people in the rural part of Vorarlberg (NUTS-3 region Bludenz-Bregenzerwald) and has continued to increase slightly since then. Decentralized accommodation and the establishment of a network of local and small-regional support and counselling facilities in the valleys have thus made an important contribution to ensuring that population figures also develop positively in the rural regions of Vorarlberg.

With regard to policy perception, in both regions, politicians adopted a view that swift, balanced and successful “integration” is dependent on focusing on the strengths of refugees, TCNs and all groups of migrants, thus seeing migrants’ “positive” place in the local societies [for Carinthia this is especially true since a regional integration-political mission statement has been developed (December 2014 to December 2016) and officially adopted (January 2017) by the members of the State Government; for further information see Dax, Gruber, Machold, 2021; Amt der Kärntner Landesregierung, 2017]. Particularly, the former member of the Regional Government for Integration aspects in Vorarlberg is acknowledged as a “driving actor” for many activities facilitating implementation of support for migrants. That commitment is (still) beneficial to many actors in respective institutions to engage in activities to overcome integration difficulties that are rising with new policy regulations and increasing administrative challenges.

The narrative presented by interviewees largely exposes the potential for a linkage of positive social and economic impacts of integration. This assessment builds on the strong economic position of Austria’s regions and the on-going demand for labour which cannot be covered by local inhabitants. In Carinthia, e.g. some sectors, such as tourism, would no longer be able to offer their services without migrant workers;

some companies that have already had good experiences with migrant workers also keep asking for them at employment agencies such as IAM in Carinthia. Findings also show that the admission of foreign people to the employment force is inevitable, which represents a good concomitant opportunity for social acceptance of migrants as well. While in the past qualifications were not as advanced most enterprises nowadays have increased the requested skill portfolios (Amann, 2020; Buber-Ennsner et al. 2016) and a high bodily strength, work ethos and commitment of new arrivals is not any more sufficient. Increasingly, German language skills are also relevant for industrial workers and matter as additional challenge. Slow adaptation and failures to show understanding of cultural diversity might have a significant rebound effect on hampering integration processes and acceptance among local communities.

Beyond work integration, the respondents of the empirical research made clear that a host of inter-related aspects is crucial for positive integration outcomes. This includes besides the core aspect of language learning, acquaintance with cultural unfamiliar features, expressed in housing behaviour, recreation organisation, family and community life, neighbourhood contacts etc. A stumbling block is quite often the role of women including their retreat into the private sphere hampering social contacts with locals (also local women) and community. Most respondents are confident (or hopeful) that the next generation might adjust to living conditions and local norms and will call this area their “home” and a much higher level of inclusion might be possible for most of them. What is noticeable in any case is that second-generation migrants whose parents came to Austria, for example, due to war circumstances, and who talked about returning to their countries of origin until they retired, are starting families in Austria and have really settled down.

Inclusion and social impact might remain very different for a long time, and there are few signs of social mobility from the first sight, although a study on structural integration in Vorarlberg (Gächter 2017/2020) reveals, that educational participation of young people with Turkish or Ex-Yugoslavian background is much higher than several years before, and participation in labour market, particularly for young females, increased. However, new arrivals often enter at the bottom of the social hierarchy, and also with respect to social and emotional integration (Esser 2001) release migrants who have arrived before (and often are here since more than a generation) from the lowest social position in society. Overall, supporting institutions struggle with coping with administrative obstacles to achieve first approval for temporary and then permanent residence permit, and later employment and social integration. This is in contrast to the qualifications and skills of some of the migrants which are, however, hardly acknowledged and therefore prevent any “rapid” social mobility success. The more harmful effect is that this deteriorates the impression of incomers and favours the dependence of TCNs, even over longer time frames.

Finally, when it comes to active participation, empirical findings show that it is not easy for migrants to start e.g. voluntary activities, as they have to learn the German language first (compulsory by law, see § 7 and § 9 Integration Act), show great efforts to enter the labour market quickly and need to familiarise themselves with the new framework and living conditions in Austria. Nevertheless, in both case studies, Vorarlberg and Carinthia, it could be observed that TCNs started to engage in clubs and associations such as the Red Cross, Caritas or football clubs. A few also take on leadership roles after a certain period of time. Besides official membership and participation in associations and clubs, results also show that migrants engage in helping other migrants, e.g. in mosques but also via voluntary or remunerate work in integration counselling organisations and projects. The empirical research, however, confirms that stronger efforts are needed by local/traditional associations and clubs to become more open to new, migrant members and show a welcoming culture.

SWOT-ANALYSIS

One **strength** in both case study areas is integration activities that offer language courses at different levels by many different institutions. What some of the language trainings make special is that these do not focus on language acquisition only, but are directly linked to other efforts, such as job hunting, administrative formalities, clearing up misunderstandings, providing support in challenging situations, or establishing relationships. Furthermore, in Carinthia, so-called “home visits” (out-reach activities) are carried out by projects, to be able to build trust, help migrants in difficult situations and detect negative developments. In

general, further strength is the diverse range of NGOs and migrant support institutions that are well networked with each other. The specific Vorarlberg approach of “integration from the first day” is very well accepted by most of the interviewees from a personal but also institutional point of view. It ameliorates exchange between locals (voluntaries) and newcomers and leads in many cases to longer lasting relationships between both. However, these efforts have been restricted by tightened national regulation over the last years.

In the analysis of social impacts, however, also **weaknesses and threats** are identified. There are substantial restrictions when it comes to language or digital barriers, cultural norms and socio-economic access to regional services and life opportunities. For example, in both case studies, difficulties with the recognition of previous education from third countries have been reported as being a very bureaucratic and time-consuming process. The Covid-19 pandemic had furthermore a detrimental impact on social integration and cohesion in all aspects, first of all, naturally, with regard to personal interactions between locals and newcomers leading to disengagement and a withdrawal into local TCN communities. In the interviews and focus groups it was mentioned that it is very difficult for immigrants (also internal immigrants) to make contacts and friendships in rural areas, already before Covid-19. Establishing contact for women with headscarves was highlighted as particular challenge in Carinthia. On the other hand, several interviewees in Vorarlberg argued that exchange between migrants and locals are easier to achieve in more remote and rural municipalities because ethnic communities are not so dominant and integration structures are smaller and easier to manage. In any case, communication and exchange in an open and approving manner needs organisation and basic framework conditions (provided for example by coordinators of refugee care or other organisations). In Carinthia, the territorial concentration of migrants in some neighbourhoods is mentioned as a threat. Newcomers are explicitly asking for accommodation in city districts where people of their own nationality already live. These people form a sort of ethnic community and prefer to stay among their ethnic community. Some migrants living in Carinthian cities escape social control of ethnic community members and move to the countryside. The immigration of individuals and families to rural areas is a **chance** to revitalise them

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1. INTRODUCTION – METHODOLOGY AND ETHICS

PURPOSES OF THE STUDY AND RATIONALE FOR SELECTING THE STAKEHOLDERS

The purpose of this report is two-fold: Firstly, the report provides a *Social Impact Assessment of the arrival and settling-in of Third Country Nationals (TCNs)* in the region of Haskovo and Harmanli and of the transformations of the local life-worlds and social structure with an emphasis on social inclusion or polarisation, civic participation, and access to services. The social impact is assessed in the major realms defined by Vanclay (2003) as people's ways of life, their culture and their community, their environment, health and well-being, their rights. Our second aim is to *develop and deepen the analysis in the earlier Policy Brief*. The Policy Brief focused primarily on public policies, their goals, targets, and assessment. This report on social impact diversifies the perspectives by including more practices – of TCNs as well as of various other local actors of civil society, business, and politics. It deepens the information presented in the Policy Brief based on much more extensive fieldwork, and a larger number of interviews, as well as focus groups. For the purposes of this report, 34 interviews were conducted (25 individual interviews, and nine interviews in two focus groups). The reasons for selecting the respondents can be summarised in three groups:

- *Hearing the voices of migrants.* The interviews included migrants from all main communities that have an impact on Harmanli and the Haskovo region – refugees, new TCNs such as British amenity migrants, the most-settled migrants such as Russian family migrants, and migrant entrepreneurs. The interviewed refugees represent the various stages of status acquisition – some have already been granted humanitarian status, others are in an ongoing procedure, and still others have had their status applications rejected and are appealing against this. The goal of including diverse cases – in terms of nationality, status, length of residence, impact on the social, economic, and cultural life in Harmanli and the region, and forms of labour, educational, cultural, and other integration – was achieved.
- *Identifying the largest possible number of perspectives* on regional development and its main drivers, on the one hand, and deficits and difficulties on the other, and migrants' attitudes towards the two. The efforts of the Bulgarian team were aimed at including in the interviews and focus group discussions representatives of the local administration, business actors and NGO communities who are engaged in local development, representatives of national and international organisations providing humanitarian and legal assistance as well as social services. The effect of the efforts to diversify this second group can be illustrated with one positive result and one deficit. The positive result is that we managed to cover a variety of local, regional, and national actors who constitute a solid basis for a complex, multifaceted analysis of the social impact of TCNs. The deficit consists of the absence of institutional voices. The manifestations and reasons are analysed below.
- *Territorial ties of the selected actors.* All selected informants have strong territorial ties to Harmanli and the Haskovo region. These territorial ties vary in form – for the migrants the region is the place where they have settled, and for the refugees it is the place that has received them. The geography of out-migration appears impressive – TCNs in Harmanli and the Haskovo region are not many in number, but they come from many countries, such as Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, the UK, even Japan, Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, and some African countries. Several local actors were born in the region or have settled there permanently for professional and/or family reasons. Other respondents live and work in other regions, including in Sofia and other cities, but are connected to

Harmanli for professional reasons, visit the town regularly, and are actors in various integration policies and practices. Some informants have no professional or residential connections to Harmanli, but have an impact on local development through their civic activity in helping refugees from the refugee centre in the town to find a job, in facilitating their access to health services, etc. The place-based approach produced interesting results across a wide range of territorial ties – from dynamic and flexible ties wholly initiated and realised by individual actors to more structured ties based on place of birth, residence, business, employment.

This study is sensitive to gender aspects. Specific attention was paid to *women's voices*. It was especially important to us to hear women refugees and migrants formulate their practices, plans, problems, achievements themselves. The gender aspect is important for the Bulgarian report, because women are the majority in one type of analysed local migrations; most of the NGO's activists working on integration are women, as well as most of the teachers working with refugee children. Women were also interviewed in all other categories – experts, representatives of non-governmental and humanitarian organisations, education, business, etc.

Policies and the lack of policies are important for understanding impact and integration, yet until the present stage of the Matilde Project they have not been articulated in their own voices but only via those of TCNs and other actors. It must be stressed that the Bulgarian research teams – both CERMES and Caritas – have made and are continuing to make enormous efforts to establish contacts with local policymakers. Up to now, those efforts have been unsuccessful. I will summarise the reasons.

The first reason is the parliamentary elections in Bulgaria on 4 April 2021. The local representatives of political parties told us that they were very busy campaigning – which was expected. The second reason for the self-exclusion by local authority representatives from the selection of informants is the lack of expertise. It is noteworthy that this is not (only) our assessment – it is their self-assessment regarding the role of TCNs in local development. I would point out a characteristic example: the deputy mayor of a town with an interesting good practice of labour and social integration of refugees refused an interview on grounds of lack of knowledge of refugees. The practice involves a small group of people, but it is known even at the national level. In other instances, the lack of expertise was an excuse for rejecting an interview. A case in point were the officials in charge of education in a municipality that likewise has practices in the inclusion of child refugees in schools but did not accept the invitation for interview. The third reason is the undeveloped culture of accountability of the Bulgarian political and administrative elite, the absence of traditions of openness, of provision of public information. The absence of voices of the local administration was offset in part by interviews with local politicians and municipal councillors.

MULTI-METHOD APPROACH AND FIELDWORK DURING LOCKDOWN

Social Impact Assessment includes the processes of analysing, monitoring, and managing the intended and unintended social consequences, both positive and negative, of planned interventions (policies, programmes, plans, projects) and any social change processes invoked by those interventions. Its primary purpose is to bring about a more sustainable and equitable environment (Vanclay 2003: 5).

This report is based on a multi-method approach combining three main methods: desk research supplementing the results of WP2 and the Policy Brief; focus groups; and narrative interviews. Especially useful were the results gained from the focus group discussion with NGO representatives. All participants were fully engaged in the discussion, which lasted two and a half hours – longer than recommended but full of interesting information and lively debates. Two of the interviews were collective, as requested by the participants – for example, two informants, usually close relatives. The other form of collective interviews was close to a small focus group – for example, three participants, a woman refugee together with two representatives of humanitarian organisations.

The large number of interviews enabled encompassing the perspectives both of migrants and of local actors as fully as possible. It was also because some interviewees were in a dual role – a businessman who is also a representative of a local organisation for regional development; a refugee employed in a company whose owner has also been interviewed. Thus, interviews with the same respondents were used in

analysing the social and economic impact, in WP3 and WP4 respectively. The analysis also included the interviews conducted for the purposes of the Policy Brief.

A specific difficulty of the field work was the difficult access of some asylum-seekers to the internet, computers and phones. Almost all interviews with refugees were conducted by phone, with a poor connection in several cases. The poor connection, insufficient fluency of asylum seekers and migrants in Bulgarian or English, and the impossibility to include an interpreter in this poor technological environment led to interesting, but in some cases insufficiently detailed and informative, interviews.

ETHICS – ‘ETHICAL MOMENTS’ IN ‘ISLAND MIGRANT COMMUNITIES’

Studying a small migrant community in a small urban centre in a mountain region highlights the ethical concerns of confidentiality and the privacy of the research subjects, as well as the management of trust, both analysed by Stachowksi (2020). The authors of this report share Stachowksi’s idea that methodological vigilance is needed to ascertain the potential effects of the specific context of small migrant communities on the conduct of the research and the production of knowledge. The Bulgarian fieldwork showed that the formal rules of guaranteeing anonymity cannot always achieve the desired result in ‘island communities’ (Stachowksi 2020). A characteristic example cited in the debates of Matilde scholars is an English-language teacher in a refugee camp. These tensions between principles and practice have been defined as ‘ethically important moments’: they arise when the ethical principles of doing research meet the research practice itself. Every fieldwork involves unforeseen situations and enhances the chance of treading into ethical grey zones (Stachowksi 2020: 7). I faced these ethical moments when studying the small migrant communities in Harmanli. The ethical moments apply also to a relatively not high number of stakeholders with expertise and/or experience of migrant integration.

THE CONTEXT – INDICATORS OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE MATILDE HASKOVO REGION

The latest study by the Institute for Market Economics (IME 2020) synthesises Bulgaria’s regional profiles on the eve of the pandemic based on National Statistical Institute data. The following table presents the dynamic of select indicators of social development of the Matilde Haskovo region in the last three years as compared to the national average.

Table 1. Social development indicators for Haskovo region. Source: IME (2020a: 116).

Social development indicators	2017	2018	2019	National average
Population growth rate (‰)	-8.3	-8.5	-8.7	-6.7
Net migration rate (‰)	-0.9	-5.2	-3.8	-0.3
Number of teachers in primary and secondary education per 1,000 pupils	74	77	84	89
Share of persons with health insurance (%)	88.2	88.5	90.1	88.8
Population per general practitioner (number of people)	1,774	1,809	1,847	1,688
Reported crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	11.5	10.2	10.1	11.1
Share of population with access to public sewerage systems (%)	72.6	72.7	n.a.	76.2
Household waste generated per capita (kg/year)	327	316	n.a.	409
Share of household waste self-delivered for treatment and recycling (%)	98.0	96.1	n.a.	70.9
Cinema visits per 1,000 population	103	72	98	659

The dynamic of social development indicators is key to this study in two respects. First, it outlines the demographic, economic, educational, health, environmental, and social regional profile of the Haskovo region as the context in which the analysed migration takes place. Second, it is useful to analyse the everyday forms of these characteristics and trends mentioned in the accounts of the interviewees who cite

them as factors of attractiveness or of lack of attractiveness of the region that encourage or limit migration and mobility.

The low level of digitalization is worth noting: one third of the population in the region does not have high-speed internet access. It is a positive trend that in the 2009–2019 decade the share of the region's population that has high-speed internet access increased from 24 to 68 percent (IME 2020b: 114). Bulgaria ranked last among EU member countries in the European Commission's Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) for 2020.

2. SOCIAL INCLUSION/POLARISATION

REGIONAL SOCIOECONOMIC PROFILE VS STRATEGIES FOR SETTLEMENT AND INCLUSION AND THEIR DIFFERENTIATED IMPACT

The regional profile of the mountainous Haskovo region is the socioeconomic context in which the settlement and inclusion of immigrants in local development takes place. Among all characteristics, the most relevant to the Matilde Project are the following (IME 2020a):

- The Haskovo region is among the least developed economic regions in Southern Bulgaria, with the lowest GDP per capita after Sliven – BGN 8,500 (2018). The average gross annual wage is the fifth lowest in the country – just BGN 9,600. Two different trends add details to this panorama: on the one hand, household incomes are gradually rising (BGN 5,678 per household member, as compared to a national average of BGN 6,013); on the other, poverty remains a problem – 30.9 percent of the population in the region lives below the national poverty line (2019) versus a national average of 22.6 percent, and 23.8 percent lives in material deprivation versus a national average of 19.9 percent (IME 2020a: 114).
- The dynamic of the labour market is favourable. Unemployment is very low, practically disappearing in 2019 – 0.4 percent (IME 2020a: 114). The employment rate is above the national average, reaching 70.9 percent.
- The labour force is characterised by two specific features: shortage of people with higher education (20.2 percent, or eight percent points lower than the national average), and a growing share of people with primary or lower than primary education (24 percent, as compared to a national average of 17.6 percent).
- Investment activity in the region is defined by the IME as 'weak' – in the 2014–2018 period, foreign direct investments increased almost four times, but remained at the very low level of EUR 801 per capita (IME 2020a: 113–116).

The socioeconomic profile of the region is a key factor for explaining the specificity of the local migration profile. The latter cannot be understood within the explanatory scheme of wage differentials, more opportunities for employment, and other classic arguments of migration theories. Other types of pull factors are relevant in explaining migrations to an underdeveloped region. I will identify them by, first, outlining the regional migration profile, and second, distinguishing the different strategies for settlement and inclusion of the key immigrant groups, driven by specific reasons.

The regional migration profile of the Haskovo region is characterised by small, but diverse migration figures. Regarding the **time of arrival and settlement**, three cases can be identified: the first arrived before the democratic changes, mostly for family reasons; the second arrived after the democratic transition when Bulgaria opened up; the last wave was caused by the refugee crisis. Regarding the **length of residence**, three distinct groups can be identified – permanently settled and transit, the former being migrants for family reasons, the latter refugees. In-between, with a pulsating character between temporary and permanent migration, are TCNs such as the British.

It is noteworthy that one type of migration is **absent – labour migration**, foreigners who have come to the Matilde region in search of higher wages or more job opportunities. A few informants mentioned the case of a woman factory worker from Kyrgyzstan, but she is an exception. This is a major distinctive feature

of the Haskovo region. The reasons for this are connected to the above-mentioned specificity of the Haskovo region as the least developed region in Southern Bulgaria and will be discussed in detail in the report.

Regarding the **type of migration**, four different types can be identified: family migration, amenity migration, entrepreneurial migration, and refugee migration. The first type is *family migration*. Its most characteristic representatives are the members of the Russian community. In fact, this group is nationally diverse and includes women from Russia and from other post-Soviet republics, as well as women from the Bulgarian diaspora such as ethnic Bulgarian women from Moldova and other post-Soviet countries. A key characteristic of this group is gender specificity – during our fieldwork we met only women from Russia and other post-Soviet countries. This specific feature of Russian family migrants is not just regional; at the national level, too, Russian family migrants are mostly women (Krasteva 2018). Russian family migration took place both during the communist regime based on the very close relations between Bulgaria and Russia, and in the post-communist period when Bulgaria redefined its geopolitical orientation towards NATO and the EU. In Harmanli, as in the rest of the country, there are women from older generations who settled here before the democratic changes as well as younger Russian and other women from the post-Soviet republics who have come to Bulgaria in recent years. Generational differences sometimes prove to be more important than common national identity. A woman informant said that she had attended a get-together of Russian women on one occasion but wasn't interested in keeping in contact with them because the majority were older than her.

Also noteworthy is a new phenomenon of mixed families, the product of the diversification of migration flows in the last decade – intermarriage of members of different migrant groups; for example, of TCNs and refugees (BG WP3&WP4 09). There are also mixed marriages between EU citizens and locals who are also EU citizens (BG WP3 & WP4 25).

The strategies for the inclusion of family migrants can be summarised as having several characteristics. It takes place relatively quickly and easily because of immersion in the husband's circles and neighbourhood. Family migration easily evolves into labour migration. The labour integration of Russian women is diverse and successful – during our fieldwork, we met Russian women teachers, hairdressers, family business owners. The close Slavic language, Cyrillic script and Eastern Orthodox religion are cultural factors which facilitate and catalyse inclusion.

Amenity migration involves people moving to perceived desirable regions, usually for non-economic reasons, such as a physical or cultural environment that is seen as more beautiful, tranquil, or inspirational than their current environment (Borsdorf et al. 2012). In Bulgaria and in the Haskovo region, the most typical representatives of amenity migration are the British. They are the most visible part of what is actually a heterogeneous, diverse community: 'We have a Japanese lady who lives with a black man from London, gay couples, trans couples, a real mix – two Polish families, people from Holland, France, Switzerland, Austria, everywhere. It's becoming an interesting mix of people with different backgrounds' (BG WP3&WP4 06).

The major specific feature of this group is its **rural character**. All other types of migrants are concentrated mostly in Sofia and other big cities. Unlike them, amenity migrants prefer the countryside. *Amenity migration* to rural areas is attracted by two key factors: a pleasant climate and affordable real estate. 'They come for the sun and the climate. They are impressed by the peace and quiet, by the fact that these areas aren't overpopulated as well as that you can buy property dirt cheap' (BG WP3&WP4 04). The set of pull factors attracting amenity migration to the Bulgarian countryside is a rich mix of environmental, cultural, social-psychological, and political factors:

'We are all moving here for the same reason – to live in the countryside, have a quiet and peaceful life, the weather is good, the people are nice, the culture is nice, the wine is also really good and we can grow our own food. Actually, a big reason why we came here was the freedom, there's a lot more freedom than there is in England, less control ...It's much less stressful' (BG WP3&WP4 06).

The first generation of British expats are mostly pensioners: 'The Brit ... is a retired military veteran with a good pension. He's bought a house here and enjoys the climate and the peace and quiet' (BG WP3&WP4 04). In recent years the generational profile of British amenity migrants has changed as young families or

singles have also settled in the Haskovo region. Their professional and work profile has also become more diverse – a family breeds dogs and horses and sells them in the UK; one migrant is a painter who paints in Bulgaria and sells his works in his home country; another is opening a camping site for camper fans (6), entrepreneurs renovate houses and rent them as holiday homes to compatriots (BG WP3&WP4 04). Parallel with the generational changes, there are also changes in the character of migration as some British migrants have started to transform amenity migration into entrepreneurial migration. A typical example is a British family who initially came to Bulgaria for a few months to realise a musical project – they recorded an album which they then promoted in the UK. They have now settled in Bulgaria, their initial temporary stay having turned into permanent residence. As revealed in interviews with English expats and locals, some representatives of the amenity migration like simple life, good climate and organic food. A case in point is the mentioned English family. The husband combines his great passion – organic farming, love for the land, his family’s desire to grow their own vegetables – with a new entrepreneurial activity – renovating houses which he then offers on the British real estate market. Thus, an individual successful inclusion has turned into a pull factor attracting TCNs who want to settle in the Bulgarian countryside – in the last two years alone, he has sold some 20 houses. He views his migration project as a dream come true: ‘We love it here; we are very happy. It’s one of the best things we have ever done’ (BG WP3&WP4 06). The feeling of satisfaction with the choice of Bulgaria is intensified by the feeling of dissatisfaction with post-Brexit: ‘It feels like the UK is going down and Bulgaria is going up’ (BG WP3&WP4 06).

The impact of this new group of TCNs on the local development can be articulated in the following perspectives:

- Creating employment and boosting local business. House renovation provides new clients to buildings materials companies and jobs for construction workers. Service companies also benefit from the new clients, whose standard of living is higher than that of the local population: ‘British families have three or four cars each. They are serviced by the local auto repair shops’ (4). As a local businessman put it in a nutshell: ‘Local business is boosted. The more [migrants] settle here, the more they boost the economy’ (BG WP3&WP4 04).
- Transforming the look of villages. A derelict school building has been transformed into a beautiful home much to the joy not only of the owners but of the whole village: ‘the school was falling down and now it is a beautiful building in the centre of the village.’ (BG WP3&WP4 06). The photo of the renovated building on the Internet illustrates this positive transformation. The many renovated houses – for living and for rent as holiday homes – have revitalised the villages.
- New intercultural experience in villages without a history of interaction with immigrants.
- Attracting new settlers, promoting Bulgaria and the region as attractive destinations for amenity migration.
- Introducing innovative social practices of inclusion and integration of vulnerable groups of migrants, analysed in Part 5. ‘Access to and quality of services’.

Turkish immigration is attracted by three pull factors: a border factor, a minority factor, and a business factor. Harmanli is located close to the border with Turkey. The ethnic Turkish minority is the largest in the Haskovo region. During our fieldwork, we met Turkish entrepreneurs, some of them of Kurdish origin. A specific push factor for the region and Bulgaria is the possibility of setting up a business comparatively more easily, especially at the beginning of Bulgaria’s transition to a market economy.

Refugees are the latest immigration phenomenon. Their profile differs from that of all other previous groups in several respects. Unlike the other immigrants, they have not chosen Harmanli – they have been placed by the host country in the Registration and Reception Centre (known informally as the ‘refugee centre’) in the town. The key difference lies in the type of migration – they are not seeking sunlight and family life, but asylum from wars and conflicts. A third difference is that refugees are the most mobile migrant group – for the overwhelming majority of refugees, Bulgaria is a transit country. The fourth specific feature is that – unlike the rest of the immigrants in the Matilde regio – several asylum seekers and refugees need assistance in housing, labour market integration, etc.

FROM CULTURAL SHOCK TO COEXISTENCE

The residents of Harmanli and the region have discovered immigration in two different temporalities and at two different levels, national and local. They experience the national specificities of immigration as citizens of Bulgaria through the media and institutional discourse, while experiencing the regional ones through their everyday lives as residents of Harmanli and the Haskovo region.

The first temporality is the national one – it is more gradual and is connected to the gradual increase in immigration into Bulgaria: 1,236 (2008), 3,310 (2009), 3,518 (2010), 4,722 (2011), 14,103 (2012), 18,570 (2013), 26,615 (2014), 25,223 (2015), 21,241 (2016), 25,597 (2017), 29,559 (2018).²

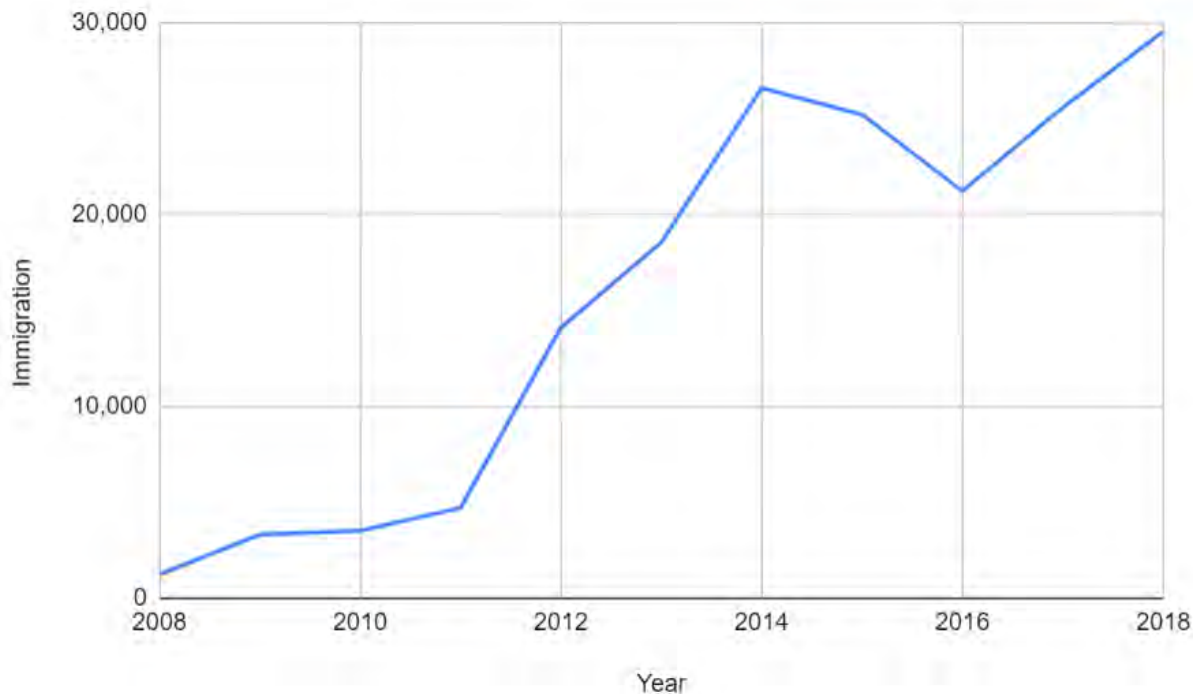


Figure 1. Number of immigrants in Bulgaria. Source: National Statistical Institute

The second migration temporality is the local one. It differs from the national by the sharp discontinuity associated with the establishment of the Registration and Reception Centre in Harmanli, which opened on 12 October 2013:

The most crowded and dilapidated [state-sponsored accommodation centre for asylum-seekers] is Harmanli, a former military base located 50 kilometres from the Turkish border. Opened on October 12, almost all of the asylum-seekers there are refugees from Syria. The camp is not a good advert for the Europe that growing numbers of Syrian refugees seek when they cross from Turkey into Bulgaria, the European Union's poorest member state. The country on the edge of south-east Europe is ill-prepared or equipped to deal with the growing influx and, like the main hosting nations, it seeks help from the European Union and other member states. (UNHCR 2013).

The **refugee centre** brought about **three big changes** in Harmanli. The first was the radical increase in the number of foreigners. The second was the substantial change of their profile in national, ethnic, language, and religious terms – the asylum-seekers come from the Near and Middle East, Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran. The third change concerns visibility. Whereas Russian women migrants are more invisible in public because they are well-integrated, as are the British migrants because they are scattered across the

² National Statistical Institute.

countryside, with no more than several British families living in one village, the refugees are concentrated in the town. There is no public data on the dynamic of the refugee flow at the Harmanli Registration and Reception Centre. The following table present the national statistics on the number of asylum-seekers in Bulgaria in the last decade.

Table 2. Number of persons who sought asylum in Bulgaria 2010- 2020. Source: State Agency for Refugees with the Council of Ministers

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Asylum-seekers	1,025	890	1,387	7,144	11,081	20,391	19,418	3,700	2,358	2,152	3,525

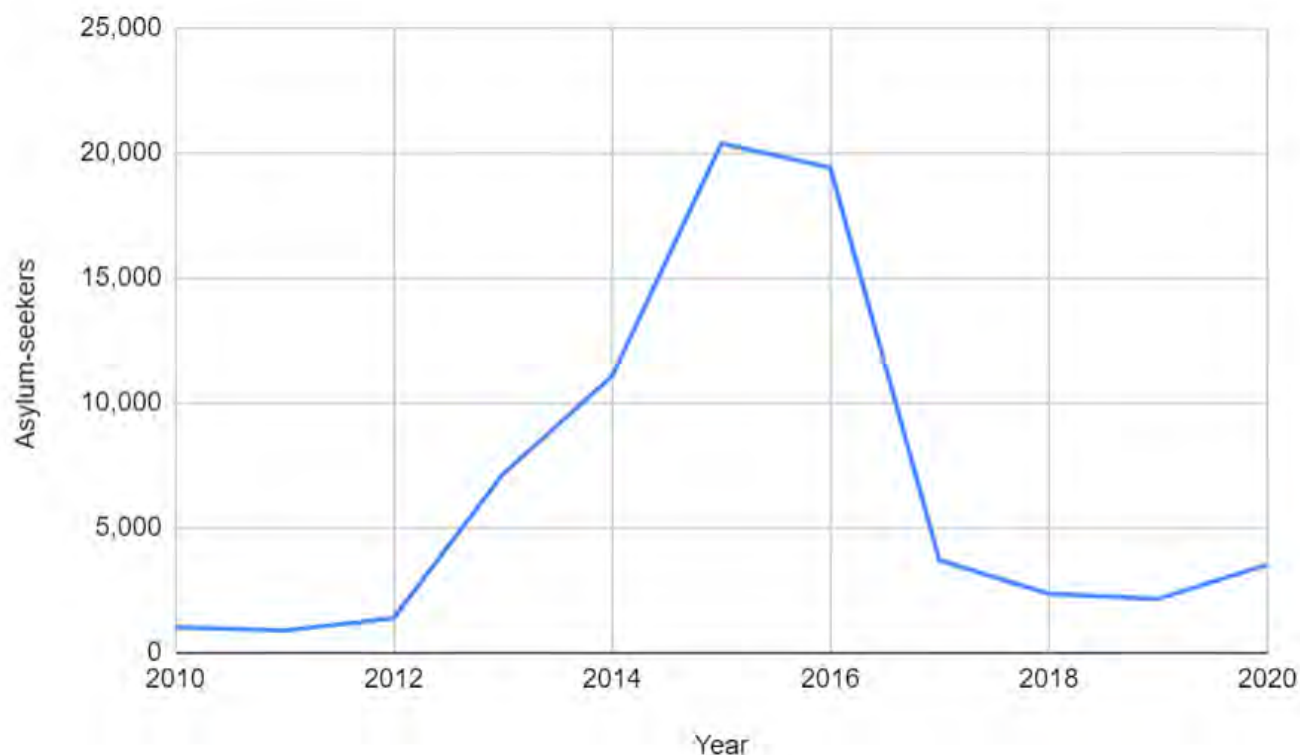


Figure 2. Number of persons who sought asylum in Bulgaria 2010- 2020. Source: State Agency for Refugees with the Council of Ministers.

A key dimension of the social impact of migration is the latter's impact on people's way of life – that is, how they live, work, and interact with one another on a day-to-day basis (Vanclay 2003). The increase in the refugee flow by 20 times in just five years was experienced as a shock by many Bulgarian citizens.

The field work identified two distinct periods in the local population's meeting with refugees. This distinction was made by numerous informants – locals and settled migrants, men and women, people of different ages and occupations. It illustrates two different types of social representations of the refugees. The first period was one of *cultural shocks and apprehensions*. It began with the opening of the refugee centre and the large group of refugees in the small town. A woman informant said she had been out of town for a week, and when she came back, she found that there was a huge difference: 'The cultural shock was enormous ... The whole town was swarming with foreigners... The locals were worried about what would happen' (BG WP3&WP4 03).

The present period is one of *calm and tolerance*. The number of refugees has decreased significantly: there were just 487 in December 2020 and even fewer, 338, in March 2021.³ The small number of refugees

³ According to data from informants.

is the first factor for calming down the atmosphere in the town and decreasing tensions in the relations between locals and asylum-seekers. The other factor is the acquired experience of coexistence: 'We got used to refugees and we do not pay attention anymore' (BG WP3&WP4 11). This opinion was shared by several interviewees. The current period can be characterised by three trends. The first one is *normalization*. Refugees are accepted as part of the urban community. The second is the transition *from care to indifference*. During the refugee crisis volunteers from the local population and the settled migrants helped the newcomers – this is analysed in the paragraph on civic participation. Today the care is more professionalized and offered by NGOs and engages less the average local city dweller. The third trend is that asylum seekers and locals live in rather *parallel communities* characterised more by co-existence than by active interaction.

IMPACT OF THE NEW REFUGEE COMMUNITY IN A SMALL URBAN SETTING

The impact of the newly formed refugee community on the local development is analysed in two regards – positive aspects of increased demand for local services and difficulties for inclusion. The two trends refer to different aspects of the refugee flows. The first one of revitalization of local businesses is connected to the size of asylum seekers flows and is more pronounced when the AS were more numerous. The obstacles and challenges of integration refer to the transit character of the refugee flows in the Matilde region. The refugee community's impact on local business, the local real estate market, and even on population growth is assessed as positive in the following spheres:

1. local business and services: There have been a growth in consumption in grocery shops and food establishments, internet clubs, in the number of passengers in local transport (BG WP3&WP4 03);
2. the labour market: 'The refugees have started offering low-skilled labour – at car washes, on farms, in the sphere of transport' (BG WP3&WP4 03);
3. the real estate market: 'There was a period in which all vacant dwellings in the town and even the villages were filled up...' (BG WP3&WP4 03);
4. increase in political representation: An interviewed local noted an interesting impact: 'Because of the number [of refugees] registered in Harmanli, the population itself increased and this led to an increase in the number of municipal councillors' (BG WP3&WP4 03).

The dynamics of the refugee flow – after the peak in 2015 and 2016, the number of refugees in Bulgaria has decreased significantly by about eight or nine times – was assessed in a complex way by the informants. The decrease in the number of refugees is assessed positively from the point of view of the atmosphere and calm in the town. The transit character of refugee migration, on the other hand, is not conducive to their inclusion in the local community.

The main obstacles to the inclusion of refugees were summarised by informants in several aspects. The first is inconsistence between their labour profile and the demands of the local labour market: 'In Harmanli there is no workforce shortage, yet refugees offer precisely cheap labour. Perhaps that's why they leave' (BG WP3&WP4 03). The key obstacle is the transit character of refugee migration. The interviews abounded in examples of efforts to include refugees in the local community – providing language courses, training, employment – which proved to be in vain because of their departure (4). An informant told us about a businessman who had devoted a whole year and invested in training migrants – in the Bulgarian language as well as in operating with sewing machines. They received training and jobs, but as soon as they were granted status they left for Western Europe. The businessman in question was disappointed by the fact that he had made enormous efforts to train workers whom he failed to keep on (BG WP3&WP4 03).

The third obstacle is the low salaries, which do not incentivise migrant workers to stay in Harmanli: 'Here they have to work eight hours a day, 40 hours a week for very low pay, and what's more, for skilled work at a garment factory, so they simply pack up and most often go to Germany' (BG WP3&WP4 04). Some informants also noted some cultural factors hampering the labour inclusion of women migrants, insofar as it presupposes a change in social roles: 'Most women from Syrian and other countries have never worked, they are used to caring for their families, they don't have any work habits' (BG WP3&WP4 04).

3. SOCIAL COHESION AND ITS CONSTITUTIVE ELEMENTS

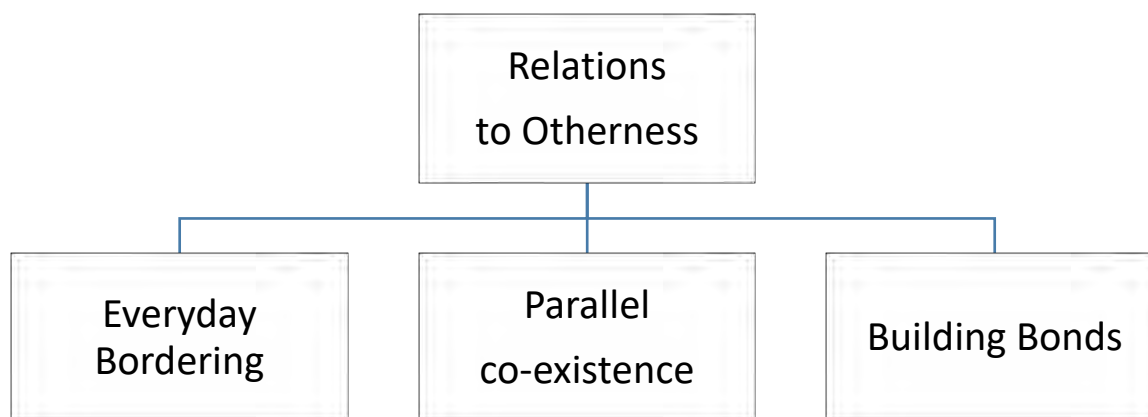
NEGATIVE REGIONAL DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE AND IMPACT OF TCNS

The regional demographic profile of the Haskovo region is characterised by two negative trends: a decline in both the population growth rate and the net migration rate. The difference between in-migrants and out-migrants is $-3.8/1,000$ population. The ageing population trend is accelerating: for every 100 people aged under 14, there are 158 people aged over 65. The proportion between the number of people aged over 65 and the number of those of working age is also higher than the national average: 37 percent, as compared to a national average of 33 percent (IME 2020a: 113–116). Migration in the region is not numerous, but it has a positive impact on the regional demographic profile in several ways.

The first are mixed families and children of mixed marriages. The others are the first children of the new amenity migration. They have significantly changed the generational profile of the new amenity migrants – the initial senior migration is being gradually rejuvenated by the generation of their now adult children who are also settling here with their families or starting families here, as well as by other migrants of active working and demographic age. The newest phenomenon, that of children born and raised in Bulgaria, marks the beginning of the third generation of British immigration. Positive forms of new migrations such as amenity migration can have a positive demographic impact on the local population as well. As an informant noted astutely, educated young Bulgarians are more inclined to stay in a region where the community of educated and English-speaking people is growing (BG WP3&WP4 04).

BUILDING BONDS VS. EVERYDAY BORDERING

Bonds between the local and migrant communities are constructed and deconstructed in the processes of interactions, as well as in the representations. The report analyses different types of relations to Otherness in the continuum between cohesion and integration at one pole, and rejection, at the opposite pole. The negative pole is illustrated by the everyday bordering and anti-immigrant attitudes, the positive one by building bridges and trust. Between the two poles is the situation of co-existence of the different communities.



Everyday bordering and anti-immigrant attitudes

'Integration remains a minor policy area in Bulgaria partially because the number of migrants is fairly limited: less than 1% of the total population. Widespread xenophobia and lack of comprehensive integration policies create unfavourable conditions for migrant integration in Bulgaria. In many municipalities, locals protested against welcoming migrants in their neighbourhood and children's schools' (EC 2016). These findings of a survey define the unfavorable national context for integration. They are confirmed by numerous other studies: the refugee issues in the political and media discourse are frequently presented in a negative and biased manner. Incidents of violence based on anti-foreigner and anti-refugee sentiments, have occurred (OHCR 2016). The anti-immigrant attitudes are forged from both the political elites – nationalist parties that espouses xenophobia and below – vigilante, 'refugees hunters', representative of extremist uncivil society (OHCR 2016). The report analyses the expressions of xenophobia and racism in the interactions of locals with foreigners. The concept of everyday bordering refers to these practices of building boundaries and increasing social distances in the everyday life performance of the meetings between 'me' / 'us' and 'them' (Yuval-Davis, Wemyss, Cassidy 2017).

An informant who was telling us about a Syrian refugee said that he 'does experience racism everywhere he is going' (BG WP3&WP4 09). This quote illustrates **everyday racism**. Social distances between Bulgarians and refugees are increased by apprehensions in several regards – fear of disease and crime, foreign culture, and Islam. The locals are familiar with Islam – in the region there is a large ethnic Turkish community – but the Islam of refugees seems more radical to them (BG WP3&WP4 11). The anxiety and multiplication of fears illustrate a feeling of **ontological insecurity** – challenges to the collective identity, exacerbated in a situation of migration crisis (Laine 2020: 5)

An informant told us about a characteristic case in a public transport vehicle. The bus driver, who wanted to make the passengers laugh, said something disrespectful about the refugees – not with malice, but out of a misguided sense of humour. The first time the refugee remained silent. When the same thing happened again in a modified form, he spoke out – in Bulgarian – much to the surprise of the bus driver and the other passengers. The atmosphere immediately became more friendly. 'And guess what happened then,' the informant, a TCN, asked me. Yes, I was already guessing – today the refugee and the bus driver are friends and communicate cordially with each other (BG WP3&WP4 09). This individual case is characteristic in several respects. Everyday bordering can emerge without any particular reason, without being provoked by the foreigner in any way. In its milder forms, it is a dimension of a contradictory attitude towards Otherness – you don't like it, but you don't take it seriously and joke about it. What is important is the reversibility of everyday bordering, the possibility of decreasing the social distance and building a shared space of communication. The most powerful means is language. The locals are particularly impressed when foreigners speak to them in their native language. The latter is also the strongest catalyst for building trust.

Everyday bordering regarding refugees is catalysed and intensified by **political brokers of hatred**. Far-right nationalist leaders 'start their campaign from Harmanli' (BG WP3&WP4 11). Several informants stressed the role of nationalist parties as organisers of anti-immigrant actions (BG WP3&WP4 30, BG WP3&WP4 14) such as rallies against the refugees, 'at which people coming from elsewhere outnumber those from Harmanli' (BG WP3&WP4 11).

Everyday bordering takes various forms. A settled, well-integrated woman migrant said she feels some discrimination when it comes to administrative services, insofar as she doesn't have Bulgarian citizenship (BG WP3&WP4 13). There are also certain rivalries between old and new migrants: 'I'm upset at being equated to the new migrants/refugees' (BG WP3&WP4 13). This quote expresses a desire for hierarchising migrants depending on how long they have lived in the region and how integrated they are in the local community.

Refugees – one group, two images. Local public opinion makes a clear distinction between the two collective images of refugees. One is positive and applies mainly to Syrians: 'they are very polite, intelligent, some of them have good professions and financial resources' (BG WP3&WP4 03, similar information in BG WP3&WP4 05). The second image focuses fears and personifies them above all in young Afghans: 'The new wave were people from Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan. They were much poorer and more numerous. They were very ill-dressed.... The people who thought the first wave had shocked them now suffered an even

greater cultural shock' (03). 'All problems come from the Afghans, they are young men, behave arrogantly, have no manners. They don't stay long, but while they are here, they create tension' (05).

The images of Syrians and Afghans differ in several respects. Local public opinion appreciates the family character of Syrian migration (BG WP3&WP4 03). The Afghans are young men who move around in groups: 'an army of young men' (BG WP3&WP4 25). The second difference in the images is about financial status – refugees from Afghanistan and Pakistan are regarded as being considerably poorer. The third difference is about education – 'the Syrians are better-educated and speak English' (BG WP3&WP4 03).

The two images correspond to two narratives of asylum – a humanitarian and a securitarian one. The Syrian refugees are conceived mostly as a humanitarian issue, the young Afghan men as a challenge to the national and individual security. They are shaped by two types of discourse – media and politics. At the beginning of the refugee crisis the media reported both the causes (war and violence in Syria) and the civic mobilization for solidarity. At the opposite pole, the far right is very vocal with its securitarian and extremist narrative. During the period 2017-2021 the far-right nationalist coalition 'United patriots' was part of the governmental coalition and influenced both the political and media discourse with their anti-migrant securitarian rhetoric.

SOCIAL CAPITAL – SOCIAL BONDS, COOPERATION, AND TRUST

Alexey Pamporov (2010) shows that social distances vary depending on the social space where 'Us' meets 'Them': the wider this space – of the country, the neighbourhood, the factory, the firm – the more accepting the attitudes; the more personal this space – i.e. the family – the greater the social distances (Pamporov 2010). Against the background of these studies, we can appreciate the positive social impact of the cases of acceptance of Otherness precisely in the most personal space of the family. During our fieldwork, we came across two such cases. One was of a businesswoman whose family had taken in a refugee because he needed a home address (BG WP3&WP4 07). The second case was different as it involved openness on the part of migrants towards a refugee. The latter initially began helping the family, but now it has become part of it (BG WP3&WP4 09).

Hospitality and welcoming attitudes. Bulgarians take pride in their hospitality. Our fieldwork provided examples of inclusive and welcoming attitudes towards new migrants, especially towards amenity migrants: 'They didn't expect that when they came to a village where they didn't know anybody, people would be delighted at their arrival. They are surprised by our hospitality. They say that the Bulgarians are very warm people' (BG WP3&WP4 04). The same positive account of the meeting between the locals and the amenity migrants has been shared by both local and amenity migrant informants.

Old traditions and newcomers, or how to build new social bonds. Social bonds are built with empathy and respect on both sides. The locals introduce the new migrants to their traditions. Baba Marta Day is a folk holiday celebrated on 1 March, when Bulgarians present each other with *martenitsas* (red-and-white amulets for health). It was present in the accounts both of migrants and of locals, creating a festive atmosphere and bonds everywhere – children at the PlaySchool in the refugee centre make *martenitsas* (BG WP3&WP4 09), Bulgarian pupils give *martenitsas* to their foreign friends, 'half the village goes to the British neighbours to present them with *martenitsas*' (BG WP3&WP4 04).

A British migrant spoke in detail about his compatriots' interest in the local culture, about the locals' enthusiasm to make them part of their traditions, about the inclusive effect of this generous hospitality: 'They really include us, it is amazing. At every kind of festival, they make sure we are included and invited. They give us wine and food and make sure we have everything.' (BG WP3&WP4 06). Child refugees are among the most-included in intercultural holidays: dressed as *Koledari* (ritual carol-singers), on Christmas Day they visit the local pensioners' clubs: 'they greeted the grandmas and grandpas, and everyone was very happy' (BG WP3&WP4 14). On Children's Day (1 June) the refugee centre, together with a number of organisations such as the Bulgarian Red Cross, the UNHCR, Caritas and the IOM, organises festive celebrations (BG WP3&WP4 14).

Social bonds are built not only through festive culture but also through everyday culture, as a British migrant noted: 'They really wanted to show us how to grow grapes and to do all the traditional things in the garden. Everyone brought us food from the garden, fruits.' (BG WP3&WP4 06). Some new migrants do

not simply admire the colourful local traditions, they reproduce them as part of fitting in. An informant stressed how respectful towards the local style the newcomers are: 'A British woman has bought a house and is restoring it, but in a way that makes sure the old style of the house is preserved' (BG WP3&WP4 04).

Bridging through affectivity. The refugees touch the hearts of locals with their tales of exile, loss, pain: 'life-stories that move you,' a teacher said (BG WP3&WP4 11). A woman informant was even inspired to praise them in verse (BG WP3&WP4 18). *From acquaintance to transboundary networks.* Refugees stay in Harmanli for a short time, but they keep in touch with some of the locals after leaving (BG WP3&WP4 11). 'Many of the migrants have kept in contact with me, they have even called me from Western Europe or given my phone number to refugees who are now here' (3). This quote illustrates the endurance of the established personal contacts – they are not only kept up via social media after the migrants leave Harmanli; they are also expanded to include new migrants who arrive in the town and need contacts with locals.

PARALLEL CO-EXISTENCE RATHER THAN COHESION

The field work provided examples of relations between the locals and the migrants in the whole spectrum from everyday bordering to building bridges. A case in point is the quotation from an interview: 'If the refugees follow the rules and behave in a civilised manner, there's nothing to prevent them from living here' (BG WP3&WP4 25). Similar views have been shared during a focus group and by a few other informants. They express the idea of peaceful, but separate coexistence rather than of cohesion.

The coexistence as parallel communities is characteristic for two different migrations – the refugees and the amenity migrants. Despite the different representations of the locals – more positive towards the amenity migrants, more prudent towards the refugees, and despite numerous practices of building bonds and bridges, the perceptions of parallel communities persist. One group of migrants is an exception – family migration. The latter is illustrative of inclusion in numerous regards – family, labour, linguistic, social, etc.

TERRITORIAL COHESION, CONNECTIVITY AND SPATIAL MOBILITY

The territorial profile of the Haskovo region is characterised by good connectivity, low local taxes, good levels of safety, and high ecological indicators:

- The infrastructure is comparatively well-developed, and its quality is gradually improving. The density of the road network is 20.7 km per 100 sq. km. The share of first-class roads and motorways in the road network is also high – 21.5 percent, as compared to a national average of 18.6 percent. The Trakiya Motorway (A1) runs through the region.
- Local taxes are lower than the national average, and some of them were cut even further in 2020 (IME 2020a: 113–116).
- Public order and safety levels are close to the national average, and crime rates are decreasing.
- The Haskovo region is among the leaders in waste recycling in Bulgaria – 96 percent of all household waste is self-delivered for recycling and treatment (IME 2020a: 113–116).

Territories as spaces where citizens live their lives are enhanced through connectivity, spatial and social mobility as resources for local development. Two factors have a positive impact on the attractiveness of the local territory – on the one hand, connectivity, and spatial mobility, and on the other, migrations. Innovative migrants have managed to transform into a resource material asset whose value has been underestimated by the locals.

The **connectivity of the Haskovo region** is a key factor for local development. Five aspects of the former are relevant to this study. The first is the role of the international road to Istanbul, which ran through Harmanli years ago, bringing a large flow of cars, people, and goods. Services for people on this international road – restaurants, shops, etc. – created jobs for the local population. Second, Harmanli became a place for intercultural meetings, some of which led to mixed marriages between, for example, a local resident and an EU national (BG WP3&WP4 25). The third aspect is connectivity and mobility as dimensions of local identity: 'As our famous fellow-townsmen, Gencho Stoev, said, "people from Harmanli don't have to travel because the world passes through Harmanli"' (BG WP3&WP4 05). The fourth aspect is

the possibility to enjoy simultaneously the local quality of life and connectedness to big cities: 'In a small-town people find peace and quiet, real food, they are close to nature, while Sofia and Plovdiv are a quick drive away' (BG WP3&WP4 21). The fifth aspect is the role of the international road for the town's intercultural flourishing: 'The whole traffic from Western Europe to Istanbul and back ran through Harmanli and this was very conducive to the town's intercultural development. It was manifested through the large number of foreigners; meetings and cultural events were held' (5).

Innovative practices of migrants using derelict factories as a resource. Immigrants have brought an innovative approach to the industrial heritage in the region. The locals perceive the abandoned communist factories as ugly, dilapidated buildings, while some migrants have turned them into a source of income: 'We were going into these old factories and we were buying hundreds of big metal lights that were hanging, all the metal furniture and we were selling them all around the world. There are a lot of clubs in London and expensive restaurants that have these Bulgarian lights hanging in there' (BG WP3&WP4 06).

Immigrants as carriers of new forms of spatial inter-regional mobility. Some of the migrants are significantly more mobile than the locals within the Haskovo region. A British informant said that he had already changed several villages in just a few years – he buys and renovates a house, lives in it for some time, then sells it and moves to another village. At present he is planning to move once again, this time to a village where there are more families with children his young daughter can play with (BG WP3&WP4 06). Both locals and immigrants take advantage of the region's border location to travel frequently to Turkey and Greece (BG WP3&WP4 06).

Mobility as an attribute of territorial attractiveness. The larger the number of migrant settlers and of Bulgarian returnees, the livelier local villages become – which makes them more attractive. A migrant owner of a real estate agency said he prefers to sell houses in villages that have already mobile residents – settlers from Plovdiv, Sofia, Haskovo, or people renovating their parents' houses (BG WP3&WP4 06).

The new attractiveness of remoteness in (post)Covid times. 'A combination of the Brexit and the virus' (BG WP3&WP4 06) – this is how a Brit summarizes key push factors. The recent British immigration to the villages in the Matilde Haskovo region is an illustration of a more general trend. Villages have become an attractive centre in Covid times not just for foreigners but also for Bulgarians. A British immigrant noted that 'a lot more Bulgarians are moving back to the villages' BG WP3&WP4 (06). The same observation was shared also by Bulgarian informants (BG WP3&WP4 03).

One of the most interesting trends in the Haskovo region is the new mobility of Bulgarian returnees, of local residents who have worked or studied abroad or in other Bulgarian cities and are now returning to their places of birth. 'Chicago, Sofia, Plovdiv' (BG WP3&WP4 30) – this is how a local businessman described the starting points of this return mobility. A characteristic example is a family of a woman from Harmanli and a man from Sofia, who lived and worked in the capital for some time but later returned to Harmanli, bought and renovated a house, and found new jobs. 'He likes the peace and quiet here, the fact that you can have your own house and time for private life. The husband commutes daily to Haskovo, where he has a job, for 20 minutes – in Sofia he needs 40 minutes, which means he saves 40 minutes a day for a private life' (BG WP3&WP4 04). The advantages of moving from the capital to the smaller town are several. The first is the better quality of life because of a larger home and a more peaceful rhythm. The second is the absence of professional discontinuity, the possibility to find a new job in the closer bigger city or to keep your old job, working from home online. The third is regional pride in the local clean, organic food: 'in our town and the local villages the foodstuffs are real' (BG WP3&WP4 021). This new mobility from the big cities to villages and small towns began before the Covid-19 crisis but has been catalysed by the latter. The identification of its actors and the reasons for their mobility are among the most important findings of this study.

DETERRITORIALISATION VS RETERRITORIALISATION

The report analyses the arrival and settling-in of Third Country Nationals (TCNs) in the regions of Haskovo and Harmanli and of the transformations of the local life-worlds and social structure. The impact is

conceived in the dialectic of reterritorialization vs. deterritorialization. Reterritorialisation is thought of in the context of deterritorialisation, the impact of new migrants is assessed in comparison to the emigration of local residents. The second factor in the assessment of reterritorialization is the nationality of migrants, and this assessment is more critical when it comes to refugees: 'Many young, gifted people are leaving Harmanli to go either to the bigger cities or abroad, while refugees from Pakistan, Afghanistan are coming in their stead. This is very depressing. Young, fine people are going away, to be replaced by others with another culture and religion. This is hard to accept' (BG WP3&WP4 03).

On the other hand, the impact of TCNs on reterritorialization and on revitalising villages is assessed positively: 'The most interesting thing is that even the grandmother in the village, who doesn't depend on the British in any way whatsoever, is delighted at their presence because she wants there to be people in the village. And they are nice, they don't do damage, so they are welcome' (BG WP3&WP4 04).

The Matilde region – as the whole country – is a region of emigration. Emigration is perceived as a loss of the youngest and the best, of demographic and social capital, of brain drain. Those who leave deprive the territory of their life, professional, education and other projects and deepen the feeling of a place left behind, of deterritorialization. Who can reterritorialize, bring sense and vitality to the territory? The symbolic cartography of reterritorialization actors is asymmetrical. The contribution of the refugees is perceived as ambiguous and public perceptions, as in the quoted interview, are dominated by framing them as cultural and religious Others. Two other types of migrants are accepted and welcomed as actors of reterritorialization – the amenity migrants who revitalize the villages and the family migrants who revitalize the demographic capital of the region.

4. ACTIVE PARTICIPATION AND CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS

CIVIC PARTICIPATION

Volunteering. The unexpected first wave of refugees also gave rise to volunteering and solidarity. It is noteworthy that people without any experience in volunteering immediately volunteered and began helping the asylum-seekers. It is interesting that I found volunteers from the real beginning of the refugee crisis both among the Bulgarians and among the migrants. A woman informant described her personal path to volunteering as an individual civic commitment, not as an NGO activity: 'I personally have been working with refugees since they arrived in Harmanli not on behalf of a non-governmental organisation but as an individual. They needed to communicate with people in the town, they were looking for support, help, etc.' (BG WP3&WP4 03). A British woman informant told us how her mother had immediately started helping the refugees. Initially, by providing food, clothes, and staples. When the authorities gradually improved the organisation of reception at the refugee centre, the volunteer focused her efforts on the most vulnerable group, children. She invited her daughter to come to Bulgaria and to help her. They developed innovative educational practices discussed in the next part (BG WP3&WP4 09).

Cultural mediators are a key figure in improving the communication and relationship between refugees and the host community. We found outstanding examples among both the locals and the refugees. *Locals as mediators.* Of the variety of examples, I will single out two. The first is characteristic of the transition **from volunteer to professional service provider**. 'My office is in the square where the refugees usually hang out and they often came to me for help – for information, help in filling out forms, looking for housing' (BG WP3&WP4 03). The informant started helping the refugees spontaneously and informally; a few years later, she is working professionally with a big international organisation for their inclusion. We found the second interesting example in the business community – a businessman who doesn't live in the region and doesn't employ refugees in his company, but who actively helps the refugees in Harmanli in various ways. His top priority is helping refugees with urgent and serious health conditions. The businessman-mediator speaks Arabic, lives in a big city with good hospitals, and knows many doctors from the Arab countries who 'are always ready to help' (BG WP3&WP4 16). His other sphere of mediation is the labour market – he helps start-ups to contact the refugee centre. He has two mottos: 'It's good to help people

in need' and 'Migration has both risks and opportunities. It's all a matter of organisation and interpretation' (BG WP3&WP4 16).

Refugees as mediators. Empowering refugees as cultural mediators has a dual positive impact: it illustrates the possibility for social mobility as a move from the more vulnerable position of asylum-seekers to the key role of mediator; it facilitates intercultural communication and social inclusion. A key role in this regard is played by NGOs and international organisations, which help professionalise cultural mediators by employing them as interpreters and mediators (BG WP3&WP4 14). The refugees come from different countries, and this makes valuable the language and cultural competencies of mediators from Afghanistan, Syria (BG WP3&WP4 14), Iran (Bulgarian Policy Brief 2021), and other countries. **Children as cultural mediators** are the most inspiring example – they are the first to learn Bulgarian and are happy to act as interpreters for their parents when interacting with teachers, social workers, doctors (BG WP3&WP4 14, BG WP3&WP4 26). The children themselves are empowered in two ways. The first is through remarkable language competence. As a woman refugee in an intercultural marriage, the mother of five, told us, her children spoke only Kurdish and Farsi in the past, but now they speak also 'Bulgarian, English, Turkish' (BG WP3&WP4 26). The second way towards children's empowerment is acquisition of experience in intercultural communication and an active role in the world of adults with their key place in their parents' interaction with the local community and institutions.

PARTICIPATORY CULTURE PRACTICES AS INTERCULTURAL BRIDGES

Participatory culture practices are used for building bridges between people, communities and cultures. An innovative form connected to the new place in Harmanli, the refugee centre, is the graffiti festival. Graffiti artists, pupils from local schools and refugee children paint the fence of the refugee centre. The festival is organised by the IOM in partnership with Harmanli Municipality. The cultural institutions in the town also conduct art activities promoting inter/cultural dialogue. An example is the arts and crafts club at the Cultural Centre in Harmanli. The children – locals, refugees, from mixed families – have equal fun doing various arts and crafts projects (BG WP3&WP4 05). The annual festival of Russian songs and music, held in summer, is a characteristic example of cultural representation. (BG WP3&WP4 05).

PLACE-BASED PRACTICES PROMOTING THE TERRITORY'S ATTRACTIVENESS

Local identity is promoted as an amalgam of the advantages of the territory, its connectivity with other spaces, and local traditions, on the one hand, and mobilities on the other. An emblematic example in this regard is the festival 'Na Harmana' (On the Threshing-Floor): 'People come from all over the country to attend, it's a very grand event. The festival promotes local foods and wines. Hotels fill up and this helps business. During the festival we also do wine-tasting. This has been a big boost for the local wine business' (BG WP3&WP4 04). Several characteristics of the festival as a place-based practice are interesting for Matilde. The festival increases the territory's attractiveness by mobilising and demonstrating its strengths – the diverse, clean food and local wines as a mix of cultural traditions, a clean natural environment and entrepreneurial dynamic. The image of the region equally valorises the town and the local villages: 'Every village has a stall [at the festival] and presents its foods and specialties' (BG WP3&WP4 21). This practice of promoting the region, which was praised by several interviewees, was initiated from below, by active representatives of the business community and civil society (BG WP3&WP4 21, BG WP3&WP4 04). Connectivity and mobility have been included as resources for the festival's success. A transboundary project on cooperation with Turkey provides for the conduct of two symmetrical festivals on the two sides of the border and for exchange of guests (BG WP3&WP4 21). A key indicator for the 'Na Harmana' festival's success are the guests from the region and from all over Bulgaria. The festival also boosts local micro-mobility through the wine-tasting tour of local wineries. It promotes the image of Harmanli as a site of international, national, regional, and local mobility. The local mobile people – migrants and refugees – are also included: 'refugees take part in the folkloric programme; British migrants sometimes play music live at the wine-tasting events' (BG WP3&WP4 21). The festival amplifies the social capital: the initiators'

strategic vision that increasing the territory's attractiveness requires innovative practices; the organisers' enormous energy in fundraising and in mobilising many different actors; the intensive positive communication between locals and guests, Bulgarians, foreigners, and migrants.

5. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF SERVICES

HEALTH – CHALLENGES AND SERVICES

According to the regional profile of the Haskovo region, access to general practitioners and specialists is more difficult comparatively to other regions in Bulgaria (IME 2020a: 113–116).

New migrants – new challenges for the community and health services. The less locals know about the new refugees, the greater their fears: 'People are worried about what will happen health-wise because refugees carry diseases, too' (BG WP3&WP4 18). The locals' fears of unknown diseases exaggerate the risks – there is medical staff at the refugee centre, medicines are supplied by the Bulgarian Red Cross (BG WP3&WP4 21, Focus Group 1) – but those fears are an aspect of the local population's unpreparedness for meeting an unknown Otherness. They express the anxiety of the loss of ontological security, 'the fundamental need of humans to feel whole, continuous, and stable over time, and especially during a crisis which threatens their wellbeing.' (Laine 2020: 5). These fears must be allayed by providing regular and accessible information about the health measures taken by the local authorities. The refugees themselves also need more systematic health care as well as accessible information about the relevant health risks. An additional risk factor pointed out by an informant is the lack of solid experience in the region in treating infectious diseases (BG WP3&WP4 19). A positive factor is that health emergencies mobilise volunteers' and mediators' efforts to find the best medical specialists even if they are outside the region and that doctors of migrant origin are especially active in providing medical assistance to refugees (BG WP3&WP4 16).

Pandemic and health culture. The relevant information about the pandemic and preventive measures reaches the refugees in Harmanli, as attested by the refugees themselves (BG WP3&WP4 23) as well as by numerous stakeholders (BG WP3&WP4 24, Focus Group 1). The Bulgarian Red Cross has an information hotline which is used both by the refugees and the locals (Focus Group 1). Activities designed to improve child refugees' health culture have a positive preventive impact. A UNICEF health project is an example of good practice. Children are taught how to protect themselves from viruses and bacteria. The project is age-appropriate and uses pictures provided by the health mediator in the municipality (BG WP3&WP4 23). Health culture is a more complex issue and that is why the project offers workshops on various subjects – healthy nutrition, sports, sleep, healthy teeth, drug abuse prevention. Each session is attended by not more than six children because of social-distancing requirements, but three or four sessions are held regularly to cater for all who want to attend (BG WP3&WP4 24).

HOUSING – 'CRISIS ACCOMMODATION' VS RURAL HOUSING

The **rural and urban experiences in housing** are very different not only because of the specificity of the villages and towns but also because of the different types of migrants. Amenity migrants in villages live in 'dream houses': 'I've always dreamed of having a big house with lots of land, which is too expensive and unaffordable in the UK, but in Bulgaria I'm about to make my dream come true' (BG WP3&WP4 06). The situation with housing for refugees in the small town of Haskovo is exactly the opposite. Access to housing is very difficult for two reasons: absence of a housing policy in support of refugees, and everyday bordering in the housing market.

'**Crisis housing**' is an important service provided by some NGOs as a measure offsetting the lack of institutional support. It provides emergency short-term housing for up to about a week to homeless refugees until a permanent solution is found: 'either a return to the refugee centre or accommodation with relatives' (Focus Group 1).

Everyday bordering in the housing market is manifested in distortion of the market mechanisms to the detriment of refugees – even when there are vacant homes and refugees can afford to pay the rent, the owners are reluctant to rent them to refugees. An informant described the long, tortuous search for housing, which had a happy ending thanks to concessions on both sides – the owner agreed to rent the dwelling to the mixed family, but the dwelling was in a very poor condition and the family spent months renovating it (BG WP3&WP4 09). The owners' reluctance to rent to refugees isn't always a manifestation of everyday bordering, but also of the real risk that tenant-refugees may move out very quickly and not leave the dwelling in a proper condition (Focus Group 1).

EDUCATION – INCLUSIVE POLICIES AND INNOVATIVE PRACTICES

Education of child refugees and asylum-seekers is the most inclusive policy with successful implementation and innovative practices. This is also the sphere of active, collective commitment on the part of schools as well as of numerous NGOs (Focus Group 1 and 2, numerous interviews). The number of refugee children in Harmanli varies greatly: at the peak of the refugee crisis, they were approximately 1,000, according to an informant (BG WP3&WP4 09); today they are significantly fewer in number. At present, 22 refugee children are enrolled in seven schools (six in Harmanli and one in a nearby village). Sixteen are accommodated in the refugee centre, and six elsewhere.⁴

I will outline both the positive characteristics of migrant education and the difficulties in the implementation. A key element of the education policy is the placement of refugee children in different schools. Education of refugee children is implemented as a win-win game. A key advantage of local schools is that teachers are trained to work in an intercultural environment. All interviewees praised these training courses organised by the UNHCR and other organisations providing further education for teachers. Of exceptional importance is the increase of social capital and the acquisition of experience in intercultural communication by all children – both locals and refugees. This intercultural experience is even more complex because refugee children are also in school classes with members of the ethnic Roma and Turkish minorities. Education is one of the spheres of active and fruitful cooperation between local schools and NGOs. Our fieldwork found numerous good practices of individualised and welcoming reception of the new pupils at schools. The most significant effect is the empowerment of refugee children who stay in school for a longer time and achieve impressive results.

The major obstacles and difficulties are connected to the transit character of refugee migration, with a relatively short stay of child refugees in school. There are also specific difficulties in the case of unaccompanied minors, the majority of whom do not wish to go to school.

Education has encouraged the introduction of several innovative practices. The best-known innovation is the PlaySchool at the refugee centre in Harmanli. It was introduced by a young British woman. Its purpose is to form behaviour for learning and emotional skills. Play methods help children to overcome the trauma (BG WP3&WP4 09). All migrant parents we interviewed at the refugee centre praised the PlaySchool. The PlaySchool is a dual educational innovation – in terms both of methodology and of financing. Having started as a volunteer project, it now relies on crowdfunding – 'Fund a teacher' (BG WP3&WP4 09). Another innovative educational initiative of TCNs is the forest school: 'It's an alternative idea of school in the forest, you learn a lot more about the nature, more practical skills. We would really like to send our daughter' (BG WP3&WP4 06).

NGOs and international organisations are also very active in providing informal education: a case in point is the IOM project 'We Play & Learn' (BG WP3&WP4 11). UNHCR is also very active in providing courses for teachers. An important aspect in the educational initiatives is Bulgarian language teaching. A local NGO in cooperation with the IOM has managed to teach 600 migrants Bulgarian in two years (2019–2020) (BG WP3&WP4 03). The refugee centre also organises Bulgarian-language courses for children and adults (14). Regardless of the ample supply, it obviously still cannot meet demand: a refugee woman who

⁴ Data kindly provided by an NGO representative.

lives out of the refugee centre told us they haven't been able to find Bulgarian-language courses (BG WP3&WP4 15).

The pandemic has an adverse effect on the education of child refugees because of their more difficult access to equipment and the internet. The mother of three pupils said her children prefer to go to school to be together with other children, but also because 'they don't have devices for online education' (BG WP3&WP4 23).

6. CONCLUSIONS

The double aim of the report is to provide a *Social Impact Assessment of the arrival and settling-in of Third Country Nationals* in the region of Haskovo and Harmanli and to deepen the Policy brief that analysed policies by including more practices – of TCNs as well as of various other local actors of civil society, business, and politics. The report is based on extensive fieldwork - a larger number of interviews, as well as focus groups. The concluding remarks will summarise the main findings regarding the social impact of migration in Harmanli and the Haskovo region, with an emphasis on social inclusion and social cohesion.

This study points to a heterogeneous picture regarding the significance of place for migrants – for some groups place does matter, for others it does not. It is important to note that **for amenity migration rural space is considered a primary destination**. The case with asylum-seekers is the opposite – they are placed in the Registration and Reception Centre in Harmanli not by their own choice, but by the decision of the host country. For the third group of migrants, place is of secondary importance, the determining factor being starting a family.

There is **no competition between locals and migrants**. The main reason is that there is **no labour migration**. The Haskovo region is among the poor regions in the poorest country in the EU and it is not attractive for economic migration. Amenity migrants have a higher living standard than most locals, and very few refugee migrants reach the local labour market.

The social impact depends on the temporality and volume of migration. **The sudden, significant increase in the number of migrants after the opening of the refugee centre** in Harmanli was **experienced as a shock**. The significant increase in the migration flow following the establishment of the Registration and Reception Centre in this small town initially had a negative impact for several reasons. The first is the big change in the ratio of locals to refugees, when the number of refugees grew to several thousand in a town with a population of fewer than ten thousand. The second is the initial unpreparedness of public institutions to efficiently manage the refugee crisis and reception of asylum-seekers. The third is the local population's lack of intercultural experience in coexisting with large groups of migrants. The more gradual temporality of the settlement of amenity and family migrants, as well as their smaller number, contribute to their positive reception on the part of the local population.

On the other hand, **the establishment of the refugee centre has had a positive social and economic impact**. It has become one of the biggest employers in Harmanli, providing a variety of highly skilled jobs. Whereas the radical increase in the number of refugees had a negative impact, giving rise to fears and apprehensions among the local population, after the situation calmed down their impact began to be seen as positive because they boosted local business – grocery shops, restaurants, banking services.

The migrants' presence in Harmanli and in the region can be characterised as **coexistence, rather than as cohesion**. Despite numerous practices for bridging migrants and locals live parallel lives. There is one positive exception – family migration.

Social inclusion follows different trajectories. It is the lowest in the case of transit migration – for the vast majority of refugees, the region is a short stop along the way to Western Europe. The most comprehensive and multifaceted is the social inclusion of family migrants. Family migration is a steppingstone to labour migration as well as to inclusion in the family, neighbourhood, and local communities. In-between the two poles – of non-inclusion because of transit migration and full inclusion because of family migration – are the amenity migrants, the largest number of whom are British.

Noteworthy also are the success stories of integrated and empowered refugees – entrepreneurs, interpreters, cultural mediators.

Women are autonomous and active actors. A specific characteristic of family migration is that it is mostly female, the vast majority of family migrants being women from Russia and other post-Soviet republics. Most of them are successfully integrated in education, business, medicine, or services. Some women amenity migrants are active in volunteering to provide help to refugees, especially refugee children. The case with women refugees is more specific. They often need support to find work as well as social and humanitarian assistance for their large families.

Place matters. New attractiveness of remoteness in (post)Covid times. Key factors for the territory's attractiveness – a fine climate, better quality of life because of clean food, a more peaceful way of life, more comfortable homes in houses with gardens, good connections to big cities, closeness to the orders with Greece and Turkey – were appreciated before the pandemic, too. Two groups find these advantages of the territory particularly attractive. The first is amenity migrants. The second are mobile Bulgarians born in the region, who have studied and/or worked in other big cities in Bulgaria or abroad. Some of them return temporarily, working from home, others settle permanently, others still renovate houses of their parents as an option for self-isolation during the pandemic, as a holiday home, and/or as a possibility for future longer-term residence. The dynamic tendency of growing interest in the attractiveness of remoteness, which started before the pandemic but was intensified by the latter, is one of the interesting findings of this study.

SWOT

STRENGTHS

1. The amenity migration has a positive impact on revitalizing the villages. This is a rare example of a rural migration in Bulgaria where most immigrants are concentrated in the capital and big cities.
2. Family migration is a case of positive inclusion from a variety of perspectives – linguistic, labour, social, intercultural, etc.
3. The Registration and Reception Centre for refugees is one of the biggest employers in Harmanli providing jobs for a variety of highly skilled professionals.
4. Education integration of refugee children is an example of an inclusive policy with a positive impact on both the inclusion of migrant children and on enhancing the intercultural expertise and experience of teachers.

WEAKNESSES

- The integration of refugees is undermined by far-right parties and xenophobic anti-migrant political discourse, as well as by everyday racism.
- The transit character of the refugee migration in Harmanli is a challenge for the policies and practices of integration. Labour inclusion of transit refugees is difficult because of the relatively short duration of the stay. The transit character is due mainly to the fact that refugees do not chose Harmanli as a destination but are sent there in the Registration and Reception Centre, as well as to the discrepancy between the needs of the local labour market and the professional profile of most refugees.

OPPORTUNITIES

1. The Covid-19 crisis catalyses the mobility and return – return from big cities and return from abroad. Most returnees are well educated and relatively young. They impact positively the attractiveness of the territory.
2. The amenity migration, if increased in mid and long term, could catalyse the understanding of the migration as a resource for local development.

THREATS

- Far right nationalist parties continue to use the arrival of refugees and the refugee centre as a target for anti-migration mobilizations, thus strengthening the fears and anxiety of the local population and undermining the conditions for social inclusion.

RECOMMENDATION

- Measures are needed for improving refugee integration, including administrative and financial resources to ensure that refugees have access to their rights, including housing, social assistance, adequate standard of living, etc.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This research report on the qualitative assessment of the social impact of TCNs in Finland is based on the same theoretical framework as in the previous Matilde country policy briefing: Finland, where migration and TCN's impact on two rural Finnish regions social life is analysed in the framework of interaction between locals and newcomers. The focus of this report is on the social impact of TCNs in the regions North Karelia and Ostrobothnia, and wider in the whole country. In context of MATILDE research report the social impact is about effects migration and specifically TCNs have on society. One such impact deals with integration, but the impact should be seen in a wider sense. The impact, what TCNs have for host society is understood in similar manners of Matilde definition: "The assessment of the socio-economic impacts of migration is co-constructed together with local stakeholders, placing specific attention to account for the agency of TCNs, that is their active role in shaping their integration path and the potential for them to take part in processes of local development." We acknowledge that the impact can be both positive and negative, and both are covered in this report. The agency of TCNs is in important role when evaluating the social impact of TCNs in two studies regions.

While the focus in this report is to inspect the impact of TCNs on Finnish society in two case study regions we recognize that TCN's impact on the development of host society is also connected to their social integration into the Finnish society. The migrant's agency is inevitably connected to the integration process. In this report integration is understood holistically, not just limited to the legal definition. The secondary focus is then to analyse how TCNs are integrated in local communities in these. In Finland, the integration-related discussion, research, legislation, and policies are co-developed with the process of Europeanization of Finland (Puuronen 2004). The current Act on the Promotion of Integration (1386/2010) considers integration as an interactive development between an immigrant and the society, and it aims at supporting the immigrant in developing the skills required in Finnish society and work life while supporting the maintenance of his or her own language and culture (Yijälä & Luoma 2018, 48). The migrants' impact on host society is inevitably, in one way or another, related to their integration into the host society. In this report, integration is seen as a wide concept; we acknowledge that it is a *continuum*, which contains different aspects of everyday life, labour market, education, social contact, family life etc., and all members of society are somehow integrated, it just varies on what level.

Labour market integration and language skills are considered the most valued indicators of successful integration and impact on host country, while the other aspects of everyday life such as family, social relationships and societal activities are not emphasized that much. In a broad sense, the concept of integration refers to the whole *process* by which an immigrant finds his or her place in society and impacts on the local community (Saukkonen 2020; Hiitola et al. 2018, 16). It is also noted that when migrants' impact on Finnish society in the national, regional, or local levels is evaluated, the impact is often defined through migrants' input in the labour market. In this report the migrants' impact on Finnish society is seen in a broader sense than just a labour market issue. Migrants' impact on the labour market and economy in general will be discussed in a separate report.

DATA, METHODOLOGY AND CONTEXT

To be able to understand the rural context of these case study regions it is important to clarify that Ostrobothnia and North Karelia represent different kinds of rural areas. While both areas have one central city, Ostrobothnia is much more decentralized and the distances between smaller cities and towns are shorter. In North Karelia, other towns are much smaller, the distances between them are longer and most

of the population is much more centralized. About 2/3 of the North Karelian population live within 50 kilometres from the city of Joensuu. In North Karelia, long distances between agglomerations form a character of its' rurality. In Ostrobothnia, the two official languages of Finland, Swedish and Finnish, are both commonly used, while North Karelia is monolingually Finnish. In North Karelia the closeness of the Russian border is an important aspect as it creates the everyday reality for the region. In North Karelia, the majority of TCNs are Russian speakers while in Ostrobothnia the immigrant population is more diverse. The two regions studied are also very different when it comes to economic conditions. While Ostrobothnia has one of the lowest unemployment rates (5,9% in 2019) in the country, North Karelia has the highest (12,9% in 2019). In Ostrobothnia, this has been one of the largest factors in the growth of the migrant population. The ability of migrants to stay in the region is also highly dependent on the reason for migration. Humanitarian migrants cannot choose where they are located at the beginning of their process and after they receive a permit to stay, they might end up moving elsewhere in the country.

The data used in this briefing was collected from the different governmental, regional, and local public organizations and from representatives of different NGO's. We conducted in total 18 stakeholder interviews in Ostrobothnia, North Karelia and at the national level. We also conducted three focus groups, two in North Karelia (six participants in both) and one in Ostrobothnia (three participants, two cancelled). Of the 18 interviews 14 were individual semi-structured single-person interviews and four semi-structured interviews where there were two actors present from the same organisation. The two-person interviews were arranged after it was suggested by the participating organization. The reasons given were related either to the main interviewee not feeling confident enough in representing alone or that the participants wanted to give a bigger picture of their work by including two members. This was also relevant in the purposes of the project because our interest lies more in the actual information than discourses or rhetorical analyses of the data. We conducted eight interviews in North Karelia, six in Ostrobothnia and four on national level actors, all of which were single-person interviews. In the focus groups there were participants from all three levels, with the focus being at the regional level. We also use some preliminary data from the entrepreneurs and business interviews we are conducting for the report on economic Impact on TCNs.

All the interviews were done in Finnish, as were the focus groups in North Karelia. The focus group in Ostrobothnia was carried out in Swedish. The regional and local level informants were working in the social, health, and education sectors both in the public and third sectors. The national level interviewees were either researchers, NGO and public administrators, politicians, and ministry officials. Educational experts represented different stages of education from kindergarten teachers to university administrators. In the regional and local interviews, we aimed for a parity between the stakeholders we interviewed between the two researched regions. We tried to find people from same or similar organizations from both areas and had moderate success in achieving it. This said, as we will point out later in the report, there are differences, for example, in NGO activity between the two provinces and thus we could not reach exact parity.

In total, we had 34 participants in the interviews and the focus groups, with us conducting three individual interviews with people who also took part in the focus groups. The informants are situated in different parts of the regions and while we managed to represent the studied regions quite well, there was some interregional clustering. In North Karelia this was due to immigration being focused mainly on three municipalities along the Russian border, and the city of Joensuu and its immediate area. In Ostrobothnia we had to rely on snowballing when seeking people to interview and thus most of them (4) were from the Jakobstad area. The regional actors from Ostrobothnia were based on the Vaasa area (2). Four of the regional or local level participants did not have a full-time residence in either of the regions. The ethical issues have been taken into consideration and confidence in interviews and the data collection process is based on good ethical practices.

The analysis of the interviews was carried out using the theory-guiding content analysis method (see Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2002). We have applied the content analysis method in its classical manner, where it represents "a research method that uses a set of procedures to make valid inferences from text" (Weber 1990), in our case to make valid inferences from interviews. The data for this report is analysed thematically, paying attention to issues which are in the interest of the project and this research report.

2. SOCIAL INCLUSION AND POLARIZATION

TWO-WAY INTEGRATION INTO FINNISH SOCIETY

The migration policy of Finland is based on Berry's et al. (2006) idea of integration, where integration is seen as a contrast to segregation and polarization and as two-dimensional: adapting the influence of receiving society and maintaining the cultural identity of home country simultaneously. It is realized that when individuals maintain their own cultural values and customs, while seeking interaction with the locals and adapting to their culture, the integration into society is smoother and more permanent. Integration concerns migrants' adjustment into the economic, social, cultural, and political spheres of society, but also today, it is considered as a process that includes the society as a whole, and therefore the conversations and research concentrate on the discrimination the migrants face, how different policies affect migrants' inclusion, and how the public perceives migrants and immigration (Saukkonen 2020; Sotkasiira 2018a; 2018b; Kotilainen & Laine 2021). The migrant's possibility to impact for new host society is dependent on the functionality of the inclusion process. When immigrant inclusion is successful his/her possibility to impact for the development of local society is better than if immigrant groups are polarized in their everyday realities. Polarization of immigrants is a counter side of inclusion, which should be avoided. According to the data collected in this study, the language, education, and position in labour markets are the corners where migrants' integration, inclusion and polarization are becoming visible.

Following Modood (2011), integration occurs on both individual and group level, and in different integration regimes these aspects can be valued differently. In other words, the perception and regulations aiming at "desired" integration may stress the obligation of individual to integrate into the "whole" society (and imagine it as mainly "national" host society) or expect them to integrate into the "own" ethnic group which already is seen as part of a "multicultural" host society. In Finnish case, the integration policies are evaluated as liberal and multiculturalist, but the symbolic reproduction of "Finnish nation" is still built on the image of a monocultural ethnic Finnishness (Koenis & Saukkonen 2006, Tervonen 2014), and this situation still produces tensions and discussions on the "desired mood" of multiculturalism and integration. On one hand, the society and its services clearly support the individual integration, which means in practice first of all support for language education (especially during legal "integration period" of three years). On the other hand, the integration through ethnic communities, while being somehow supported, is substantially less funded and promoted, and the integration overall is seen predominantly as a process of entry of single immigrants into a Finnish society, and first of all, the labour market. (Kurki et al. 2018; Ronkainen & Suni 2020.)

Immigration and international mobility are part of everyday life in the two rural case study regions in Finland. In North Karelia, the immigrant population is slowly growing and still the majority of the inhabitants with foreign backgrounds are Russian speakers. However, the population is changing and even in North Karelia it is moving towards super diversity, as the migrant population is getting more diverse. The number of languages used in our everyday lives is growing and the places of origin are diversifying. The immigrant population in Ostrobothnia is more diverse as it is; the super diversity is the everyday reality in the region and the migrant population is heterogenous.

According to previous research and the empirical data collected during MATILDE-project it is clear, that the social inclusion of different migrant groups into Finnish society is different (see Pöllänen 2020; Castaneda et al. 2015). For example, in the Ostrobothnia focus group the premise of integration as a two-way process was questioned. Two-way integration requires for both the immigrants and the natives to want to merge, but is this what we see today? How do you even measure integration? It is not a simple task to quantify something like the feeling of being integrated or not integrated. There is a huge gap between the intentions of the legislation and what reality is. In practical life, little attention is paid to integration as a two-way process. Becoming a part of the rural community, i.e., becoming integrated, is highly contextual. There is a high risk that some migrant groups, especially if they do not speak any local languages, are polarized and kind of living their everyday lives in their own bubbles. This is a big risk especially for asylum

seekers who do not have legal status in Finland and who are living their everyday lives in limbo (see e.g. Pöllänen 2020; Yijälä & Nyman 2017). The cause of migration will largely determine how well an immigrant will become integrated in rural areas. The most common causes for moving to Finland are to form a family with a Finn, job offers, and as quota refugees or asylum seekers. Each of these groups will integrate differently. Those entering Finland – and especially the Swedish speaking part of Finland – due to love or a job will become integrated well, while refugees and asylum seekers are not nearly as successful.

The question of language chosen by immigrants for integration is also ambivalent according to interviews. In Finland immigrants choose whether they will be learning Swedish or Finnish during their integration period. In Ostrobothnia, the results from the focus group indicates that integration in Swedish language is more fluent than in Finnish. However, in the individual interviews with the participants, who were more often working in the integration process in practice, being more hesitant about the role of the language. An informant who worked as a language teacher said that language chosen by immigrants is dependent on the local surrounding. If for example the reception centre is in an area where Swedish is more common the language chosen is often Swedish. Swedish language was seen as easier for many TCNs learn than Finnish. Some informants were, however, pointing out that Swedish as an integration language can also limit the possibilities of migrants in future, as it can be more difficult to integrate into Finland if you speak only Swedish. While Swedish is taught in schools everywhere, it is commonly used only in parts of the country's coastal area. It was also said during the interviews that some parents who have integrated in Swedish language have chosen Finnish schools for their children to make their future studying and job opportunities wider. Finnish is seen as a language which gives more opportunities in Finland beyond Ostrobothnia, and it opens a gate to move to the bigger cities. From the perspective of TCNs it seems that there are more possibilities to impact Finnish society if they can also speak Finnish.

"It has to be said that when an immigrant integrates with Swedish language, they have somewhat smaller possibilities to integrate further. The possibilities for getting a job, education and such are much narrower." (WP3FIO11)

It was stated in the Ostrobothnia focus group that the lack of immigrant integration does not *per se* constitute a problem, it is dependent on the context. For example, while labour migrants who come to Finland on three-year contracts with their families, with no contact with the Finnish society nor any ambitions to learn the language is not considered an "integration problem" while a refugee not learning the language and socialising with the general population might be seen as such. Migrants who want to stay on a long-term or permanent basis will most likely have poorer life quality and will struggle from social exclusion unless they learn the language and participate in the local community. At the same time, the country of origin and cause of migration are also important aspects when discussing the determinants of social issues.

As noted in several interviews in all the levels, depending on migrants' country of origin and reason of migration, their integration process and impact in Finland is different. The informants said that those who immigrate to Finland because of work or family are typically better integrated than asylum seekers and refugees. The ethnical background of migrants is also seen as a significant factor in their inclusion. In the studied rural regions, the migrants from Africa, Asia and Arabic countries are likely to be less integrated and face more racism and xenophobia than those who come from, for example, Russia or the United States. According to our interviews western migrants are often seen as strength, who impact the local community in a positive way while "visible" migrants from Middle East or Africa are not. Russian immigrants, especially in North Karelia, are not always even seen as migrants. This is not to say that they do not encounter any discrimination. One reason for the better integration of Russians and Anglo-American migrants is they have less language barrier when it comes to access of information and services. Basic information is almost always available in both English and Russian languages. It is obvious that your inclusion into society is better if your native language is relevant in your new home country.

The migrants age is also noted as an indicator of successful inclusion. The children who are going to kindergartens and schools in Finland mostly integrate well. Still, many informants, who work with children or young adults at a grassroot level (in schools, leisure time hobbies), are telling that children can have

well-functioning social contacts and friends with Finnish speaking pupils at school, but in their leisure time the children and young migrants are too often separated in their own groups. According to the interviews, one reason for this is that migrants are participating in sports and other leisure time hobbies less than their Finnish counterparts. Informants emphasized that, for example in many migrant groups it is not as common for young people, especially girls, to participate in hobbies in their leisure time.

"In my experience those with Russian background have a lot of different hobbies. In that way I don't see a difference between Russian and Finnish youths. In the first place, football is big, especially before when had these Somali boys. For them football was the number one sport and they practiced it a lot. It was their main hobby but of course they visited the centre and played video games and such. When I was working on the project, we tried to promote women's and girls' hobbies a lot so that it would be possible for them to participate and find groups which they could safely join. We tried to advance that in different ways, but it looks like that especially girls from a Somalian or Syrian background didn't have as many hobbies outside of their homes unlike, for example, Russian girls. Of course, it varies between families and individuals, but this was my gut feeling that got from the youths I worked with."
(WP3FIK14)

In North Karelia one of the participants was a teacher, who has been teaching migrants for several years as a special education and Finnish teacher. According to the interviewee there is a noticeable difference between pupils of foreign background depending on why, when and where the children and their families have moved into Finland. The same has been noticed by a youth worker, who works with teenagers from different backgrounds. In North Karelia, Russian speakers' socio-economic situation is often better than with those who have moved to North Karelia as asylum seekers or refugees. Among Russian speakers it is common that children have a lot of hobbies, they are coping well in the educational system and one can see that they are well integrated into society. Approval of the local community towards Russian speakers is also better than towards those coming with humanitarian reasons. The teacher also said that Russian speakers are a tight community, who have their own hierarchies inside the community. Even as many Russian speaking families have gained a middle-class socio-economic position in Finnish society, this is not the case for all Russian speakers.

According to the focus group conducted in Ostrobothnia, while the desire is to make the immigrants feel so comfortable in region they decide to settle down on a permanent basis, this still does not always happen. In many cases the immigrants come from big cities and do not feel at home in more rural and sparsely populated areas. They might stay few years and then they move on to the larger southern cities of Helsinki, Tampere or Turku. The same trend is visible in North Karelia as well. And like one informant puts it, it would be important that TCNs would stay in one place for little bit longer, so then they probably could realize the "beauty of the place" and the more relaxed everyday life which can be offered by the rural surroundings. Although it was not explicitly voiced during the focus group, the temporary nature of many migrants in Ostrobothnia makes many locals see little point in getting to know the newcomers. It seems that if TCNs are only staying for limited time in the region their impact on the rural regions positive development is also minor. Implicitly, it reinforces the "us" and "them" feeling.

In a few interviews it was also brought up that the housing policy, for example in the municipality of Joensuu was not supporting the migrants' inclusion into society. The suburbs of the municipality are built up in homogenous ways so that in certain areas there are only privately owned houses and rented and public housing is concentrated in other parts of the municipality. This can cause unwanted segregation and polarization among the groups as many humanitarian migrants reside in public housing and private rental housing. One informant was very disappointed with the housing policy of the municipality and demanded for more heterogenous city planning and housing policy.

"Maybe if you think about the Joensuu city area, when talking about building residential areas, I would like to see all kinds of building. We shouldn't make more areas like where my workplace is located at, where you need a big bag of money or a good bank to provide with a huge loan to be able to live in the core area. This could increase heterogeneity so that people could find reference groups

from the area to make them stay. Sure, you would also need to have different kind of accessible services like schools, healthcare and such.” (WP3FIK12)

In Ostrobothnia, the problem to solve is finding enough rental housing for immigrant families in the rural areas. There are probably homes for sale, but no rental housing to the same extent. This often means that immigrants are seeking to move to the larger cities in the region. According to the informants, this is unfortunate, as children have often been socially integrated in schools and have made friends in the villages. In addition, the informants point out that, immigrants who have moved to the country individually are usually better integrated into the local community than those who are part of a larger group of the same ethnic background. The fact that a larger ethnic group is located in the locality often leads to the immigrants seeking each other and not being integrated into the local community in the same way as individual immigrants. In addition, there is the risk of ethnic segregation and polarization of population, which does not facilitate integration in the new country. This means that isolated families who do not have compatriots in the locality can more easily be integrated into the local community. But as we will later see, the lack of co-ethnic networks can also cause migrants to move elsewhere where they exist.

FAMILY ROLES IN FLUX

When discussing the social impacts of immigration, it is important not to restrict the focus only on the native-immigrant perspective, but also to acknowledge the social impacts of migration within immigrant groups themselves as well as social impacts on individual immigrants. When a family migrates to another country, relations within the family will change. This is between the children and the parents, as well as between the parents.

Children and adults in the same family display a different pace in social integration. In many cases, children are the first to pick up a new language. Usually, they also grasp how the society in which they now reside in works before their parents do. This will lead to several consequences within the family and the relations between its members. One such consequence is that the parents become dependent on their children to manoeuvre in the new society and need to ask the children for advice and, for example, help with translation. This is something which, in many cases, turns their relations upside down.

Integration might also display a difference in timing between the parents. In the case of refugees, it is not uncommon that the wife picks up the new language quicker than the husband, which is something that will distort the gender roles between the spouses/parents. In the country of origin, the husband might have been the unchallenged head of the family, but in Finland his role in the family is redefined. This redefinition of the male role is sometimes painful at an individual and family level.

Therefore, it is very important to help and strengthen the role of parenthood for the new immigrants in order to facilitate the transition into the Finnish society. It is important that immigrant parents receive information on how the Finnish society works and how to deal in different situations to mitigate the effects of the changing roles within the family. Learning the language also facilitates this process.

These are all fine ambitions, but, at the same time, it is immigrant women who often become marginalised and isolated in their homes. This is related to the financial support provided for those who learn the language and take care of pre-school aged children. Many adult immigrants keep the values, norms, and preferences from their home countries, and if these include more traditional gender roles in which the woman takes care of the domestic work, these women will not integrate into Finnish society. According to a participant in the Ostrobothnian focus group it is usually the women who are the most vivid defenders of the traditions from the home country. At the same time, the children adopt the values, norms, and preferences in the new country, which will lead to tensions within the family.

Little efforts are made in preparing immigrant men on the changed role of the family in Finland relative their native country. Much of the focus is on women, while men are neglected. For many men, the redefinition of family roles is traumatic, but little help is provided to support them in this process. Domestic violence and divorce are common results of this family redefinition.

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

According to the interviews it is obvious that Covid-19 pandemic and restrictions caused by it are affecting TCNs everyday lives in Finland. Most of the informants are concerned about migrant's integration in Finnish society, because the Covid-19 -pandemic restrictions have interrupted the face-to-face contacts and many social activities, which are important for the integration process. These include pastime activities, clubs, and unofficial language learning lessons. Many of the informants stated that, especially in the beginning, some migrants lacked the skills to operate in virtual environments and migrants were also often missing the tools to use them. These cause hindrances both in accessing information about the pandemic and its' effects but also on work and studying life. In addition, it was said that because migrants' networks are in many cases weaker than the social networks of Finnish natives, the migrants are often also socially isolated due to the restrictions, and this has increased the polarization in society.

Especially, at the beginning of the pandemic one of the biggest worries was how migrants are getting relevant information concerning Covid-19 if the information is not available in the proper language. The informants representing NGOs' and public sector workers told that a lot of their energy and efforts were used to finding proper information for TCNs in different languages. One of the national level informants, who had a medical degree, was worried about how to relay information about Covid-19 and other health related issues for those migrants who are illiterate.

The pandemic is also psychologically demanding for TCNs because many of them have relatives and close family members in different parts of the world where the pandemic has been much worse than in Finland, especially it's peripheral regions such as North Karelia and Ostrobothnia. TCNs are worried about their family members and their health, and this has caused a lot of extra stress for them. One informant told that during the period of distance schooling in North Karelia, in the Spring of 2020, some migrant students just disappeared after the schools were closed due to the virus. Families have also been under pressure as it has been demanding to support children coping with distance learning.

"How it showed in the school side was that I had students from multilingual families that just disappeared. There unfortunately were incidents in the families where, for example, the parents divorced, or another parent was left outside of the borders due to work-related and other reasons. This changed the family dynamic. And depending a little on the cultural background, Corona could be seen as so frightening that the parents were unaware of where it would be safe for their child, in the school or in distance learning. Then if the parents couldn't support with the hardships of distance learning they might just leave the tasks undone or not attend the meetings with the teacher."
(WP3FIK12)

In North Karelia, the majority of the migrants are Russian speakers. It was stated in several interviews that the pandemic had its' effects in the border movement of Russian speakers. Russian speakers could not freely enter Russia to meet their relatives, when under normal circumstances they are used for transnational way of life in their everyday practicalities. It must be understood that border regions are vulnerable to international tensions, even if they are not immediately involved in transborder conflicts.

From previous research (Oivo & Davydova-Minguet 2019) we know, that for example the insidious Russian-EU crisis escalated in 2014 because of the Russian annexation of the Crimean Peninsula and its involvement in the war in Eastern Ukraine, and this had a direct effect on the everyday lives and relations in the North Karelian border areas. The impact of the crisis was multidimensional and often subtle. From the Russian side, Russian state authorities issued several laws, instructions and restrictions that targeted Russian citizens with residence permits abroad, or those with dual citizenship. In Finland, Russian dual citizens were conceptualized as a potential threat, and their possibilities to study and work in security-related spheres were restricted. This served to create an atmosphere of being "between the devil and the deep blue sea" among Russian-speakers, where their affiliations and levels of state trust became polarized and somehow traumatized (see Oivo & Davydova-Minguet 2019; Oivo 2020). Simultaneously, the neo-patriotic attitudes towards Russia promoted by Russian media discourse have divided Russian-speakers into different pools and created new collectivises which are tightly connected with different types of transnational media involvement (Davydova-Minguet et al. 2016; 2019). The crisis also impacted on

international trade and tourism, and many Russian-speakers suffered from diminished job opportunities. Furthermore, those with Ukrainian passports and transnational families experienced considerable difficulties in crossing the border.

In March 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic closed the Finnish-Russian border for private and business crossers, which was an unprecedented event that had not occurred since the fall of the Iron Curtain. As a result, people's trans-local contacts, transnational families, Russian tourism, and businesses connected with the border became even more fragile and porous. In interviews informants are pointing out that it has affected many Russian speakers' everyday life significantly because they are unable to continue their transnational everyday life, many Russian speakers have care duties and obligations in both sides of the border, and they are worried how their relatives are coping on the other side of the border. However, this is not the fact with all the Russian speakers according to interviews, but there are also people who have adopted to this situation, and they just avoid travelling to Russia, because according to their knowledge the health situation in Russia is unpredictable.

Russian speakers' transnational way of life has also caused confusion among local communities, especially in those municipalities which are situated close to the border and where there are significant Russian speaking population. It seems that Finnish speaking members of local community are worried if those Russian speakers, in many cases those who have dual citizenship, are crossing the Finnish-Russian border in regular terms and that how are spreading the COVID virus. The confusion is also caused by the suspicion if all the border crosses are complying with expected quarantine. It is also noticed that if Russian speakers are travelling to Russia during their holiday seasons, they need longer holidays in due to them having to comply with quarantine rules. This was emphasized in an interview where the participants were working in the municipal day care:

[--] It also effects that if some, for example Russian speakers, travel somewhere, they are quarantined for two weeks so the child is away for that time [--] (WP3FIK22)

THE ABILITY OF INDIVIDUALS TO CHANGE THEIR ECONOMIC STATUS – THE IMPORTANCE OF WORK

In the interviews getting a foothold in the labour market was seen as the most urgent issue for refugees as well as for other non-labour migrants. The labour market agency is also the most obvious way TCNs can impact local and regional development. In the Ostrobothnian focus group it was noted that having a job has a huge social impact on the individual, especially for refugees. Without a job one has limited opportunities. Long-term unemployment is especially devastating – not only for the affected people directly, but also for their family. Parents' ability to integrate into the labour market can affect children as well.

In summary, work is important. Without a job settling down in the rural regions is difficult and the lack of jobs is the most common reason for migrants to move away from rural areas. It is a well-known fact realized in both case study regions that because of lack of work and social contacts with their co-ethnics, refugees and other migrants are moving to bigger cities in the south of Finland. Especially in North Karelia many informants were pointing out that due to negative attitudes towards migrants and high language barriers in the labour market makes finding a job hard. This applies even to educated migrants who might have been educated in the area. (See also Pöllänen 2007; 2020.) Some informants pointed out that in bilingual Ostrobothnia the Swedish speaking local dwellers are more tolerant towards migrants than Finnish speakers.

“FIO13: In their own way the Swedish speaking people are more open, more willing to receive immigrants and help them, than the Finnish speakers...”

FIO14: Yeah. Yeah, it could be so...

FIO13: Of course, it is case-specific. You cannot generalize. But my gut feeling is that, on the whole, like in many other matters that are tied to cultural differences of any kind, the Swedish speakers are able to receive and handle the matter... [there is an interruption but most likely the participant meant to end it with “better”]” (WP3FIO13 & WP3FIO14)

Also, in many cases, the competences, and qualifications most immigrants have been seldom recognised by employers or the system, which is very unfortunate. It was also mentioned in interviews that even discourses used in official's language the TCNs who are moving from so called Western countries to Finland are more commonly seen as experts and valuable workforce than those TCNs who are moving to Finland in humanitarian reasons.

“I would say that what is seen in everyday encounters and what wider research data shows is that the reason of immigration clearly effects on how different migrant groups are discussed about. Labour migration is preferred and is discussed positively about with terms such as international professionals. There are also some services that are specifically for international professionals with tertiary education and that connect to the positive attitude. This contrasts the way in which humanitarian immigration is talked about. Even though some of migrants from refugee or asylum seeker background have graduate degrees as well, they are not talked about as international professionals and are not regarded positively but rather critically.” (WP3FIN7)

With this said, not all the informants see employment as the only meaningful aspect of refugees' everyday life, however. It was also pointed out that, for example, voluntary work can be a major factor of a liveable everyday life and also a way to impact for local community in a positive way.

SOCIAL INCLUSION AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

The reason of migration has major effect on the TCN's possibility agency in Finnish society. In both case study regions, there are a plethora of activities and services organized especially for migrants, which aim to help them integrate better into Finnish society. As it is said earlier, young people and children are in a good position because they are at least part of the Finnish schooling system. Children and young people are fully participating in Finnish society as pupils and students. On the other hand, it was also noted that young people did not have too many Finnish speakers as their friends outside of the school. One reason might be that immigrant children are not as active in sports or other pastime activities. This is especially true with certain migrant groups and with girls. There also seems to be differences between the two case study areas, however. In North Karelia sports clubs are not as active in matters of activating migrants and improving their participation. Also, when organizing interviews, we did not gain any informants from sports clubs in North Karelia, while in Ostrobothnia we were pointed towards several active sports clubs are active with migrants. Due to the limited time frame of this study, we were unfortunately unable to interview them.

In addition, as said before, participation in sports and leisure time activities is a highly gendered phenomenon. In this front men and boys are more active than girls and women. Because of the gender roles among many TCN groups, female activity in society is much more limited than male activity. In Ostrobothnia men were participating, for example, in fire brigade activities and the Red Cross, but women were much less active. If refugee women were active, it usually meant that they were participating together with their husbands or other male "guardians". In general, one informant from Ostrobothnia said that he has noticed that asylum seekers, refugees and paperless were active in third sector activities, and he explained that this was due to them not being employed, they had more time to participate in societal activities and this was the way how they gained meaning in their lives.

"Many of them are very active and motivated to do things. I know people who, for example, take part in the fire brigade, are active in the Red Cross and they bring with them new drive to the local community in some ways. They are very motivated to integrate into this society and that is why many of them are active and take part in such affairs." (WP3FIO11)

It was also noticed in interviews that social inclusion takes place in diverse ways. For example, in Ostrobothnia some informants pointed out that, if a single family from one country settles in an area without any other immigrants nearby that family will be very open towards the local and native community. The natives are also open to that immigrant family. The more immigrants in an area of settlement, the less integration into the local community there is. One participant also stated that the natives also lose interest in the immigrants if they are too numerous. The implication of this is that clustering of immigrants within residential areas should be avoided if possible.

In North Karelia the situation is somewhat different where the dominant migrant group is Russian speakers. Migrants from Russia have been moving into the region since the beginning of 1990's, after the collapse of the Soviet Union. It was noticed in the interviews and based on previous research (Davydova-Minguet & Pöllänen 2020; Pöllänen & Davydova-Minguet 2017) that Russian speakers have wide and tight networks among each other, but still their contacts with local dwellers are vivid. Russian speakers are well-integrated, but their everyday lives are very transnational. In recent research (Sireni et al. 2021) it is emphasized that migrants, especially Russian migrants, everyday life should be seen holistically, where the concept of transnationalism, which focuses on migrants' social, political, cultural and economic networks which transcend the borders of nation-states, should be considered as part of a successful integration process and liveable everyday life in the rural border region in North Karelia. According to Sireni et al. (2021) integrationalist and transnationalist perspectives on migration should inevitably complement each other, especially when talking about Russian speakers in rural border region of North Karelia. In everyday life, Russian speakers' transnational relations do not exclude the desire of immigrants to integrate into their new surroundings and communities, but quite the opposite, the transnational connections can be seen as a resource helping both migrants' integration having a positive impact for rural vitality and multiculturalism (ibid). Sireni et al. (2021) sum up, that local labour market, economies, businesses, legislation, and different

integrational measures, as well as the attitudes of the general population frame everyday lives of immigrants, making it liveable or not, and affecting their decision to stay or to leave the region. In the case of Russian speakers, transnational ties, Russian language, and transnational everyday life can be seen as social capital but it also has an economic impact. In the interviews we conducted for this report as well as those we have doing for the report on economic impact show that transnationality also offers them business opportunities (e.g. tourism) and networks.

LACK OF TRUST: RACISM AND XENOPHOBIA

In the contemporary Finnish society both the “locals” and “newcomers” can be seen to form racialized hierarchies. This process involves also “white” immigrants; especially those who come from Russia and are commonly positioned on the “margins of Western/Finnish” whiteness. They both are racialized and racialize other immigrants whom they position on the lower ladders of racial hierarchy (Krivonos 2018). According to the conducted interviews, it is obvious that different migrants are in different positions in terms of discrimination and experiences of racism and xenophobia and it seems that after 2015, the positioning of different migrant groups in Finland has been changing. The asylum seekers from Middle Eastern and Asian countries who have moved to Finland after 2015 are in some way “the new other” for all the other people living in Finland, including “old” migrant groups, namely Russian speakers, but in some cases also those with their background in Somalia.

According to statistics and previous studies the integration of Somali migrants in Finland is different than the integration of other migrant groups (see e.g., Sotkasiira 2019). According to Sotkasiira (2019) it is seen that those TCNs who have moved to Finland as asylum seekers or refugees are often seen as the most different in Finnish society. Especially those who arrived from Africa are facing prejudices and xenophobia. Sotkasiira (2019) points out that Finnish Somalis, who already are an “old migrant group” in Finland, with most of them having moved to Finland in the early 1990s, are still facing significant challenges in their everyday lives. On the contrary, in one interview in Ostrobothnia the informants were pointing out that because Somalis have moved to Finland in the beginning of 1990s, they are nowadays well adapted and are approved in the local communities. This is of course a positive sign, giving hope that the situation of Somalis and other African and Asian migrants is getting better. Informants were telling, for example, how good student’s Somali girls are. However, most of the informants were pointing out that unfortunately racism is an everyday reality in Finland for TCNs.

The racism and xenophobia are taking place both in everyday matters and on a structural level. It is noticed both in our interviews and in previous research that for certain migrant groups it is difficult to gain a job. If one has a foreign-sounding name, it is harder to even progress in the job application process (Bergbom et al. 2020). In everyday level informants told that they are aware that migrants are facing name-calling and some of the informants told that they are facing harassment in social media by themselves as well because they work with migrants. The most vulnerable for racism and harassment are people from Africa, Asia, and the Middle Eastern countries. It also seems that young men are more vulnerable to racism in their everyday surroundings than women and girls. According to the informants’ discrimination and racism are part of immigrants’ everyday lives, especially when talking about humanitarian migrants and visible ethnic minorities.

“[Before this the interviewee was discussing about refugees and asylum seekers]

I would also think that one group I would point to, which partly but not entirely overlapping the last group, is what I would call racialized or coloured group of Finns who are either immigrants themselves or who have been born and grown here. They face a lot of discrimination, prejudice, and such. We have a lot of racism within the structures that fall upon this group.”

[later in the interview]

"[--] For example all these examples that have been observed through research, that when you send same job applications with a Finnish sounding name or for instance Russian or Somali sounding name, you can clearly notice how much more difficult it is to get into an interview with the same application depending on the name and the associations it brings up with the person handling the application. You easily invite a person to the interview whose name sounds Finnish to the interviewer's ear. There are probably much more of these kinds of manifestations of structural racism than we know of or can even pinpoint research-wise." (WP3FIN3)

4. ACTIVE PARTICIPATION AND CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS

While integration is a guiding idea in Finnish migration policy, with its two-dimensional thinking, it also creates multiculturalism in the receiving society. Finnish society in the level of legal administration is said to be one of the most multicultural in Europe. The situation in the practical everyday level is, however, much different. Racism and xenophobia are present in everyday media discussion and everyday activities (how easy it is for migrant to integrate into the Finnish labour markets etc.). Immigrants' agency in the society and their interaction with the surrounding community can be seen, for example, in their participation in NGOs and voluntary activities, decision-making, voting activity, through social relations or owning property, or from their participation in hobbies.

The recent critique is concentrating on this side of the integration process, where migrants everyday should be considered more holistically. In recent research (Sireni et al. 2021) it is emphasized that whereas integration is based on the views of the host societies and has been criticized for its container-thinking it should be seen more holistically and the concept of transnationalism, which focuses on migrants' social, political, cultural, and economic networks which transcend the borders of nation-states, should be considered as a part of a successful integration process. As said before, integrationalist and transnationalist perspectives on migration should come to complement each other. (Sireni et al. 2021.)

CIVIC PARTICIPATION: THE IMPORTANCE OF THIRD SECTOR

According to interviews the TCN's civic participation mostly takes place within NGO's and third sector activities. In both cases study regions, there are several NGOs with migrant-focused activities. The NGOs organize unofficial language teaching, leisure time activities and support networks for migrants. Many of these activities are concentrated at families', children's and female participation in civic society and society as a whole.

There are also NGOs and activities which are organized by migrants themselves. Immigration has given birth to the establishment of both multiculturalist and ethnic organisations. This has had a profound impact not only on the multiculturalization of the regions as such, but also on local politics; it is easier to participate in local politics as representative of multicultural organizations than a particular ethnic organisation. In North Karelia two third sector actors are in important role in TCN's civic participation the Multicultural Association of Joensuu Region (JoMoni) and The Lieksa Somali Family Association, which in its' Metka Community House offers guidance, counselling, and support to immigrants in order to help better integration in Finnish society. The activity is also partly run by immigrants themselves. As noted in our interviews, the Lieksa Somali Family Association is well-known not just in North Karelia but wider in Finland as its activity was recognized even by some national level and Ostrobothnian participants.

The association activity of Somali-speaking minority has also been observed in previous studies. Pirkkalainen et al. (2016) state that when looking at the integration of Somalis in Finland, the focus is often on the poor integration of Somalis, and their lively social participation is lost under the reputation that is often seen as problematic in public discourse. Somalis are one of the most active immigrant groups, both in terms of the number of associations formed and the turnout in municipal elections. (Pirkkalainen et al. 2016.) In previous research it has been noticed that Somalis are particularly active in setting up various associations compared to other large groups of immigrants living in Finland, such as Estonians and

Russians (Pirkkalainen et al. 2016; Castaneda et al. 2012). According to Pirkkalainen (2013) there about 50 Somali-run associations in Finland. According to Pirkkalainen et al. (2016) many Somali associations are offering language teaching, homework workshops for pupils and students as well as other integrationalist activities for immigrants. The Lieksa Somali family associations aims are immigrant integration, employment, training as well as working as a bridge between immigrants and the local people. In the recent years the number of Somalis in the associations operating area has decreased, but they have had a surge of Russian speakers in their daily activities within the last year.

Somali associations are mostly volunteer-based and are hence very vulnerable if the main active people are moving away from the area or they for some reason decide to stop working in the association. The funding is normally based on projects, and this is also one reason which makes the long-term activity of these associations often challenging. (Pirkkalainen et al. 2016.) The problem of project-based funding is also noticed in most of the NGO-based social activities in Finland. Lehto (2020) calls this the project care - phenomenon, where breaks and ruptures make the societies civic activity fragile. It was noted in our interviews that personification of NGOs activities on a few or just one's shoulders is an issue, even with NGOs ran by locals. Especially in rural communities, this can cause issues in the continuity of activities.

The Russian speakers are also active members of civic society. This is especially seen in North Karelia where the number of Russian speakers is substantial. Russian speakers are both active in their own language-based third sector activities but are also active participants in multicultural and substance-based NGO's. It was also noticed in interviews that children and young people who are coming from Russian speaking families are often active in terms of hobbies. This, according to the interviews, is an exception among TCNs.

Civic participation and the active role of TCNs in the third sector is taking place especially in culture and arts. According to informants in Ostrobothnia the role of art communities in organizing activities for immigrants is important. There are multiple such communities in the region that have attracted migrants into their classes. However, due to the time constraints, we did not have time to interview any of these actors.

In North Karelia the most active third sector actors among migrants were the ethnic and multicultural associations. In addition, the informant from Ostrobothnia emphasized that immigrants, especially asylum seekers and paperless men, were actively participating in many kinds of societal activities. Many multicultural associations (e.g. Lieksa Somali Family Association, ALJANS in Kitee and Jomoni – the Multicultural Association of Joensuu region) were offering services and activities for immigrants which could help them to integrate better in Finland. With these said, the low participation rate of migrants in organizing NGO activities was seen as an issue in many of the third sector actors and project-based activities. Activities are still mostly run by locals as they have a better chance of getting financial subsidies to operate their organizations.

ACQUISITION OF EQUAL RIGHTS

Many informants in both regions emphasized the roles of families in the integration process. Often children are integrated first through the education system. The integration of families as a whole was seen as vital. One participant in a North Karelian focus group said that even if the labour market situation of one parent is good, the inability of the other parent to get a foothold might make them move out. According to unemployment statistics and our interviews, it is especially the women who have hard time with finding employment. It is important to get the parents into working life as soon as possible and that how families, both parents and children, have opportunity to gain equal rights in Finnish society.

If the parents enter working life quickly, this also makes it easier for the immigrant children to integrate into the local community. Being involved in a work context also gives a sense of belonging and participation. Regarding integration, the importance of getting a job quickly was also discussed in focus groups, but also the importance of being able to study and get a job that corresponds to education, also for tertiary educated people. The lack of language skills is often a major threshold for companies to employ immigrants outside of manufacturing jobs. For migrants it is many times hard to climb the company hierarchy even with a college degree from a local institution. As will be discussed more in our report on

economic impact, educational recognition and language barriers are a major hurdle in migrants' agency. This often causes people to work jobs they are overeducated for or make them so called forced entrepreneurs.

BRIDGES AND LINKS BETWEEN TCNS AND LOCAL CITIZENS

As we have said before, in the interviews, the role of the third sector was perceived to be very important in the integration process, especially those NGOs which organize their activities so that they allow people of different origins to meet and mingle. Different kinds of community centres and events are vital in building bridges between groups. These kinds of activities are also run by the public sector (e. g. youth centres) but they are more limited in scope. Although we found multiple organizers of this sort from both regions, the lack of spaces for spontaneous meetings between natives and immigrants was seen as an issue, at least in Ostrobothnia. These kinds of activities have also been hit hard by the Covid-19 pandemic with most being at least partly closed during the past year. The somewhat segregated housing and labour markets are an issue in both areas. There was a call for more cooperation between the authorities, decision-makers and the third sector and there are on-going attempts by the public sector to strengthen this co-operation.

Pretty much every participant emphasizes that immigration is needed and is a societal issue. As the birth rate in Finland is declining and the share of retired people in the population is increasing, immigration, is seen as a vital resource for the whole nation. Immigration also increases the number of taxpayers and strengthens the economy in the long run at a national level. From the rural perspective it is an outstanding issue that since immigrants often come from larger cities, they often do not stay in the countryside for more than few years. This tendency is also noticed in previous research, and it is one of migration policy challenges from the rural perspective, how to help immigrants to settle down in rural areas (e.g. Pöllänen 2020). One informant was telling, that if migrants could stay in one place for a little bit longer than just a little time, they would settle down better and they would realize the benefits of rural surroundings.

SOCIAL CAPITAL: THE IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE

Together with getting foot hold in the labour market, language was mentioned as the other major factor when it comes to immigrant's integration. These two are also intertwined with each other's. Language skills can be interpreted as the most important form of social capital to be able to integrate. Inadequate language skills are often seen as a barrier for gaining a place in the labour markets in Finland. However, especially in North Karelia many informants were pointing out that in many cases the demands of language skills are set up at such a high level that sometimes it is impossible for immigrants to meet the demands. This might be at least partly attributed to the negative attitudes towards migrants. In interviews conducted in Ostrobothnia it is repeated that Swedish speaking local dwellers are usually more open and tolerated towards immigrants than Finnish speaking local dwellers. Still, even there most migrants without good skills in either of the local languages struggle with finding employment outside of manufacturing and other low skilled jobs. This is a problem even with migrants who have received their college degree in the area as many of them do not have sufficient language due to studying in international programs.

It can be emphasized by the data of this research and results of previous research that language skills contain a language paradox: it is a well-recognised fact that migrant's ability to get employment is connected to their language skills (e.g. Airas et al. 2019; Pöllänen 2007). However, it is also noticed that for example in the capital region or other larger cities where there are more jobs available, migrants can have work with lower level of language skills than for example in North Karelia, where there are less employment opportunities. As a development strategy for this we should focus on the two-way integration and attitudes of local communities. If it could be included more practice and training periods for the studies of non-native speaking students, the tolerance of local communities towards them would increase. The more effective co-operation with local employers in all sectors would help the two-way integration process: the immigrants would learn better Finnish or Swedish in the real everyday working environment and the local employers could familiarize themselves more with the non-native speakers. It should also be

understood that it is worth going beyond the perception that one needs to speak fluent native language to be able to handle his or her work well.

5. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF SERVICES

UNIVERSAL OR SEGREGATED SERVICES

In Finland, services are offered to all residents of the country. The municipalities are responsible for organizing welfare state services (e.g., schooling, health care, social care, immigration services) for the residents of the municipality. Municipalities can organize these services by themselves, together with other municipalities, or they can buy these services from other (public, private, or third sector) service providers. Since the 1990's the Finnish welfare state has been hollowing out and this has reduced the role of the public sector. This said, it still has a significant role in providing services in terms of all aspects of everyday life: day-care, schooling, education, care, and social and cultural services. The role of third sector has been widening in the recent decades, and the role of NGO's is remarkable especially in terms of migrant's services. A major question concerning migrants' access and quality of services, according to many interviewees, seems to be the question: Should migrants have their own segregated services (e.g., social and health care) or should they integrate to the universal services offered by the Finnish welfare state?

"[--] Already when I was a social worker in mid 90s Helsinki, you never solved the problem right. Does this lead to the need to create divergent arrangements in social and health care because the person is a migrant or do we operate upon our service structures and try to integrate people into them? Neither of the solutions seem to be accepted in full by some side of the argument. It is a difficult question for a beginner social worker as well as for a pretty experienced development manager when concerning the digital environment.

[later in the focus group from the same participant]

The question you asked is actually devilishly good, that I often think about. For example, what kinds of services should social and health care sectors support and organize and it connects to the theme I tried to bring up earlier, that should the services be specifically perceived and tailored just because the person comes from another culture. Practical everyday life shows that in many cases they should, but right after that begins the other societal conversation of "why?"." (WP3FIK7)

Finland is a Nordic Welfare State, where the distribution of welfare benefits and services is based on the idea of universalism, which in practice means that all public services are offered for all residents of the municipality in equal terms. The right to welfare benefits and services is based on municipal placement and all the benefits and services are aimed for residents of the country, who have legal municipal place in one of the Finnish municipalities (Municipality of Residence Act 201/1994). Those who move to Finland for work, family or study purposes get municipal placements and the right to welfare state benefits on equal terms with Finnish citizens. Those who come to Finland based on humanitarian reasons are divided into two categories: asylum seekers, who are still applying/pending for the formal right to stay in Finland, and refugees, who have already obtained that right. If an asylum seeker receives a positive decision on her/his application, s/he will no longer be a client of the Finnish Immigration Service, but a formal resident of a municipality. This assigned home municipality will be responsible for organizing the basic services (e.g., health care, schooling, etc.) and specific integration services that the municipality organizes for immigrants based on the Act on the Promotion of Integration (1386/2010).

Some of the participants, especially officials working in the public sector were discussing about if TCNs and migrants in general should have services designed specifically for them designed or should they use same services as the other residents of municipalities. It is widely accepted that integration is better if

TCNs use universal services, but at the same time they see that migrants need special support especially at beginning of their life in Finland and there is a need for at least a certain number of custom-made services.

"I see that it is good that in the early stage there is special support for the immigrants so that they can get a little accustomed to the Finnish system, of how it works, of what kind of authorities there are and what are the assignments of different authorities, as the system can be very different than in the country of origin. But of course, a little by little, and this is my opinion as well, they should start to move on to the general populations' basic services. Move there little by little and then there could be someone to support them in the transition phase so that they are not left empty-handed on a one fell swoop." (WP3FIK13)

The language is seen one of the biggest issues, which needs to be taken into consideration when talking about TCNs' access to services. It is noted in almost all the interviews that migrants need services in different languages and sometimes access to services is limited because there is no information about services in an appropriate language for a client. This has been especially apparent during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Also, in terms of using services e.g., medical doctors' appointments the TCNs' need special support with languages. The medical doctor interviewed for the research told that it is possible to use interpreters during appointments so that the patient can be served in appropriate language. This does not mean that the translator is always professional or that the language is always patient's native language, but it is a language they know well. There are also cases where children have been used as interpreters for their parents because of the child's better language skills. This is not an optimal situation by the informants. There are situations which should not be dealt with by children.

Many informants working in the social and health sectors in the public or third sector pointed out that during the pandemic, the need for adequate information about the virus and restrictions has gotten special attention and information has had to be produced in several atypical languages. The pandemic also gave rise to the problem of TCN's access to services and information as they have the digitalized even further. The digital services and capability to use them might not always be easy for migrants. The service providers told that they are struggling with how to pass the information to TCNs and what are the suitable channels for it.

The importance of language and difficulties in accessing services are different in different contexts. The language has become problematic, especially when dealing with adults. According to informants it seems that when services are provided for children or young people, the language is in a way secondary or minor issue: small children in day care and kindergartens are quick to adopt new language or they can communicate even without a common language with other children or adults. The director of one big kindergarten in North Karelia told that in their kindergarten there are children with almost twenty different native languages, and she continued that in their activities language has never been the problem. Sometimes when parents are not fluent with the local language, communication usually happens in English in these cases and only rarely there has been problems in communications due to language issues. When thinking about prospects for the future more attention should be paid to the personnel of kindergartens and their diversity, to better develop the two-way integration process.

In North Karelia, there is on-going project-based activity where Russian speaking day carers are helping the children of Russian origin in their own language. In this project Russian speaking children are helped in their native language during their pre-education in day care. The assumption is that if children can strengthen their Russian skills, it can also help them to integrate better into Finnish society. According to the two informants working on the project, it seems that the results of the project are promising and immigrant children's adaption into the local areas is benefiting from the project. This project also benefits the goals of two-way integration, as it makes immigration, different languages, and cultures more visible in kindergartens for Finnish speaking children and their parents. To sum up, one can say that the language question is a more central or hot potato issue in health and social services than for example in education and pre-school care.

In the interviews conducted with specialists working in the health care sector (a medical doctor and researchers), the concept of TCN's mental health and trauma was emphasized. The medical doctor pointed

out that among refugees, asylum seekers and paperless migrants the medical problems are in many cases reflections of previous life situations and traumas a person had faced in his or her life before moving to Finland. Health problems such as a deficit of D-vitamin or anaemia (especially among women) are also common among humanitarian migrants, but those are easy to cure. On the contrary the humanitarian migrant's mental health problems are very difficult to cure and it seems that contemporarily in Finland there is not enough knowledge on these issues. This lack of information is apparent both with professionals and the peers these migrants interact with. People working with humanitarian migrants such as therapists should gain more education for trauma treatment. It can be seen as a nationwide problem, which really needs to be solved in the near future. It can also be a risk for everyday security if TCNs and inhabitants of the country cannot get appropriate treatment for their psychological problems.

It is emphasized in previous studies (Castaneda et al. 2015) that traumatic events, which immigrants have experienced earlier in their lives can have long term effects in their everyday lives and integration into Finnish society. Traumatic events can affect their ability to function and to their integration. According to Castaneda et al. (2015) traumatic life experiences are common, especially among refugees. The assumption is stated by the informants of our study: the asylum seekers, refugees and paperless TCNs are those who have faced traumatic life experiences. Castaneda et al. (2015) also points out that insecurity seemed to have accumulated in young adults who had either been born in Finland or had immigrated to Finland under the age of seven. As a conclusion Castaneda et al. (2015) suggest that measures to promote the mental health of TCNs are needed in Finland. According to the results of this study, it is easy to agree with this suggestion. In Finnish social and health education changes should be considered to better respond to this challenge. The trauma treatment and understanding of experiences of traumatic events should be updated. In one interview the informants are suggesting that more occupational therapy should be used with refugees and other immigrants.

"Maybe this is where the services show up, even though I just applauded that Vaasa has fine services. This is something that should be developed so that the mental health services would not be so dependent on language. Those who don't know language also need mental health services, and on the other hand, there are also those who think that what good does speaking about something do, so we also have need occupational forms of therapy. I would like to see up wake up on this that occupational forms can also do a lot of good." (WP3FIO17)

INCLUSION AND INTEGRATION ACTIVITIES

Municipalities are responsible for the provision of basic services such as healthcare and primary education and these services are to be equal for all permanent residents, and in the case of healthcare, those with international healthcare insurance. The national level of integration legislation is also implemented at the municipal level. In North-Karelia and in Ostrobothnia the bigger municipalities have local coordinators and offices for migrants, where their integration process and other issues as residents of municipalities are handled. In smaller municipalities migrants use the same welfare state services as the locals. The municipalities are obliged to give immediate healthcare to asylum seekers and equal care if the applicant is a minor or pregnant. For undocumented migrants, the municipalities must provide immediate care, although some of the larger cities have made the decision to expand them by providing undocumented migrants with more services. Primary education has to be provided to every municipal resident within the compulsory education age, no matter the legal status (Basic Education Act 628/1998). Municipalities are also required to organize preparatory education for newly arrived migrants lasting the length of a full school year syllabus (Basic Education Act 628/1998).

Finnish municipalities are in a central role when it comes to integration practices and immigrant services. The municipalities are the main actors in the Finnish welfare state being responsible for organizing welfare services and benefits. The Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration (1386/2010) made it statutory for municipalities to make an integration program either by themselves or in municipal partnerships. These plans must be reviewed at least every four years, and they are necessary for the municipalities to be able to receive compensation for the reception of refugees. These documents function

as the guiding plan for the local integration process, containing provisions for example on immigrant education, social services and integration services like translation and recreational guidance.

While many of the inclusion and integration activities for TCNs are offered by the municipalities, the third sector plays a crucial role in providing different kinds of integration services. According to the interviews conducted in Ostrobothnia and North Karelia there are multiple NGOs in both case study region, who are offering social services for TCNs but also more recreational services like hobbies and leisure time activities built upon different cultures, art, music and sports. It was also obvious that Covid-19 restrictions have put up large hurdles for this kind of integration work, as most benefit from face-to-face contact.

The migration work is also creating jobs in both case study regions. In larger municipalities there are public funded coordinators and specialized offices, who work on integration. In addition, in the social and health sectors there are officials who work on migrants' social issues. Much of the activities are run by the third sector and the public actors through projects. Lehto (2020) has developed the concept of project care, which refers the situation, where some temporary funding (normally coming from EU) is boosting local and regional actors to build up activity which can help people in their everyday challenges, such as how to integrate immigrants into local society or help migrants and the unemployed to get work. As said before, the issue here is the temporary nature of such funding. In some NGO's there are also activities with a more stable funding, typically coming from the public sector as direct payments or through outsourcing of services.

SCHOOLING AND EDUCATION

The education of TCNs is an important part of integration into the Finnish society as it increases the agency of the migrant in the society and therefore the impact they can have. Children are obligated to receive elementary education in Finland, and they are also entitled to have some special support, such as teaching of Finnish or Swedish as their second language. Every immigrant child is also provided with up to a full school year of preparatory education with specialized teachers.

In secondary education the migrants' situations are different depending on their background, the reasons for moving to Finland and their language skills. It is said by teachers and other adults working with young TCNs that language is a crucial question for immigrant young people during their secondary education. In vocational schools, a deficit of the local language can cause problems during studies. In North Karelia, the informant told that the integration into Finnish society can be slow if a student comes to Finland for studies but does not have Finnish language skills. It may be that they cope with the studies and have vocabulary for their profession, but networks with Finnish speakers can stay weak if their everyday language skills are not as good. In the secondary level (upper secondary schools and vocational schools), there seems to be a tendency that migrant students are more vulnerable to abandoning their studies than other students.

The regional impact of TCN students on rural areas in Finland is remarkable. In North Karelia there are several units of local vocational schools (RIVERIA) located in rural municipalities which benefit greatly TCN students. Especially students from Russia are important additions to these units as the local Finnish age groups have been diminished. There is a public policy project in North Karelia which aim is to recruit students from Russia to rural vocational and high schools. It is said by an informant that in these areas, where the demographic changes are challenging, it is essential that students are recruited from outside of the country. This is the way how secondary schools in rural North Karelia can have enough students and they can continue their operations. In one of the focus groups, it was brought up that it would be good if there was a possibility to do the diploma works in other languages than Finnish.

The tertiary education, the universities and universities of applied sciences provide English language programs in both case study regions. These TCNs are normally called international students and many informants see them as a different group of other TCNs. In North Karelia, the students of tertiary education form an important part of the international everyday life in the region, especially the Joensuu region. The impact of international students is seen in leisure time activities as well as in the general vibrancy of public life. In Ostrobothnia, many tertiary education units provide programs in English to

attract international students. It is an implicit ambition that some of the students will stay in Finland, but almost none of them have sufficient language proficiency in Finnish or Swedish to pick up a job after graduation. Hence, they move somewhere else (usually to their native countries or to countries where English is the working language). In many cases, these persons live a parallel life during their stay in Finland.

SHARE OF NEETS

The data collected for this study does not give information about NEETs (Not in Employment, Education or Training). However, it was noted in the interviews conducted among teachers and other experts working with young TCNs that there is a higher risk that young people will stop their secondary education and they do not graduate. According to the interviews the risk is especially high with girls with refugee backgrounds. Still, to conclude, the status where young people are not in education, employment or training was not a significant phenomenon among young TCNs according to our interviews.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The two case study regions in Finland are different. In North Karelia, most of the population is Finnish speaking, while in Ostrobothnia both Finnish and Swedish languages are widely used. In addition, the economic structures of the regions are different: in North Karelia unemployment is high and the service sector is a big driver, while Ostrobothnia is an export industry oriented. The population in North Karelia is more homogenous. In North Karelia the municipalities are more rural and similar to each other except the central city of Joensuu. In Ostrobothnia, the structure of municipalities differs from each other. North Karelia also has a homogenous migration population, Russian speakers being the dominant migrant group. Russians are also moving to the area mostly for family and education reasons and not so much because of work. In Ostrobothnia, the migrant population of the region is diverse and many TCNs are moving into the region as labour migrants.

During our interviews it came apparent that in both case study regions the possibilities in the labour market and existence of co-ethnic community are key factors in permanence of stay. Most of those who came as refugees or asylum seekers move out of the regions to larger cities in the south of the country after their integration period is over. The phenomenon is especially apparent in North Karelia, but it also happens in Ostrobothnia.

Together with better job opportunities, one factor helping the migrants stay in Ostrobothnia is the language. According to our interviews, if the TCNs are integrating into Finland in the Swedish language it creates both advantages and disadvantages. The Swedish language increases agency in rural parts of Ostrobothnia and helps one's integration at least in the Swedish majority areas. It is also said to be somewhat easier to learn. Minority populations being relatively more welcoming towards newcomers who pick up their language and culture is a rational behaviour: each and every newcomer who joins them will increase their relative size. If the TCNs are aware of this, picking up Swedish will smoothen the life in the new country and especially in Ostrobothnia. On the other hand, in many interviews it was also noted that if TCNs cannot speak Finnish it limits their opportunities to move, work and study in the other parts of Finland, but it can also limit the possibilities inside Ostrobothnia as parts of region and some major companies have Finnish as their main language. The integration process in Swedish can help in finding work in the area, but at the same time, it can hinder your possibilities elsewhere in the country. However, there are long-established migration flows between Ostrobothnia and Sweden when it comes to Swedish speaking Finns. Although it wasn't particularly visible in our interviews, picking up Swedish in Ostrobothnia may provide a 'Plan B': if you do not succeed in Finland, proficiency in Swedish will open the labour markets not only in Sweden but also in other Nordic countries Norway and Denmark.

In North Karelia, the overall unemployment level is high, one of the highest in the country. As with natives, this creates a tendency for migrants to move from North Karelia to the other regions of the country, where the labour market is better. However, even in North Karelia there are sectors in labour markets, which need work force, such as care, agriculture, high tech, and the service sector. For this reason, the regions existing labour market situation should be carefully evaluated and then the education paths, mainly the secondary and tertiary education, should be focused so that TCNs could be educated to those sectors where there are employment opportunities. This would both impact the local labour markets but also help immigrants to integrate and settle down into the region better. We must, however, keep in mind that we cannot expect all the immigrants to educate themselves for the labour market sectors which are locally lacking. The big global picture of labour markets should also be kept in mind.

The impact of immigration can also be seen in everyday security or the feeling of everyday security. The bridges between “old inhabitants” and immigrants are not always easy to construct. According to the data collected for this research report it seems that the everyday life of studied rural regions mostly goes on smoothly in terms of interaction between local dwellers and TCNs. Unfortunately, it is also a fact that many immigrants, especially “visible” migrants face both structural and everyday racism. Good interaction between immigrants and locals is promoted and active anti-racism is paid attention to and it is taking place in both case study regions. The third sector is in a crucial role in this as much of integration and multicultural work is done by NGOs. While migrants are integrating into associations which are run by the locals there are also some NGOs run by the migrants themselves. In the interviews it was seen highly important that immigrant run organizations are promoted and encouraged and immigrants are let in on the decision making in local public and third sector organizations. The significance of the Finnish Red Cross was mentioned several times, especially in the interviews conducted in Ostrobothnia. There are also many types of activities which are not especially organized for immigrants, but where they are actively taking part in and impacting local and regional communities.

One phenomenon where everyday security should be considered by public policy is the mental health issues of TCNs. According to most of the informants who work with immigrant's health issues, the treatment of traumas and other mental health issues of asylum seekers, refugees and other immigrants is mentioned as one of the major problems in the Finnish integration system. It is said that contemporary treatments and support processes are not enough, and more education and resources should be focused in the area. In most extreme cases uncured mental health problems can cause other societal problems. One concrete suggestion is the introduction of more occupational forms of therapy in TCN's mental health treatment. The occupational methods could be more effective than traditional therapy treatments, where clients are just talking with therapists. To sum up, mental health issues need to be taken seriously into consideration as they are always also societal and structural problems and not just individual ones. Neglecting their treatment can have a major negative impact on society.

The social impact of TCNs for the studied regions is noticed in secondary and tertiary education. In both regions there are educational institutions (vocational school units, university units etc.) which benefit greatly from TCN students. Some of these units have strategically built up their activities around TCN students. Their strategy under the reforms of Finnish education system have been the internationalization of their work. As the Finnish educational network has been reduced, condensed, and centralized this has been a key coping mechanism for certain educational organizations, especially in more rural areas. Some of these units would likely not exist anymore if they did not have international students. This tendency takes place in both studied regions.

To be able to evaluate the causality between integration and impact one needs to consider immigration in a wide framework. It is not easy to answer this question. One possible way of solving out the question is to think about how informants were replying, when asked what the social impact of TCNs for their regions is. One common answer was that for rural areas in North Karelia and in Ostrobothnia the presence of immigrant population is creating vitality in everyday life and remedies the deteriorating demographics of these regions. The street scene has become more multicultural, and this was appreciated by our informants.

If immigrants integrate into Finland and especially into its remote areas properly, this will have a major impact for those regions and the county. It is an indisputable fact that rural areas all over the Europe,

but also in Finland, suffer from demographic challenges and, in addition to the workforce, immigrants are having an impact on this as well. There are many young people and young families among TCNs, and it is precisely those demographics who are needed in rural areas. But for families and young people to adapt and settle in the rural areas, there needs to be a wide range of support mechanisms and guidance in the surrounding community, and for them to stay in place. A key part of integration and thus impact is social contacts, not only with people of their own language and culture but also with locals.

The question of the causality between migrants' integration and impact from the point of view of rural areas becomes visible differently if we concentrate on long-term impact or the contemporary situation. The long-term impact is only possible if immigrants settle down and integrate into Finnish society and rural areas. The young people will have families, they will have children, and even if they are not getting jobs immediately, they can affect the community in other ways, such as volunteering.

It is also important to understand that immigrants have different ways of integrating into rural areas: some of them are tightly integrating into their own language groups (e.g., Russian speakers), some TCNs integrate more to local communities and their set up networks with Swedish or Finnish speakers (especially those who come from rarely spoken language groups) and then there are those who integrate into English speaking multicultural communities (typically highly educated who can speak English fluently). In our understanding of liveable everyday life and expected multiculturalism, these all should be equally appreciated. There is not and cannot be just one way of integrating into Finnish society and its rural regions. In addition, there are several ways of impacting it too. The important thing is that TCNs need to integrate into rural areas with one of these possible ways, if one does not integrate at all then there is high probability that they will move away to larger cities or even abroad, as it is a case with many university students. The university students' better integration into more rural regions is one unsolved problem, which should be further considered. As most tertiary jobs are mostly in larger cities, this is a difficult task to undertake. International university students could have a major impact on the region and its economic and social life if we could integrate them better. Unfortunately, this remains an unresolved problem also in this study, but one can keep this in mind and this needs to be studied more.

As a conclusion it is possible to make short SWOT reasoning of TCN's impact on Finnish society:

<p>STRENGTHS:</p> <p>In Ostrobothnia, diversity of the population is benefiting the everyday life and economic sector of the region. The impact different TCN groups have for local labour markets in agriculture, manufacturing and services is evident. The diversifying population in the region has increased Tolerance and created a well-functioning group relation. In North Karelia, where the border and short proximity to Russia is characteristic, the Russian speaking TCNs, who form the biggest migrant group, is impacting local and regional development by being the cultural and social bridge between the transnational and cross-border co-operation between Finland and Russia.</p>	<p>WEAKNESSES:</p> <p>In both case study regions the weakness is how to integrate TCNs for local rural communities. Especially asylum seekers and refugees tend to move to bigger cities in Finland. The second group which does not integrate into local communities are international university students. Once these TCN groups are only partly integrated it also means that their possibilities to impact host communities is limited. If we could better resolve the problems in their integration these TCN groups would be highly valuable for local and regional development and vitality of the region.</p>
<p>OPPORTUNITIES:</p> <p>TCNs provide an opportunity to amend the weakening demography, especially in rural areas. They can also provide a valuable work force to</p>	<p>THREATS:</p> <p>What happens if TCNs do not integrate into Finnish society, and they are isolated. If they cannot impact their new host country in any way.</p>

the troubled areas of the local labour market if they are given an opportunity to do so. TCNs bring with them their own networks which can be beneficial culturally, socially, and economically.	For example, if traumatized asylum seekers and refugees cannot get help from Finnish social and health sector the everyday security of local, regional, and national communities can begin to rupture. Also, if racist and xenophobic ideologies take hold in society this can breed unwanted social, economic, and cultural polarization and weaken the everyday security of both locals and newcomers. According to the collected data it seems that in Swedish speaking Ostrobothnia the good relations between different groups are easier to achieve than in North Karelia, where the population is less diverse.
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1. INTRODUCTION, SAMPLE AND METHODS APPLIED

Social impact of TCNs, understood in the MATILDE social dimensions (MSDs) social polarization, social cohesion, active participation, and access to and quality of services, is determined by legal frameworks and policies. Kordel & Weidinger (2021, country-based policy briefing on migration-related social and economic policies, MATILDE Deliverable 3.1 and 4.1) discussed social policies addressing various realms ranging from education, employment, social welfare and social cohesion to housing and mobility, pointed out the specific implementation in rural and mountain areas and identified relevant stakeholders. Yet, social policies and its implementations can only be a starting point for a deeper understanding of the social impact of TCNs in MATILDE regions in the MSDs. Instead, changing life-worlds of both immigrants and the resident population as well as dynamics in social structures must be addressed. Regarding the former, the staying orientation of immigrants in rural areas is considered crucial to identify long-term impacts. For this purpose, a qualitative assessment was conducted in the MATILDE region Bavaria with a focus on five rural districts, i.e. Berchtesgadener Land (BGL), Garmisch-Partenkirchen (GAP), Neustadt a.d. Aisch – Bad Windsheim (NEA), Oberallgäu (OA) and Regen (REG). Methodologically, the report draws on qualitative interviews, focus group discussions, a collection of documents and participatory observation.

Overall, a total number of 29⁵ qualitative in-depth interviews with 33 stakeholders were conducted in Germany and its selected MATILDE region between October 2020 and March 2021. In addition, three focus group discussions with 14 stakeholders (ranging from three to six per discussion) were implemented at the regional level in February 2021, focussing on three different groups of stakeholders, i.e. actors involved in the provision of Services of General Interest (in our case: educational offers, WP3WP4DE021), regional development and planning (WP3WP4DE019), as well as CSOs, NGOs, and social enterprises (in our case: refugee and integration counsellors, WP3WP4DE020). Besides, the report is based on a collection of documents, including press articles from the MATILDE region as well as from the rural districts, and participant observation at various online meetings. The latter aspect encompassed the closing meeting of the INTERREG project “Migration and integration in the Bavarian-Czech borderland region: Analysis, Cooperation and Solution Strategies” (19.02.2021), two meetings of the Association of Volunteers in Refugee Relief in Bavaria, one on the presentation of a quantitative survey of volunteers engaged in refugee relief (01.03.2021) and one on the situation of forced migrants in rural areas (24.03.2021), an online meeting of the Bavarian State Ministry of the Interior, for Sport and Integration (StMI) with volunteers working in refugee relief (02.03.2021) and a press conference of the respective Ministry and the Bavarian State Office for Asylum and Repatriation (LfAR) on the presentation of the 2020 asylum balance (22.03.2021). In order to contextualize active participation of immigrants, an online seminar of the project BePart on the empowerment of civic and political participation of people with family-relation immigration biography was attended.

The stakeholders for the interviews and focus group discussions were chosen to represent the different political levels in Germany, i.e. the national level (NUTS0, one person), the federal state level (*Länder* level, NUTS1, two persons), the administrative district level (NUTS2, 10 persons), and the local level, i.e. the rural districts and municipalities (NUTS3 and LAU, 33 persons). Applying purposive sampling, interview persons were selected based on their competence regarding the themes of the report and comprised decision makers as well as actors from public administrations, education and training

⁵ The number of interviews includes qualitative interviews for both social and economic impact analysis, since stakeholders often have multiple roles (see also below). Despite single interviews were foreseen, some interviewees agreed to participate only if allowed to consult colleagues with particular expertise. Possible asymmetries and resulting hesitations could occur and were observed by note-takers.

institutions, trade and labour unions and organized representative groups, private businesses, public welfare service providers, NGOs, asylum and refugee care, associations and clubs, and research facilities and individual researchers. We also intended to capture stakeholders that were able to provide information about the diversity of locally relevant TCNs, i.e. forced migrants with an open and recognised protection status, labour migrants, accidental migrants such as US military personnel and lifestyle migrants (Kordel et al. 2020). Stakeholders had various ties with the local context due to the multiple roles they often took. Accordingly, one of the interviewees was not only councilperson and parliamentary leader, but also a TCN employing entrepreneur and local spokesperson of a professional group, while another one was engaged in a charitable association and a sports club, for instance. In contrast, individuals without institutional affiliations, who were neither mentioned by other stakeholders during the first couple of interviews nor covered by the local media, are underrepresented in the sample. It was also intended to include local journalists, however, appointments with that particular group could not be realised. For the focus group on regional development and planning, it was hard to convince stakeholders about the potential surplus of their participation due to a perceived lack of knowledge about migration-related issues. A de-coupling of locally relevant problem-situations, e.g. housing or labour shortage, from the topic of immigration finally could convince interviewees, yet immigration was introduced during the discussion several times. Due to on-going travel restrictions as well as for preventive reasons during the COVID-19 pandemic, all interviews were conducted audio-visually using the conferencing tool Zoom via university license (for a critical methodological reflection, see Nehls et al. 2015) or via telephone. After having received the interviewees' consent, all except three interviews were audio-recorded. In cases where permission for audio recording was not given, the note-taker intensified his observations. Interviews and focus group discussions lasted between nine and 100 minutes (the average was 65 minutes). For further analysis, extended protocols served as a basis for thematic analysis for the suggested dimensions, while parts of the interviews were transcribed verbatim and translated to English language to illustrate argumentation. The additional documents were collected drawing on a keyword search in google, while press articles were mostly gathered via the wiso-net.de database of the GBI-Genios Deutsche Wirtschaftsdatenbank GmbH. With regards to participant observation, notes were taken to maintain distance for systematic understanding.

Results of interviews, focus group discussions, the collection of documents and the participant observation are presented in terms of social inclusion / polarization in chapter 2, where an overview about the perception of immigrants in general is discussed from a diachronic perspective, followed by positive and negative implications deriving from that. In chapter 3, social cohesion and its constitutive elements, social inclusion of immigrants and the role of acquiring social capital, including social bridges, bonds, and links, is discussed, while an emphasis is put on enabling structures and the role of places of interaction. Active participation and civic engagement of immigrants in particular is addressed in chapter 4, yet also factors that hamper it, are discussed. In chapter 5, it is presented how services and infrastructures changed due to the arrival of immigrants, while both the creation of new infrastructures and the modification of existing ones due to new needs are elaborated. The report ends with a conclusion and a reflection on current and future challenges and needs.

2. SOCIAL INCLUSION / POLARIZATION

Generally, immigration to rural areas was considered in terms of labour migration from south-eastern Europe (both EU- and non-EU countries) and forced migration from third countries by the interviewees. It must be kept in mind in this and the following chapters that further groups such as care workers from Africa or Asia, accidental migrants such as US-American military personnel or lifestyle migrants were only mentioned upon request and obviously not taken into consideration in most cases when reflecting about the social impact of TCNs.

Overall, the settlement and integration of TCNs was evaluated both positively and negatively by the interviewees in terms of social inclusion / polarization. Through the arrival of TCNs, **problems that already existed in (rural) Germany became more salient**. Similar to a magnifying glass, it became clearer and more obvious how big the housing shortage in many urban and rural areas of Germany is, and, not least during the COVID-19 pandemic, how bad the internet connection still is in rural areas in particular (WP3WP4DE020_3, 021_1; see also chapter 5).

The settlement of TCNs was also addressed as an **enrichment for (rural) society**. While Germany was an immigration country that existed only on the paper after the implementation of the immigration law in 2005, the recent arrival of forced migrants helped to establish Germany as a 'real' immigration country (WP3WP4DE031). Thereby, enrichment is considered both in economic and cultural terms. Regarding the former aspect, migrants help to overcome the shortage of workers and have positive economic effects (WP3WP4DE009; Hudelist 2016; Elsberger 2020; cf. Country Report Germany as part of Deliverable 4.3). Regarding the latter aspect, i.e. culture, immigration is seen as a "good challenge" for the region (WP3WP4DE031) as it allows more frequent and more intense encounters with other cultures. These may result in the questioning of one's positions, a rising awareness about the expectations of the respective other, mutual understanding, adaptation and learning effects (WP3WP4DE002, 007, 018, 021_5) and an improved intercultural dialogue over time (WP3WP4DE031). The immigration of TCNs was found to contribute to a growing diversity, which made life "more colourful" and established "a new component in a conservative community" (WP3WP4DE020_1, 020_3). However, due to concentration processes of TCNs in the five rural districts, this is mostly experienced in the denser populated small towns (WP3WP4DE016, see also chapter 3).

Furthermore, a positive impact was attributed to the **(temporary) welcoming culture⁶ and the establishment of local refugee relief groups**, especially in 2015/2016⁷ and with a spatial focus on municipalities that were situated at the end of the so-called 'Balkan route' (cf. Abikova & Pitrowicz 2021), i.e. alongside the German-Austrian border or had to accommodate asylum seekers due to distribution quota (WP3WP4DE007, 010, 016, 020_2, 025). During that time, which was frequently described as 'state of exception' by interviewees, helping forced migrants, e.g. by donating or dispensing second-hand clothes, was *en vogue* among locals, also among individuals of young age (WP3WP4DE010). However, long-term support by means of lay German language courses, newly established asylum cafés, lifts, leisure activities or visits to the authorities was mostly provided by individuals aged 50+ as well as by former rural in-migrants from other parts of Germany (WP3WP4DE012; Munzinger 2015; cf. Akademie für die ländlichen Räume Schleswig-Holsteins e.V. 2017, for rural Germany). While both groups often happened to not be engaged civically before (cf. BMFSFJ 2017, for Germany), their involvement for forced migrants was facilitated by a higher allocable leisure time due to (pre)retirement on the one hand and by experiences similar to the ones of immigrants about being 'the other' in the countryside on the other hand (WP3WP4DE016; Weidinger et al. 2017; Glorius 2021).

Individuals born and grown up in the region as well as former immigrants, instead, rarely became involved in refugee relief groups. While the former group feared negative comments from friends and

⁶ In the German context, the term *Willkommenskultur* was used widely following the arrival of refugee newcomers (Hamann & Karakayali 2016).

⁷ The year went down into German history as both refugee crisis (*Flüchtlingskrise*, Bade 2017) and long summer of migration (*langer Sommer der Migration*, Hess et al. 2016) as well as long summer of flight (*langer Sommer der Flucht*, Schulz & Schwertel 2017).

acquaintances, the latter group dodged behind the argument that they did not receive support themselves, when they arrived in the rural, and thus did not consider themselves responsible (WP3WP4DE016; see also chapter 3). As a result of the occupation of professional tasks (WP3WP4DE018), volunteers started to face overpowering in 2016 the latest and needed psychological counselling. This was overcome partly by the recruitment of professionals that served as a link between administration and volunteers as well as by means of specific seminars and courses that provided supervision and enhanced the volunteers' resilience (WP3WP4DE010, 016, 031; cf. Mann et al. 2018, for rural Germany). Over time, however, the activities for refugee relief decreased due to the development of agency among forced migrants, the lack of new arrivals, increasing animosities of locals towards volunteers and the frustration of volunteers in terms of a lack of support and public acknowledgement by local politics and administration and resulted in the termination of their engagement (WP3WP4DE010, 012; Roßberger 2019; see also **Figure 1**; cf. Karakayali & Kleist 2016, for Germany). Others, instead, shifted their involvement towards supporting single individuals or families, taking the roles as father and mother figures (WP3WP4DE010; cf. Sawtell et al. 2010, for rural Australia). Interviewees involved in the coordination of volunteer work, however, reported a lack of openness of volunteers towards helping other immigrants or neighbours instead (WP3WP4DE010, 016), which is argued to be related to the fact that it is less easy to exercise power over these groups – in contrast to forced migrants (WP3WP4DE016). Over time, two things in particular remained stable. Clothing stores offering second-hand clothes could be established as a regular, long-standing whole-of-society offer, often occupying former vacancies in the centre of the towns, and, from the perspective of professionals, volunteers continue to be perceived as a valuable complement to the administration.



Figure 1: Advertisement for an asylum cafe in one of the rural districts
(source: own photo, 2016)

Even though some parts of the Alpine rural districts are accustomed to tourists wearing headscarves (WP3WP4DE009, 028), the immigration of TCNs resulted in a **“polarization in all areas”** (WP3WP4DE021_3), **strong group building processes** (WP3WP4DE007, 016) and increased **xenophobia** (WP3WP4DE020_1, 020_2; see also chapter 3). Controversial discussions arose in various situations: firstly, when refugee accommodation should be established, secondly, when the location of those was expected to have a negative impact on tourism, which was seen most recently when quarantine accommodation for asylum seekers should be opened, or, thirdly, in cases the opening of an accommodation went hand in hand with a high ratio of forced migrants to the resident population (Kasperowitsch 2014; Lukaschik 2015; Bäuml-Schachtner 2020; cf. Hubbard 2005, for the rural UK; Pehm 2007, for rural Austria; Biesenkamp & Daphi 2015 and Bock 2018, for (rural) Germany). Right-wing extremists and anti-

immigrant groups and parties such as the ‘Third Way’ (*Der Dritte Weg/III. Weg*) or the Alternative for Germany (*Alternative für Deutschland, AfD*) demonstrated against immigration policies in general and the opening of these centres, while alliances against right-wing extremism condemned those protests (cf. BBSR 2017 and Rösch et al. 2020, for rural Germany). Supra-regional events and media reports, e.g. about 2015-16 New Year’s Eve sexual assaults in Germany, additionally affected the attitude towards (forced) migrants in a dynamic, mostly negative way, even on a regional scale in rural areas. The COVID-19 pandemic, however, led to the fact that the topic of migration and integration took a backseat (WP3WP4DE010, 025). Cultural barriers and the segregation of the locals, finally, were found to prevent interaction and problem solving between locals and migrants (WP3WP4DE021_3, 028; see also chapter 3).

Zooming in on the rural districts and the municipalities, we found a **heterogeneous spatial pattern in terms of attitudes of the resident population towards TCNs and handling of the settlement and integration of TCNs on part of local politics**. There were both ‘welcoming’ and ‘unwelcoming’ cultures (*Willkommens oder Schleich’ di – Kultur*, cf. Bayern 2 2016) that interviewees related to two aspects among other things: the location of the municipality on the one hand and the attitude of local elites such as politicians on the other hand. Regarding the former aspect, it was stated that the location in high mountains “make people narrow-minded”, while, for those who live outside, “the horizon is wider” (WP3WP4DE016). Regarding the latter aspect, there was a minority of politicians, who were open towards this topic and organised events for new inhabitants from abroad or even engaged in refugee relief him- or herself. The majority, however, limited his or her engagement in this field to ‘necessary’ information events for local residents upon the opening of refugee accommodation (Meindl 2017; cf. Glorius et al. 2018, for rural Germany) or short welcoming speeches at the annual integration conferences (WP3WP4DE018). Politicians did not want to put their foot on their mouths and did not actively address the ‘hot topic’ of migration (WP3WP4DE010, 020_1, 020_3). Simultaneously, their lack of interest may be explained by the fact that the group of TCNs is not decisive for becoming (re-)elected (WP3WP4DE019_1, 020_2). Besides other reasons such as decreasing numbers of forced migrants, the COVID-19 pandemic recently shifted political priorities and is argued to be the cause for the non-renewal of contracts of professional staff dealing with that issue (WP3WP4DE025, see also chapter 5 and conclusions).

In summary, the allocation of forced migrants due to a dispersal scheme evoked and profoundly altered the awareness for TCNs in rural areas from 2015 on. Since then, and interrupted by the pandemic, diversity of the rural society and resulting inclusion or polarization have been part of local discourses. The attitudes of both the resident population and rural newcomers determine the way of interactions and finally how life-worlds and social structures change.

3. SOCIAL COHESION AND ITS CONSTITUTIVE ELEMENTS

Social cohesion among migrants themselves was achieved by **TCN families living together**, e.g. due to family reunification (WP3WP4DE020_3, 031), as it fostered their social wellbeing (WP3WP4DE031). Regarding the local population, the **thankfulness of refugees** to get the chance to work and get tolerated in their cultural identity was highlighted positively (WP3WP4DE030). Following the contact hypothesis (Allport 1954), **opportunities for interaction** were decisive for the establishment of social capital (WP3WP4DE012). This was positively influenced by **places of interaction** such as the school (WP3WP4DE025, cf. Jones & Lever 2014, for rural Wales), the workplace, the residential environment, or places for recreation. Regarding the latter, interviewees reported of already existing places such as festivals (WP3WP4DE003) or clubs and associations (WP3WP4DE007), e.g. celebrating religious feasts with the Turkish community (WP3WP4DE012). However, following the recent arrival and settlement of forced migrants, new places were established, too. This encompassed (regular) intercultural cafés or festivities, for instance, at the refugee accommodation, where food was an important mediator (WP3WP4DE012, 021_1, 021_4, Munzinger 2018), but also more functional gatherings, such as a ‘documents party’ (*Aktenparty*), where document folders for forced migrants were made (Evangelisches Dekanat Uffenheim 2018) or a newly established intercultural garden project (Munzinger 2018).

Organized hiking trips in the Alps, furthermore, provided a low threshold offer for social interaction between locals and refugee newcomers, who were recruited with the help of refugee relief groups and language course providers. Exchange, both during and after the hiking tour, e.g. in chat groups of messenger services reduced prejudices, raised awareness for the everyday situation of refugee newcomers including everyday racism, and fostered social connection. Today, these hiking tours are a no-brainer and self-organised privately (WP3WP4DE006). Opportunities for interaction as well as access to services were further enabled by **various mediators**, who were able to overcome ‘everyday otherness’ (cf. Radford 2016; see also chapter 4). These were found to be volunteers, who assisted in terms of access to employment or housing, for instance (WP3WP4DE003, 030, 031; see also chapter 2; cf. McAreavey 2012, for rural Northern Ireland) and children, who acted as a bridge for their parents (WP3WP4DE012, 020_3; Glorius et al. 2020; cf. Jones & Lever 2014, for rural Wales; Stachowski 2020, for rural Norway). Additionally, **positive press coverage**, i.e. putting out positive news about and success stories of immigrants (WP3WP4DE016, 019_3), and **prevention offers** against racism, antisemitism and Salafism were considered beneficial for social cohesion (WP3WP4DE010).

Various actors also supported the **acquisition of language and cultural knowledge of immigrants**, which helped them to get along on-site and helped them to overcome obstacles regarding social interactions on-site. An employer, for instance, initiated a language-learning project in cooperation with a rural small town (WP3WP4DE015), while employers, non-statutory welfare providers, and volunteers initiated language courses open to everyone, regardless of legal status or nationality, to fill time gaps to official courses provided by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) (WP3WP4DE015). To get acquainted with local institutions, some of the courses also entailed excursions, e.g. to the fire brigade, the police, the builder’s yard or recycling yard (WP3WP4DE015; cf. MATILDE Deliverable 4.3). To avoid that individuals do not need to learn German, a public housing company also governed against the spatial concentration of certain nationalities in housing estates (WP3WP4DE008).

Overall, a **dynamic hierarchization of TCNs** made by the resident population impacted on their social inclusion respectively social cohesion. Thereby, interviewees mentioned various intersecting aspects that determine the social standing of TCNs on-site:

- the **skin colour and appearance** (the darker the skin, the more negative the attitude; WP3WP4DE012, 020_2, 020_3, 025, 031),
- the **name** (the more foreign sounding, the more negative; WP3WP4DE012),
- the **family situation** (families are preferred over single men; the more children, the more negative; WP3WP4DE020_3),
- the **country of origin** (EU immigrants and US-Americans are preferred over immigrants from countries perceived as more culturally distant; WP3WP4DE020_2, 028),
- the **religion** (immigrants from Christian countries are preferred over immigrants from majority Muslim countries; WP3WP4DE016),
- the **education level** (the less educated, the more negative; WP3WP4DE012),
- the **employment status** (immigrants having a job or at least learning the language and studying are preferred over those staying at home; the less income, the more negative; WP3WP4DE016),
- their **expected economic impact to the region** (the less, the more negative; WP3WP4DE016, 028) and
- the **years spent on-site** (the shorter, the more negative, except for seasonal/circular immigrants; WP3WP4DE019_5).

Social cohesion, however, was hampered, in particular, due to the **legal insecurity of TCNs**. Asylum seekers as well as individuals with precarious residence permits were worrying about their future in general and their working permits and pending family reunifications and thus did not focus on their social inclusion (WP3WP4DE007, 020_3, 032). In addition, interviewees reported **worries of TCNs about family members do not present on-site, a lack of support due to the non-presence of family members and homesickness** (WP3WP4DE031, 032; cf. Penman & Goel 2017, for rural Australia), which explains TCNs’ often expressed wish to live close to migrant-related infrastructures such as Arabic shops

(WP3WP4DE012) or mosques (WP3WP4DE016), causing spatial concentration processes in rural small towns. Worries, a lack of support and homesickness in combination with traumatization and hampered access to and low quality of employment, housing or social connection, e.g. due to a negative attitude of the resident population, however, may also foster **domestic violence and psychic diseases** such as post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSDs), depressions, sleep disorders and substance dependences, both among adults and their children (WP3WP4DE020_3, 031). A **lack of financial resources**, e.g. due to remittances sent to family members despite receiving only a low salary as an apprentice (WP3WP4DE031), finally, may also hamper TCNs' inclusion, e.g. not being able to pay for further language courses (WP3WP4DE030) or high costs for public transport (WP3WP4DE002).

Interviewees also considered the attitude of the resident population detrimental to social cohesion. Firstly, a **lack of awareness of the presence of certain immigrant groups** was identified. Labour migrants or single individuals without social connection, for instance, often ran "under the radar" (WP3WP4DE012). A further issue reported was a **lack of experience with immigrants** at all or with those, who stay long-term. Regarding the latter aspect, especially differences compared to hosting transient groups such as Russian or Arab tourists or US soldiers were highlighted (WP3WP4DE012, 016, 028; see also chapter 2). Thereby, interviewees referred to a lack of normalization of immigration, e.g. neither being used to People of Colour (PoC) or women in burka on the streets nor to their appropriation of public space to use free Wi-Fi, for instance (WP3WP4DE009, 012, 018, 025, 028; Kagermeier 2018). In addition, a lack of cultural knowledge in how to deal with newcomers resulted in a lack of welcoming culture, a fear of the unknown and a distanced behaviour as well as a hesitance to approach each other (WP3WP4DE018, 021_3, 021_4, 027, 028, 030, 031; Roßberger 2017). Adding on a lack of experience with immigrants, a **lack of interest in interaction with immigrants** (and tourists) was detected, too, which became obvious from a survey of all associations and clubs in one of the rural districts on their offers for young people with refugee background as well as their need for support, which achieved a response rate of only one percent (WP3WP4DE025). Despite being active for years, an US-German association is also hardly successful. Eventually, a distinctly **negative attitude towards TCNs** was found to be based on three motives. The first one is that **other immigrant groups as well as locals were jealous and feared to lose privileges** (WP3WP4DE016, 028; cf. McAreavey 2012, for rural Northern Ireland; Hedberg & Haandrikman 2014, for rural Sweden; Jones & Lever 2014, for rural Wales). Interviewees, for instance, reported of jealousy among former guest workers and late repatriates from post-Soviet countries towards forced migrants as the latter group would have received massive support from the state and volunteers at no charge, while they themselves did not, or only with a high co-payment (WP3WP4DE003, 016, 020_1; Roßberger 2017). Immigrants who arrived earlier also felt superior, despite a lack of knowledge of German language, e.g. in the case of late repatriates from post-Soviet countries (WP3WP4DE012).

The same rivalry was reported for Arabic and Turkish youngsters, which resulted in after-school fights (WP3WP4DE012, 018). The second motive was **prejudices, rumours, and bar-room clichés about immigrants** (spread via social media) (WP3WP4DE010, 030; cf. Nelson & Hiemstra 2008, for rural USA; McAreavey & Krivokapic-Skoko 2019, for rural Australia; Rösch et al. 2020, for rural Germany). Negative practices of single persons were considered representative of all TCNs, e.g. selling drugs (WP3WP4DE009) or committing other criminal activities (WP3WP4DE016) and were often culturalized. TCNs were evaluated as a cost factor (in contrast to tourists who would leave money in the region (WP3WP4DE012, 016, 020_1), while their appropriation of public space was seen as detrimental to tourism and retail (WP3WP4DE025; Bock 2018, for rural Germany). The third one, finally, was **racism and xenophobia**. Interviewees, for instance, reported of negative attitudes of landlords towards PoC, individuals with a different visual appearance or foreign-sounding names as well as ones with low income (see above). Again, landlords, in particular, seemed to worry about tourists' opinions (WP3WP4DE012, 030).

Apart from a lack of awareness of the presence of TCNs, a lack of experience with and interest in interaction with as well as negative attitude towards them, a **lack of opportunities for participation** and a **lack of places of and time for interaction** were mentioned by the interviewees to establish social capital. Regarding the first aspect, immigrants mostly did not get the chance to 'direct' integration. Instead, "migrants have to abide by the rules" (WP3WP4DE016) of the resident population, resulting in immigrants' assimilation and existence as "background actors" (WP3WP4DE012). In addition, paternalism and

dependency structures hindered the development of agency of immigrants, e.g. in case the administration trusted on volunteers' continuous provision of shuttle services instead of supporting the acquisition of a driving license (cf. Patuzzi et al. 2020, for rural EU). A lack of public transport connections and a lack of opportunities to reach places were a further obstacle, which became obvious not least during the COVID-19 pandemic, when volunteers could not provide lifts for immigrants (WP3WP4DE010, 016; cf. Patuzzi et al. 2020, for rural EU; Stachowski 2020, for rural Norway). Regarding the latter aspect, i.e. a lack of places of and time for interaction, a dispersed settlement structure, segregate housing and, following the logics of catchment areas, also concentration processes in schools contributed to hamper social cohesion (WP3WP4DE007, 018, 031; Wittl 2013; cf. Nelson & Hiemstra 2008, for rural USA; Stachowski 2020, for rural Norway).

Spatial concentration processes⁸ occurred due the location of and segregation of forced, labour and seasonal migrants in group accommodation (WP3WP4DE012, 016, 020_3, 031), the residence rule on a specific municipality for individuals with a recognised protection status reliant on social welfare (WP3WP4DE020_1) and the lack of availability of and access to housing in general and for big families in particular (WP3WP4DE002, 003, 005, 008, 012, 020_1, 028, 031). The latter aspect is an outcome of a high rate of home ownership and scarce social housing with long waiting times (WP3WP4DE007, 015), the prevalence of tourism and second homes (WP3WP4DE012, 020_1, 028), the high rental prices (WP3WP4DE007, 012, 020_2, 020_3) and the discrimination by landlords, which is based on negative attitudes and experiences with immigrant tenants (WP3WP4DE002, 007, 012, 016, 024, 031, see also above; Weidinger & Kordel 2020; cf. Nelson & Hiemstra 2008, for rural USA). Concentration processes also occurred due to the passing on of apartments within one's social networks, which could be evaluated also as a lack of social bridges to the local population (WP3WP4DE012, 020_1, 030, 032). Besides, also a lack of places in nurseries/kindergartens were considered detrimental to establish social capital (WP3WP4DE012). A lack of time for interaction was especially caused by family duties, long working hours, exhausting work, and shift work, not least due to employment below the level of qualification and exploitation, as well as time spent on commuting given the long distances in rural areas (WP3WP4DE007, 009, 015; cf. Nelson & Hiemstra 2008, for rural USA; Huizinga & van Hoven 2018, for the Netherlands). Regular and one-time events, thus, often did not match the timetables of immigrants (WP3WP4DE012). Due to social distancing, the COVID-19 pandemic, negatively affected the cumulation of social capital, e.g. towards volunteers (WP3WP4DE010, 016; cf. Patuzzi et al. 2020, for rural EU). Security issues of the US government, following 9/11, finally, were found to hamper social interaction between US military personnel and the resident population, as they did no longer regularly participate in events 'off-post' nor held former days of open doors 'on-post' anymore (WP3WP4DE028).

4. ACTIVE PARTICIPATION AND CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS

According to the interviewees, the **motivation for active participation of TCNs** seemed to differ between immigrant groups. While former labour migrants from Turkey⁹, for instance, accepted exclusion and devaluation and "said yes to everything" in the 1960s or 1970s, today, they want to get involved and want to participate in society (WP3WP4DE016). Refugee newcomers from Syria, in contrast, aim to participate actively to show gratitude towards the receiving society (WP3WP4DE010). Volunteers or integration guides also motivate refugee newcomers to engage, but self-motivation, e.g. due to self-interest and capabilities, is seen as the most important factor of success for sustainable participation (WP3WP4DE010, 016, 023, 025, 028).

⁸ In one village close to a middle town in one of the rural districts, a path-dependent process of spatial concentration of (im)migrants was witnessed. The village was founded by the Nazis to tackle the housing problem of workers, who could not afford an apartment in the expensive towns. Later, it accommodated refugees and expellees after World War II, guest workers from Italy and Turkey from the 1960s on and, more recently also forced migrants (WP3WP4DE012). Locals, especially seniors, protested against further immigration to the village due to fear of stigmatization and alienation (WP3WP4DE012).

⁹ These kinds of immigrants are usually referred to as 'guest workers' (Chin 2009).

Considering the different **areas of active participation of TCNs**, interviewees reported volunteering that can be categorised along a continuum, i.e. from informal to formal. Rather informal was the **participation in get-togethers with a focus on intercultural and interreligious dialogue**. Exemplarily, interviewees mentioned round table discussions ('coffee klatch'), which were often attended by volunteers and women (WP3WP4DE010), the one-time organisation of prayers in Eritrean style including the provision of foodstuff, which was well-received by local Catholics and fostered interaction (WP3WP4DE023), or monthly oecumenical prayers for peace, including finger food as a platform of exchange. The latter events were organised both by the protestant church and the mosque association. However, it was criticised that there would always be the same people, while the interest of Muslims seemed to be low (WP3WP4DE016). Besides, TCNs also engaged themselves as **lay cultural and language interpreters** for other immigrants (WP3WP4DE002, 012, 028, 031; Bayerwald-Bote 2019; see also chapter 5; cf. Hessisches Ministerium für Soziales und Integration 2018, for (rural) Germany). This happened both informally, i.e. by occasion in everyday situations such as at the foodbank, where they taught newly arrived TCN users how to behave in the queue (WP3WP4DE023), and formally, i.e. as part of a standardised qualification programme such as the *Dachau model* (WP3WP4DE012, 031; Dachauer Forum – Katholische Erwachsenenbildung e.V. 2021). They interpreted during visits to the authorities or at counselling interviews. Since TCNs receive compensation for that task, the demand of TCNs was very high in one of the districts and a selection had to be made (WP3WP4DE010). In addition, informal and formal engagement of TCNs was found in both **mosque communities and migrant associations**. Newly arrived TCNs not only opened mosques in a self-organized manner to do Friday prayers (Weidinger et al. 2017; cf. Nelson & Hiemstra 2008, for rural USA), but also offered and still offer language courses for children or women (Weidinger et al. 2017).

Migrant associations, in addition, were founded to organise joint activities, intercultural dialogue and assist other refugee newcomers with integration (WP3WP4DE025; Bayerwald-Bote 2020). Apart from establishing their own associations, single cases of **active participation in local associations** were reported by the interviewees (WP3WP4DE003). This engagement can be split up in four fields: nature-based, sports-based and technology-based activities as well as and those related to services of general interest. In the first field, i.e. nature-based activities, TCNs and especially forced migrants got involved in the Alpine Association (WP3WP4DE010) and a newly founded association, where forest roads were reconstructed together with locals, while, in another case, hiking tours were offered by refugee guides that aimed at bringing together immigrants and locals (WP3WP4DE006). In the second field, i.e. sports, interviewees highlighted low thresholds for TCNs to enter these kind of clubs (WP3WP4DE028) and presented individual cases of participation in a dance association, where one could meet other individuals from the same nationality (WP3WP4DE007), as well as in sports clubs. Regarding the latter, special divisions were opened to meet the particular interests of TCNs, e.g. boxing, cricket or volleyball (WP3WP4DE010, 022, 025). In the third and fourth field, i.e. technics and services of general interest, their participation in a repair café and the fire brigade were mentioned (WP3WP4DE010). Rather formal engagement happened when TCNs joined **work councils** of industrial firms and corporations (WP3WP4DE026, in the case of second-generation Turkish Germans), the rural district **integration advisory board** (WP3WP4DE003) or when they were invited to **round table discussions** in the rural district dealing with integration (WP3WP4DE025). Regarding the latter, an interviewee prevised a potential overburden of immigrants to represent a very heterogeneous group and 'speak for' all fellows as well as a fear that immigrants are reduced to the topic of integration. Consequently, she did not forward all requests for participation to the target group (WP3WP4DE025).

When assessing the social impact of TCNs, it is necessary to pay attention to the **reasons for a lack of active participation** as this may hamper their impact on rural and mountain areas. Interviewees reported on both individual and structural reasons, why TCNs often did not engage on-site. Some TCNs wanted to **concentrate on their individual careers** and, for instance, focused on their language courses, while others were busy with their work and, thus, **lacked respective time resources** for volunteering (WP3WP4DE016, see also chapter 3). Others, instead, **lacked place-based belonging** or sought to leave the region in the future and therefore did not want to get involved (cf. Stachowski 2020, for rural Norway). **Religious beliefs** of TCNs may be detrimental, too, e.g. in case parents do not allow their daughters to join

certain clubs such as a dance association (WP3WP4DE007). Apart from that, **language barriers** as well as a **different cultural understanding of volunteering**, e.g. focus on family or neighbours versus focus on the local community in general, were mentioned (WP3WP4DE016). Furthermore, interviewees estimated that own problems such as **traumatization or worries about family members** in other parts of the world led to the fact that they do not have “the physical and psychic power to volunteer” (WP3WP4DE016, see also chapter 3). Active participation was also hampered due to a **lack of opportunity structures and platforms** such as a foreigners’ advisory bodies or integration advisory bodies, which were rejected by local politics in one of the rural districts (WP3WP4DE002, 007, 025; see also chapter 2). Many clubs and associations, furthermore, are attested a **lack of openness towards TCNs** (see also chapter 3), while thresholds especially among ‘homogeneous’ associations such as the traditional band or the society for traditional costumes were considered high (WP3WP4DE023, 028). Some clubs and associations hesitated to take TCNs after negative experiences related to perceived **cultural differences**, e.g. in terms of irregular participation or a lack of notice of departure, which could only be overcome by a rising awareness and mutual learning process of both locals and immigrants (WP3WP4DE016, see also chapter 2). In case clubs and associations were more open, they often expected immigrants to do the first step: “Everybody can participate. They just need to call and come here” (WP3WP4DE025, from a third perspective). In contrast, however, interviewees reported that it is **difficult to reach immigrants**, who neither attended school, lived in asylum accommodation, or assisted living nor frequented counselling services (WP3WP4DE025). Further structural reasons fostering non-participation were **constrained everyday mobility of TCNs** (WP3WP4DE016) and **high ‘entry costs’ for TCNs** due to expensive equipment, e.g. when joining ski clubs or societies for traditional costumes (WP3WP4DE023, 028). Besides, **high regular costs** may be confronted with low advantages due to COVID-19-related closures and led to the fact that TCNs decided to cancel their memberships (WP3WP4DE025). A **high level of bureaucracy** to open a bank account or held mandatory annual general assemblies, finally, was found to deter immigrants from founding their own associations (WP3WP4DE025).

Measures to foster active participation of TCNs were both of general and specific kind. On the one hand, federal state associations of the fire brigades, sports, and rifle as well as non-statutory welfare providers such as the Bavarian Red Cross (BRK) or Malteser signed a **declaration** and wanted to support each other in terms of integration of immigrants (WP3WP4DE016). On the other hand, on-site, the **provision of meeting spaces** was floated, e.g. a soccer field and a youth club were supplied for a refugee relief group to do some sports with refugee newcomers respectively for a refugee organization to have a weekend retreat (WP3WP4DE023, 025). In addition, liaising between clubs and associations and potential TCN members was facilitated by professionals as well as immigrants, who were already members there (WP3WP4DE010, 016, 025). These **bridge-builders and mediators**, for instance, had separate personal conversations with responsible persons at the clubs and with TCNs in the first step, initiated a dialogue between them in the second and finally accompanied TCNs to the first meetings (WP3WP4DE025; see also chapter 3; cf. Mann et al. 2018, for rural Germany). While long-term support of TCNs was considered necessary, it was impossible for professionals to maintain the support given their limited working hours. Volunteers, similarly, argued that they do not have capacities either (WP3WP4DE025). A further measure to foster active participation of TCNs was the **promotion of clubs and associations and their mode of operation** in the integration classes for foreigners in one of the rural districts’ vocational schools (WP3WP4DE025). To overcome everyday mobility of TCNs, **lifts**, e.g. to training sessions, were provided by coaches, other club members or integration guides (WP3WP4DE016, 025). To deal with high costs, e.g. for membership subscription or equipment, eventually, a **loan** for hiking gear or a **waiver** for membership subscription were offered from a newly founded association and an open-minded sports club (WP3WP4DE006, 025).

5. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF SERVICES

The immigration of TCNs over the last couple of years first and foremost resulted in the **creation of new (qualified)¹⁰ jobs in the social sectors (or the safeguarding of existing ones)** to meet the TCNs' specific needs and provide respective services (WP3WP4DE012, 020_3, 028; cf. Patuzzi et al. 2020, for the rural EU). These positions were manifold and encompassed commissioners for integration in the public administration and in private companies, case workers in the administration, social workers at schools and in refugee accommodation as well as various counselling services such as refugee and integration counsellors, migration counsellors, the youth migration service (*Jugendmigrationsdienst*, JMD), canvassers of vocational training for refugees, job mentors or welcome guides. In addition, posts for coordination and networking activities were implemented, e.g. so-called coordinators of educational offers for new immigrants or integration guides for the coordination and support of volunteers and civil actors (Kordel & Weidinger 2021). In the case of teachers for language and integration courses, the influx of forced migrants following 2015 led to a "wild growth of teaching staff" (WP3WP4DE021_4). However, because many of the positions mentioned are project-funded, they are on a temporary basis only (WP3WP4DE012, 021_1, 021_2, 028). As a result of the end of funding schemes, certain positions were already cut in the past or currently face expiration (WP3WP4DE021_2; see also chapter 2).

In the case of language and integration courses, in addition, a decreasing demand for teachers must be highlighted: While 21 courses were offered in one of the rural districts in the past, at the time of investigation there were only nine (WP3WP4DE021_4). Consequently, contracts were not renewed, or people had to be dismissed¹¹. Some of the positions, however, could be transformed to indefinite positions targeting all immigrants (e.g. Commissioner for integration at the rural district administration, WP3WP4DE012, 028) or even a general audience (e.g. Canvassers of Vocational Training, WP3WP4DE004). This, sometimes, went hand in hand with **organizational change**, i.e. the reorganization of departments within the administration (WP3WP4DE012). In other cases, retraining and transfers took place. Counsellors targeting immigrants, for instance, were relocated to other counselling services such as addiction or credit counselling, where they potentially met their clients again and could make use of their foundation of trust and their language skills, too (WP3WP4DE028; see also MATILDE Deliverable 4.3).

Besides new jobs, the arrival and settlement of TCNs also led to the (temporary) **creation of new (infra)structures**. Based on an initiative of the Bavarian State Ministry for Housing, Construction and Transport, new housing estates were erected as part of the emergency programme, partly targeting TCNs (WP3WP4DE019_4; Kordel & Weidinger 2021). The newly funded positions mentioned above, similarly, often were not reserved for TCNs only, but open for other immigrants, Germans with a migration background¹² and the resident population as a whole (WP3WP4DE020), e.g. in the case of social workers at schools¹³. In reaction to rising conflicts between Arab and Turkish young adults, a dependence of the youth club of the district was temporarily opened on-site, too (WP3WP4DE012). Eventually, also specific migrant-related infrastructures were established that acted as a social hub, e.g. mosques, grocery stores and (fast food) restaurants, which were not present in the regions beforehand (see also chapter 4; cf. Nelson & Hiemstra 2008, for rural USA; cf. MATILDE Deliverable 4.3).

However, the social impact of TCNs in terms of **access to and quality of services was and is hampered** because the services often neither reflected the composition or individual needs of immigrants nor rural specificities. **Language barriers** on part of TCNs diminished over time, especially among young people who learned German more quickly than parents with children (WP3WP4DE031). However, they often remained in situations where the resident population was using Bavarian dialect, e.g. teachers in

¹⁰ Competitive tendering procedures, e.g. for language and integration courses, are organized around the fact that 'the cheapest' wins, which leads to lowballing and may result in an exploitation of teachers and staff (WP3WP4DE021_3).

¹¹ Individuals who arrived directly from university already intended to leave at some point and left. Thus, there were no dismissals due to operating reasons. Staff retention was no issue for them (WP3WP4DE028).

¹² An individual has a migration background, if he or she, or at least one parent, was not born with German citizenship. This definition specifically includes immigrant and non-immigrant foreigners, immigrant and non-immigrant naturalized citizens as well as (late) repatriates and their descendants born as Germans (Statistisches Bundesamt 2021). For a critical discussion of this term, e.g. due to its focus on inherited citizenship and ancestry, see Will (2019) or Fachkommission Integrationsfähigkeit (2021).

¹³ Trauma therapy in Germany, in addition, improved in quality following the arrival of forced migrants in 2015 as more people completed a respective training, which was of benefit also to Germans (WP3WP4DE031).

vocational schools (WP3WP4DE029). A **lack of time resources** due to childcare obligations as well as closed nurseries and home schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic also prevented mothers from attending language courses (WP3WP4DE021_4, 021_5). A **lack of technical competencies**, e.g. not being able to use laptops or being unused to email communication, were another obstacle that became visible during the COVID-19 pandemic and that aggravated competence transfer in times of social distancing (WP3WP4DE004, 014, 021_2) as well as home schooling (WP3WP4DE018, 031). The pandemic, however, forced immigrants to be active on their own and fostered their self-efficacy and self-reliance (WP3WP4DE020_1, 020_2). **Family structures** also aggravated access to the private housing market as apartments often were not spacious enough for big families. Changing perspective, i.e. from individual to rather structural issues, specific **funding regulations** were found to led to the fact that (advanced) language and integration courses could not be offered on-site due to the low numbers of immigrants and resulted in long waiting times of students (WP3WP4DE021_2). Funding regulations as well as **insurance-legal issues** also excluded certain groups of immigrants or locals from newly established services such as shuttle services and fostered animosities (cf. Patuzzi et al. 2020, for rural EU). **Constrained everyday mobility** was reported to have a negative impact on TCNs' access to and the quality of services and had various causes: a lack of or only irregularly operating public transport connections (WP3WP4DE021_4), long distances, e.g. to reach special services (WP3WP4DE031, Kordel & Weidinger 2017), high costs for public transport even at short distances, especially for families (WP3WP4DE021_5, Kordel & Weidinger 2017), and a complex bus ticket system (WP3WP4DE021_3).

A further issue was a **lack of infrastructure** on-site, e.g. infrastructures for further education (WP3WP4DE016; cf. Patuzzi et al. 2020, for rural EU), housing to accommodate recruited skilled workers (WP3WP4DE019_3), internet infrastructure in rural areas in general and in refugee accommodation in particular (WP3WP4DE021_2) or a lack of mobile devices (WP3WP4DE018, 020_1, 020_2, 020_3, 021_4). Both internet connection and mobile devices were a precondition for providing decentralized counselling (WP3WP4DE020_1) as well as for participating in virtual language and integration courses and home schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic (WP3WP4DE001, 004, 018, 020_1). Consequently, compulsory school attendance could sometimes not be fulfilled (WP3WP4DE018, 021_4). An additional factor that was detrimental to the social impact of TCNs was a **lack of competencies** of the professional staff in how to deal with TCNs as well as in how to best communicate information to them (WP3WP4DE021_3, 021_5), which – in combination with language barriers – led to misunderstandings in the authorities (WP3WP4DE012). Interviewees also reported of a **lack of (intercultural) openness** and **racism/xenophobia** among the staff, e.g. manifested in the internal use of the N-word (WP3WP4DE012, see also chapter 3), as well as a **lack of interest in intercultural trainings** to prevent, instead of just discuss, problem cases (WP3WP4DE028). Furthermore, a **lack of time capacities** of teachers resulted in difficulties with dedicating themselves to specific challenges of immigrant children or only had insufficient time for providing intensive instructions and support (WP3WP4DE021_1; cf. Jones & Lever 2014, for rural Wales). Lay interpreters, in addition, were not always disposable for professionals as they often also had a steady job (WP3WP4DE031, see also chapter 4). Finally, the **fluctuation of contact persons** in administration and teaching due to maternity leaves, resignations and new hires was criticised as both TCNs and volunteers engaged in refugee relief had to get acquainted with new persons again and again (WP3WP4DE010, 021_2).

Over time, **various measures to overcome individual and structural impediments and foster TCNs' access to and the quality of services** were implemented. To deal with the specific demands of mothers in terms of language acquisition, **language courses with childcare offers** were initiated (WP3WP4DE018, 021_5). For large families – both Germans and immigrant ones –, social housing providers started to construct **more spacious apartments** (WP3WP4DE008). Constrained mobility and spatial distance in rural areas were tackled by means of **decentralized counselling** (WP3WP4DE003, 021_2, 028)¹⁴. Also, events were organised in a decentralised manner, i.e. spread over the rural districts, to reduce travel time and distance (WP3WP4DE028). In addition to the prevention of mobility, the improvement of mobility was focused. Therefore, **lifts** to visits to the authorities or consultation-hours of

¹⁴ Due to social distancing in times of the COVID-19 pandemic, face-to-face-counselling was adapted to virtual counselling recently (WP3WP4DE001, 010, 022; Bayerwald-Bote 2021).

counselling were provided by various actors (WP3WP4DE021_1, 021_4, 031), while appeals for donation in the local newspaper aimed at raising **used bikes** for international students of a vocational school and for refugee newcomers (WP3WP4DE032). Also **driving licenses** were particularly funded, e.g. by the *Jobcenter* (WP3WP4DE028).

A pragmatic handling of the mobility situation became manifest when timetables of public transport and alternative transport options were taken into consideration for arranging appointments (WP3WP4DE031). Besides, infrastructural shortcomings were overcome by means of **providing internet** in emergency accommodation (WP3WP4DE020_3) **and/or devices for virtual learning**, drawing on donations, loans at schools or applications for refund of the costs at the *Jobcenter* for those reliant on social welfare (WP3WP4DE018, 020_1, 020_2, 020_3, 021_2, 021_5). To overcome social distance as well as language and cultural barriers, and foster intercultural understanding, **welcoming receptions**, e.g. for refugee newcomers, were implemented by a few mayors (e.g. Bayerwald-Bote 2019). A vocational school for international students also instated a **troubleshooter**, who explained the local public transport system, assisted with bureaucracy, and revealed opportunities for social interaction (WP3WP4DE032, for similar findings in private companies, see also MATILDE Deliverable 4.3). To overcome the language barrier, **employees with respective language and cultural skills** were hired, e.g. in refugee and integration counselling (WP3WP4DE028) or kindergartens (Arberland REGio GmbH 2018), and **interpreting services** were and are offered by means of lay cultural and language interpreters among the TCNs (WP3WP4DE002, 021_2, 021_5, 028, 031; see also chapter 4; cf. Patuzzi et al. 2020, for rural EU)¹⁵.

In addition, **new forms of communication** were used to interact with TCNs, e.g. social networks and social media (WP3WP4DE020_1, 020_2, 020_3). Flyers with pictures, instead, served as a translation aid during counselling only (WP3WP4DE020_3), while a food bank provided signs about their products (WP3WP4DE023). As another measure, **intercultural opening and sensitization** in administration, libraries, kindergartens, and schools was fostered (WP3WP4DE003; cf. Patuzzi et al. 2020, for rural EU). The *Jobcenter* in one district, for instance, became more sensitive and understanding towards their both German and foreign clients' difficulties to catch up with the performance-orientation of the region after being confronted with the experiences of forced migrants (WP3WP4DE031). Libraries, in addition, presented books dealing with immigration, flight and trauma at the annual integration conference of a rural district (WP3WP4DE018).

In kindergartens and schools, a book box with books dealing with diversity, reading, and learning mentors (WP3WP4DE018) as well as a 'Bavarian word of the week'-challenge were established. Regarding the latter, immigrants of a vocational school should be sensitized for the Bavarian dialect (WP3WP4DE032). To reduce prejudices of private landlords, in particular, **housing seminars for tenant qualification** were initiated for refugee newcomers, following the *Neusäß model* (WP3WP4DE015, 020_2; Mieterqualifizierung Neusässer Konzept 2021). The certificates, however, were no *cartes blanches* (WP3WP4DE020_2, 020_3), but only improved TCNs' access to social housing (WP3WP4DE015). Finally, some municipalities followed the **Teisnach model** to release fears of private landlords and rented private houses and sublet them to refugees with a recognised protection status (Buchner 2016).

6. CONCLUSIONS

The social impact of TCNs in terms of the MSDs was firstly evaluated with regard to an **inclusive or polarized society**. While a welcoming culture was reported in the MATILDE region after 2015, polarization arose in parallel and the open and inclusive notion after the arrival and settlement of forced migrants was challenged. For a sustainable and rooted understanding of an inclusive society at rural places, various actors, sometimes also encompassing local elites, at certain localities make tremendous efforts, while, at other places, diversity is met with disregard. For **social cohesion**, opportunities for interaction, facilitated

¹⁵ In addition, in 2015, soldiers from the German army stationed on-site assisted with interpreting in dealing with Dari-speaking TCNs (WP3WP4DE023).

by mediators, were identified as key in the MATILDE region of Bavaria. By enabling encounters, the attitudes of the resident population could be changed partly. However, cohesion is challenged by a hierarchization of immigrants as well as conflictive interactions within the migrant communities. **Active participation** of TCNs is mostly visible in terms of intercultural and inter-religious activities. While such an involvement might be event-like, a more continuous participation is realised by involving immigrants as volunteers, e.g. as lay interpreters. Becoming engaged in local associations is reported quite rarely and, as a consequence, rural societies seem to be quite fragmented. Reasons for a lack of participation are mutually dependent and simultaneously individual (e.g. lack of time, lack of language competencies) and related to the attitudes of the society sketched above. Regarding **access to and quality of services**, TCNs in rural and mountain areas created new jobs and infrastructures, first but foremost in the social sector. Counselling activities are present in all rural districts under study, while the access for immigrants is hampered because of family-related obligations, language barriers or restricted everyday mobility, while their legal status is often treated pragmatically. Having acknowledged such barriers, local stakeholders overcome them by, for instance, providing childcare, lifts, or a tenant qualification.

Positive social implications are observable when actors continuously learn from immigrants' life-worlds, identify barriers, and adapt and modify their offerings. Moreover, a continuation of infrastructures must be realised and is also desired in the rural districts, since they fear a cutting of funding due to decreasing number of arriving immigrants (WP3WP4DE031) or as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (WP3WP4DE001).

Closing with **current and future challenges and needs**, a possible strategy for a continuation of social infrastructures would be a demigrantization and a mainstreaming of jobs and services, i.e. from target-group specific to whole of society-approaches (Dahinden 2016; Papademetriou & Benton 2016). Simultaneously, stakeholders (use their room for maneuver and) make efforts to include migrant groups that are less visible, like EU-immigrants (WP3WP4DE010, 016) or even locals (WP3WP4DE016), as they often face similar problems in rural areas. Related to this issue, the communication of immigration as an opportunity for the region must be improved (WP3WP4DE019), also drawing on the regional identity and history of the region (WP3WP4DE019_6). General acceptance in a region can also be fostered by inter-municipal networking (WP3WP4DE019_1), while the involvement of politicians or larger employers in general must be strengthened, e.g. inviting them to round tables or discussions (WP3WP4DE007, 019). To increase the engagement of TCN newcomers, recruiting strategies for local associations must be intensified (WP3WP4DE016), against the backdrop of ageing, especially for young people (WP3WP4DE025). Besides, bottom-up activities of immigrants should be supported (WP3WP4DE016). The interaction between immigrants and locals could be strengthened (WP3WP4DE027), without neglecting the special need for social inclusion of immigrants (WP3WP4DE007) and forced migrants in particular (WP3WP4DE031). Finally, encouraging immigrants to stay in rural and mountain areas and encouraging a place-based belonging is considered as prerequisite for sustainable and long-term positive implications of TCNs. By doing so and highlighting the opportunities in rural areas, regional and local stakeholders could counteract the prevailing assumption of rural areas as 'transient places' for immigrants.

Social impact assessment provided a first glimpse into realms affected and subsequently transformed by the arrival and settlement of TCNs. At the same time, practices and measures differed widely between regions. Thus, local case studies, foreseen in WP5 will be able to capture the local diversity on the one hand and dig deeper into locally relevant challenges and changes.

STRENGTHS

- Intercultural opening of society in the course of a self-reflection about one's own position as a result of encounters
- Civic engagement of locals for TCNs who were often not engaged before
- Civic engagement of TCNs (rare)
- Organizational changes and intercultural opening in administration

WEAKNESSES

- Long-term social innovation focused only on the denser populated small towns, where TCNs concentrate
- Welcoming culture in 2015 was only temporary and limited to forced migrants, social integration of TCNs is a long-term issue, which is currently also overshadowed by the COVID-19 pandemic
- Some local elites, e.g. politicians, were and are rather inactive in terms of social integration of TCNs

OPPORTUNITIES

- problems that already existed in (rural) Germany became more salient because of presence of TCNs
- volunteers are discovered as a valuable complement to the administration
- second-hand shops / clothing shops for forced migrants could be established as regular, long-standing whole-of-society offer, often occupying former vacancies in the centres of the towns
- negative attitudes on part of locals could partly be overcome by means of interaction with TCNs

THREATS

- legal insecurity of TCNs
- lacking (psychological) well-being of TCNs
- the lack of financial resources of TCNs hampers their participation
- residential concentration or even segregation of TCNs result in lack of opportunities for interaction
- lacking experience with TCNs as well as prejudices, rumours and bar-room clichés about TCNs among locals fostered polarization, strong group building processes and increased xenophobia; this had further consequences, such as lack of access to private housing or employment
- lack of interest among locals in interaction with TCNs
- lacking positions in administration and non-statutory welfare providers dealing with social integration of TCNs that are on an indefinite contract basis

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1. INTRODUCTION

In Italy, there are **two case-studies under investigation**, located at the two extremes of the Alpine range: South Tyrol (that coincides with the autonomous province of Bolzano/Bozen) and the Metropolitan City of Turin (located in Piedmont region). Since these two regions are **very different in terms of geographical, socio-economic, and historical-cultural characteristics**, the report will present the results of the interviews and focus groups realized, taking into account these local specificities. Therefore, the results of this qualitative investigation will be presented as path-dependent and contextualized, developing the analysis through a **comparative perspective**.

The participants from South Tyrol and from MC Turin were selected because they play an important role in the various public (local administrations, services of general interest, etc.) and private (associations, NGOs, private research centres, etc.) spheres, having a clear expertise on migration in the respective territories. Moreover, interviews were also conducted with intellectuals (schoolteachers, journalists, writers, university professors, filmmakers) either as experts in the field or because they themselves have a migration background.

The two case-studies occupy, almost paradigmatically, opposite positions within the scenario of Italian rural/mountainous realities, even if both territories are located on the international border with other countries (France, Austria, Switzerland) and are similar in size (7,000 square kilometres South Tyrol; 6,800 MC Turin).

South Tyrol, however, is predominantly mountainous and has a small/medium sized regional capital (Bolzano, about 100,000 inhabitants) located in the centre of the territory, from which its valleys, some of which are transit valleys and others closed, radiate out almost like a circle. From an economic point of view, this is a prospering region with the highest regional gross domestic product per capita compared to other MATILDE regions and one of the highest in Italy. The driving forces behind this successful performance are related to regional broad fiscal autonomy, the province's position along the Brenner axis and a strong economic exchange in particular with the German speaking countries Austria and Germany. While the city of Bolzano hosts most of the services of general interest and several medium-small size enterprises (high-tech, logistics, communication, etc.), a flourishing economy based on intensive mountain agriculture and tourism has been developing since decades even in inner valleys and mountain sites. The population is widely dispersed throughout the valleys, amounting to 553,000 inhabitants with a population density of only 72 square kilometres for 116 municipalities. It is a bilingual community, with Italian being spoken by only a quarter of the population and German being spoken by the remaining population, especially in the mountain valleys. A small minority also speaks Ladin.

The **Metropolitan City of Turin**, on the other hand, is located in the centre of a region – Piedmont – characterized by several mountain valleys (some transit, some closed), all concentrated into the west part of the region, while the rest of the territory is made of plains and hills. The Metropolitan City of Turin has a population more than four times that of the province of Bolzano (2.215,000 inhabitants compared with 533,000 in Bolzano), and a widespread presence of municipalities (312 compared with 116 in Bolzano), with a population density per square kilometer of 324, compared with 72 in South Tyrol. The capital city – Turin – however, has very different characteristics from those of Bolzano, obviously because of its large size, eight times larger than Bolzano (around 850,000 inhabitants), but above all because of its economic and social history. Turin, with Genoa and Milan, constituted the so-called “industrial triangle” of Italy and, for this reason, has a long history of internal in-migration: first, from the beginning of the 20th century,

from the neighboring mountain valleys; then, since the 1950s, from the north-eastern and southern regions of Italy.

Considering **the interviewees**, in the case of **South Tyrol** both for the individual interviews and for the focus groups, they were all previously selected and contacted by the local partner, Caritas Bozen-Bolzano, in accordance with the research team. This had the advantage of facilitating the work of the interviewers, as interviewees had already been informed about the Matilde project in its essential lines and objectives. However, the fact of having a single “intermediary” at the local level brought to some homogenization of the sample, so that it can be said that the interviewees showed similar visions and a fairly similar capacity to generalize the problems.

On the other hand, the interviewees from **MC Turin**, were identified through different brokers and local contacts: thanks to information and suggestions from two different administrative sectors of the Turin metropolitan city, as to researchers' networks (involving the University of Turin) and private contacts, too. This led to a more heterogeneous sample and a wider range of individual opinions, although not always this has implied an equal capacity for generalization.

After conducting the **20 individual interviews** in the two case studies, **three focus groups** were carried out, two on a common territorial basis (one with seven participants from South Tyrol; the other with eight participants from the metropolitan city of Turin); the third was organized involving 6 participants from the two regions (three for each one), in order to highlight how territorial specificities (economic vocation, local history, public policies, cultures, etc.) can have a different impact on the relationship between migration and mountain/rural areas. The participants involved were all expressing pro-migration positions, although each had a different angle of vision and a different capacity for generalization. In the first focus group (South Tyrol) most of the participants already knew each other, while in the second (MC Turin) and third focus groups they knew each other only partially.

The focus groups were held online on the Zoom platform, with a researcher conducting the interaction and another researcher as a non-participant observer, taking written notes and audio-recording. Methodologically speaking, holding the focus groups online meant that there was less human/social interaction between the participants, who were intervening one after the other, more than developing an interpersonal/horizontal dialectics. With respect to the information collected, the third and mixed focus group resulted indeed more interesting, also for the participants, who were able to explicitly compare the different needs and perspectives of the two territories examined.

2. SOCIAL INCLUSION AND POLARIZATION

While approaching the issue of social inclusion, we should consider that migrants arriving and settling down in the two considered regions reveal **different migratory histories and trajectories**. For both territories, some foreign populations (e.g. Moroccans, Albanians and Romanians) have migratory rooting at local level that began decades ago, from the 1990s onwards. At the same time, both regions show more recent migration flows from sub-Saharan Africa, crossing the Mediterranean Sea, and from Asia and the Middle East, via the Balkan route: these last populations show different outcomes also in terms of interest for, and possibility of establishing roots in mountain and rural areas of Italy.

In both the territories, **professional specialization** has been developing often on the basis of previous skills and professional traditions characterizing different ethnic groups: this is the case, for example, of the Albanians in the building sector, or the Macedonians in porphyry quarries, or the Maghrebi in personal services, cleaning and micro-commerce, while the migrants from Bangladesh and Pakistan seem more involved in tourism and catering services, and the Eastern European (in South Tyrol) and sub-Saharan (in MC Turin) population in agriculture.

The opinion that **foreign immigrants represent an opportunity** for the socio-economic and cultural development of the mountain and rural areas of the respective territories is unanimously acknowledged among the interviewees. However, the **needs of the two territories seem profoundly**

different and this depends, for the large part, on the differences in the management of mountain and rural areas revealed by the words of the participants interviewed.

South Tyrol in fact is perceived mainly as characterized by a rural economy which, thanks to local policies developed over decades, continues to allow new generations to plan their lives in the valleys, contrasting demographic decline and ageing, typical of many Alpine regions, like Piedmont. This economy is complemented by tourism. Moreover, the road infrastructure linking even the inner valleys, to the urban centres is defined as very good, and the same evaluation receives the public transportation; according to the interviewees, this is efficient and allows daily connections between the villages scattered throughout the valleys, and between the villages and Bolzano. These favours commuting and work mobility strategies that can benefit everyone, locals, and migrants alike.

The industrial development that had characterized for decades the **Metropolitan City of Turin** has mainly brought two consequences: the progressive development, albeit with periods of social tension and conflict, of an adaptive capacity of the territory towards successive waves of (internal and international) immigration, then developing a kind of pluralist vocation at urban level. On the other hand, a governance approach focused on the urban core of the region (the industrial city of Turin), to the detriment of the peripheries, i.e. rural and mountain areas. This has implied that the dramatic depopulation of mountain valleys, following industrialization processes, has not been slowed down by local policies put in place to contrast it, as it happened in South Tyrol; neither have social and economic shock absorbers been provided for those who have remained, so that mountain communities have been progressively weakened.

According to the majority of the interviewees, this weakening is clearly visible in the road infrastructure linking the villages to the capital city, as well as in the public transportation network, which has been reduced over the decades. In particular, the development strategies for the road and transport network clearly outline the public policies that have guided the development of mountain areas for decades, giving priority to the transit valleys (Val di Susa and Chisone), which have also been the focus of a flourishing tourist economy. As a result, the mountain valleys of the metropolitan city of Turin appear profoundly different from one to another: while some of them profit from transit and tourism, other ones have progressively been abandoned, even though they are very close to the capital city. A case apart is Val Pellice: from the interviews it emerges that the ancient migratory history of its local populations and the religious dimension of the territories can profoundly influence the local policies of reception towards migrants, overcoming to some extent the infrastructural difficulties. These different territorial resources and assets imply **different attractiveness of the territories with respect to immigrants**.

Regarding **South Tyrol**, it emerges from the interviews and focus groups that migrants arriving in this region have often the concrete **possibility to settle down permanently** even in the inner valleys, thanks to the opportunities that the local labour market offers, mainly in agriculture and tourism, but also in welfare and care services. However, seasonal jobs seem also very relevant, like in the fruit-picking sector or in the wood industry and forestry, and to some extent even in the tourist sector.

Three main factors partly reduce the attractiveness of rural and mountain territories in South Tyrol, and consequently the possibilities of integration for migrants: the high cost of housing, and the access to the rental market in general; the seasonality of a relevant part of the labour market; and the difficulties for foreigners in learning local languages in a bilingual territory.

Regarding housing, rents result quite high and finding a house seems difficult for migrants, also because of a certain mistrust by local owners. Moreover, local regulations about housing are very strict, while a tenant must have at least 35 square meters and an extra eight square meters are required for each additional person living in a flat; this means higher costs for tenants, due to the dimension of the flats. In the tourist sector, migrant workers have board and lodging in hotels, but after the end of the season they must leave, and the problem of accommodation re-emerges. The same problem regards migrants working in personal services, such as caregivers helping elderly people: usually they live in the employer's home, but when the employer dies the caregiver remains homeless. Finally, there is a language problem. In South Tyrol, the local community immediately poses a language choice to arriving migrants between Italian and German. Some foreigners, like Indians, seem to adapt better in learning German, while others, like Albanians, are more prone to Italian: bilingualism is a preferential way to find work, "...but learning two

foreign languages at the same time is very difficult.” notes an interviewee with a migration background (Research and Education Centre on Interculturalism, Brixen/Bressanone, researcher, interview ITB9).

Looking at the future, there are different economic sectors in which migrants labor force will be even more needed at local level, such as the personal care, due to the ageing of the population, but also the industrial sector. Considering agriculture, the recruitment of migrants for seasonal work can become a problem, as at the moment temporary workers come mainly from Eastern European countries, where the economic situation is improving, and the willingness to out-migrate partially decreasing.

However, as another interviewee says: “it must be taken into account that here in Bolzano, local policies have always encouraged the rooting of locals in the territory as an antidote to the depopulation of the valleys, so much so that this depopulation is not as accentuated as in other Italian areas. The question arises as to whether the possible territorial rooting of migrants could conflict with territorial rooting policies aimed at locals, and what can be done to prevent these two policies from conflicting (Eurac Research, Institute for Minority rights, Bolzano, Researcher, ITB12).

Regarding the **Metropolitan City of Turin**, the attractiveness of the rural and mountain territories is described by the interviewees very differently; in fact, the shared perception is that 95% of migrants arriving in the region consider their local settlement as a transitory phase. **Migratory projects seem quite often not focusing in remaining in this territory** but reaching other destinations, outside Italy, such as France, Germany, Great Britain, often in order to reunite the families or to find better work opportunities.

It should be considered that the migrants who arrive in this region usually have not chosen to come here. As one professor interviewed says:

*“In this context of lack of choice of where to migrate, what could be called the rhetoric of repopulation of rural areas has been constructed: in reality it is random that one ends up in a mountainous place and it is in any case a mostly hetero-determined choice. Sometimes they come from African megacities and end up in a small mountain village. Obviously, some people take root, and there are some cases of successful settlements, but in the face of these cases there are whole masses of seasonal workers, who move from one place to another and have no interest in living in the place: for them, the formula of “**highlanders by force**” is the right one... they are often “**highlanders for a while**” but it is not known whether they will want to stay” (University of Eastern Piedmont, Alessandria, Professor, interview WP3ITT3).*

In terms of conditions for settling down, what is **lacking** in these territories are, first of all, **essential services**, starting with public transports, while housing seems not to be a real problem, due to an abundance of vacant houses in the villages and empty or under-used second homes. The other relevant problem is employment: although there is some need for labour force at local level (e.g. in agriculture or cattle breeding), the depopulation of the mountains to the benefit of the city has led to a structural loss of farms, agricultural enterprises and businesses, and the firms remaining in the area have low absorption capacity. Not only are the farms small, often run by single individuals, but often they seem no longer to have a family strategy for the future, as the youngsters tend to move to the city. In addition, tourism strategies, which, as we have already mentioned in this section, have always favoured the so-called Olympic valleys - roughly corresponding to the main centres on the Val Chisone / Val di Susa axes of mass mountain tourism - do not help to develop a widespread network of touristic activities that can support the agri-food chain, as it happens in South Tyrol.

Another element that characterizes the Metropolitan City of Turin is the **ageing of the rural/mountain population**: often it is the presence of migrants and their children that allows essential services, such as schools, to be maintained. **To sum up**, therefore, the majority of the interviewees in the Turin area stated that in order to bring the mountain and rural territories into the projects of migrants, it is necessary to invest in essential services, public mobility and road infrastructure, so as to allow mountain communities to become attractive again.

3. SOCIAL COHESION AND ITS CONSTITUTIVE ELEMENTS

When considering the issue of social cohesion, most of the interviewees agree that **changing socio-economic status is not easy** for a migrant: the main reasons are **excessive bureaucracy** on the one hand and **constantly changing migration policies** on the other. This means that people continue to have migrant (and often irregular) status for years without being able to regularize their position in legal terms, and therefore transform their socio-economic status. The basic problem, says one professor interviewed, is the laws governing the entry of migrants: it would be necessary:

*"...to create a channel of entry into Italy linked to a **simple work permit**, which would free the system of asylum seekers for political or war reasons from many people. Today, if you are not an asylum seeker for political reasons, you have to leave this country. So we go on with an overstretched labor market, difficult entrances and then periodic amnesties, such as the one in 2020.... Among other things, in this way the workforce becomes blackmailable and it is certainly unthinkable a change of socio-economic status in a reasonable timeframe"* (University of Eastern Piedmont, Alessandria, Professor, interview WP3ITT3).

Despite this difficulty, **relations between migrants and local communities are defined by interviewees from both territories as basically positive**, although some distinctions must be made. Interaction with the local community is perceived as good by all the interviewees, at least when considering the **working sector**, where migrants' skills are appreciated. Interaction is substantially positive first of all because interviewees, particularly those in South Tyrol, see **no competition** with foreigners on the access to local resources, services or job opportunities. In fact, migrants do the work that other people would not do, accept working hours that no one else would accept. However, all interviewees from both territorial areas say that social prejudices remain, e.g. it is difficult for migrants to find a house, as many locals do not want to live close to migrants or to rent them a flat.

While considering the arrival of asylum seekers and refugees, the inclusion of newcomers is considered possible only in the presence of efficient **reception initiatives**, which are fundamental for fostering a wider social cohesion. According to all interviewees from both South Tyrol and Piedmont the main identified characteristics for the success of these projects are: a **bottom-up approach**, developed at local level (e.g. with the involvement of municipalities, NGOs, etc.); and, very important, the respect of the **carrying capacity** of local communities, for example investing on micro-projects of widespread hospitality. The good practices reception are multiple, and in some case they also rely on intergenerational interactions: as the Director of an important public consortium reports,

"We placed the community of unaccompanied minors in the same building where there is a residence for the elderly people. We had some fears about the interaction that would necessarily be created, but the relationship in the end was above all our expectations: when there were events in the square, the elderly people were accompanied by the children of the foreign community. There was mutual integration. They even prepared Christmas games together... This worked because the group of minors was about 12 people. If you put a group of 200 people in a place, there can be no integration and tensions could arise: the way forward is to offer widespread hospitality" (Susa Valley - Sangone Valley Social Welfare Consortium, Pinerolo, Director, interview WP3ITT1).

For the success of reception initiative, a third element is considered crucial: having a **good project with a concrete and precise goal**:

"in some cases - says an interviewee of MC Turin - projects offer the opportunity for mutuality: to welcome and even to train migrants, but also to ask them to give something back to the community, for example for the maintenance of the territory, of the forests, banks, roads. Many wonderful projects

invented by local municipalities have worked to the satisfaction of migrants and local community's needs. Even the initial fear has gradually decreased..." (ANCI Piemonte - Welfare Policies, Immigration and Social Housing, Turin, Vice-President, interview WP3ITT2).

Interaction with the local community seems to depend on the type of project put in place. If the proposed projects show the above-mentioned characteristics, communities are often favourable, with mayors personally involved. On the other hand, as it often happened in the emergency phase of the arrival of refugees, the prefectures imposed large numbers of migrants on small and unprepared communities, there were even barricades to prevent the buses from entering the villages.

Regardless of the quality of reception projects, all the interviewees of both territorial areas agree on the opinion that **settled ethnic groups tend to be impermeable** to the local community and to other ethnic groups: this seems to be a common behaviour of any migrant in any context, which consists in trying to reproduce in the arrival countries relationships, dynamics, lifestyles of their own home, to keep something of their place of origin, of their own culture. However, a cross-ethnic element can be **religion**, which is common to different ethnic groups. An interviewee of the South Tyrol who coordinates a religious association states that: "the encounter between ethnic groups takes place on a common spiritual basis, overcoming national belonging. It is often important for young second-generation migrants who were born in Italy to join religious-based associations. Their difficulty lies in discovering what their identity is because they feel to be Italian and foreign at the same time..." (Bozen Muslim Youth Association, Bolzano, Coordinator, ITB8). The religious issue also returns in the Turin area where one interviewee states that "...migrants tend to find refuge and solidarity primarily within their own group, but also within their own church. The ethnic group and the church of reference, living outside their country of origin, becomes the only point of reference for interaction and sociality (CISS Pinerolo - Intermunicipal Services Consortium, Pinerolo, Director, interview WP3ITT4).

Consequently, migrants in general tend not to interact with locals but mainly to find a peaceful coexistence with them, while remaining separate. This process seems accentuate in **rural and mountain communities**, that are **often perceived as not very open to the outside world**. Here, however, it is possible to distinguish some specificities of the two territories examined, South Tyrol and MC Turin.

Local identity seems more evident in rural communities: moreover, it must be considered that in certain territories, like many valleys of the **Metropolitan City of Turin**, local communities are depopulated and **lacking in social cohesion**: over the years, the sense of community in the mountains has disappeared, as says one interviewee "...there used to be a need for each other in order to survive, now there is less; furthermore, the less innovative people are often the ones remaining in the mountains, as they find it difficult to deal with a changing world. Hence the turn to **populist political movements**. Fortunately, not all of them... These dynamics - can be extended to all the valleys of Piedmont, even though perhaps less in the Waldensian ones, where there is a more pluralist culture due to a strong religious dimension. Paradoxically, it is precisely the liveliest valleys that have developed strong identities that are most reluctant to accept migrants..." (Humus Association, Cuneo, Co-founder, interview WP3ITT5)

Even in the mountain and rural areas of **South Tyrol** there is a complex situation. As one interviewee says: "First of all, what we call a local community is actually a **double community, half Italian and half German**: migrants find it hard to integrate because they need to fit into an already fragmented social context, made up of a German majority and an Italian minority." (Eurac Research, Institute for Minority rights, Bolzano, Researcher, interview ITB2) This historical fragmentation does not help the migrant, who struggles to find a place. There are two separate educational systems, and only the university in the end is for everyone. As another interviewee says: "The unfriendly attitude of Germans towards Italians has now been transferred to migrants" (Repair Caffè, Bolzano, Manager, interview WP3ITB3).

An interviewee with a migrant background notes the **provincialism of the locals**: "Many locals have never travelled in their lives and have only met people like themselves. Many of them therefore judge migrants without knowing them" (Moro Onlus Association, Ceres, Cultural Mediator, interview WP3ITT7). The problem with interaction, however, is that it should take place involving both sides, otherwise it becomes an **assimilation** of a non-legitimate culture into another considered legitimate. The interviewee continues saying "Even among Italians there is racism: imagine among us... I was lucky and here I found a

family that adopted me, as well as relatives. But the problem is cultural: in Italy many people do not know what Africa is really like, and if they do, they only know the negative aspects, the ones that come out on TV. But Africa is also a beautiful place...”.

What emerges from the opinions of the interviewees are **the dynamics by which trust develops** between migrants and locals. One interviewee from the MC Turin compares the system of mountain communities to that of **tribes**:

“I hosted a Nigerian migrant for two years; I live in a community of 700 souls, and everyone looked at me badly, even my son. Then, the migrant won their trust. The mountain tribe micro-system is a bit like this: if you're in, you're in, if you're out, you're out, if someone takes you in then you're in. This is true for all kinds of migrants, including Italians: my son moved to Courmayeur and the dynamics were the same there, too. When it came to finding the Nigerian migrant a house and a job, the tribe got involved. But in the end, he didn't remain, and moved to Stockholm” (Social cooperative Dalla stessa parte, Ciriè, Coordinator, interview WP3ITT10).

The problem of social cohesion, therefore, is also linked to the **motivation of the migrants** to settle down permanently in rural and mountain regions. And so to their migration project, which, if it includes the mountain valleys of South Tyrol, often does not include those of MC Turin: “The migratory project of these people do not coincide with our expectations of welcoming and rooting migrants. Our mountains in Turin might be of interest to some, perhaps to Afghans, less so to Nigerians, who have a more urban or lowland culture” (Municipality of Bardonecchia, Bardonecchia, Major, interview ITT9).

Sometimes social inclusion has to face opposing cultural worlds, with borders that seem difficult to cross. Migrants arriving in Italy often represent the weaker sections of their society of origin and **ignorance and exclusion constitute an effective instrument of social control**. As an interviewee says:

“The group of Nigerians in particular is quite closed. The reasons are multiple and start from the same recruitment made by the criminal network of traffickers in Nigeria, and which is done purposely on illiterate women, daughters of prostitutes, women who have already been raped, that is, all those subjects that we would declare “with cognitive deficit”. This means that these subjects, in Italy, are resistant to learning Italian and this means that they tend to remain in their original group and not to mix with other groups or with the locals. The ignorance of these migrants is the weapon with which the criminal network that brought them in continues to maintain its control because the acquisition of linguistic skills would mean freedom and the possibility of breaking free from the criminal network and beginning a path of progressive autonomy” (La strada - Der Weg Association, Bolzano, Head of Women and Gender Equality Area, interview WP3ITB5).

When discussing social inclusion, **women seem the last ones** to be able to interact with the local socio-cultural system. In the words of the same interviewee:

“Even the Pakistanis and Indians remain very much within their own group; here we identify a gender problem: while the men engaged in trade know Italian language, women stay at home and have no relationship with the outside world, depending entirely on their husbands. For this reason, we have designed a nursery service for children aged 0-3 years, to get women out of the house and intercept them to begin a path of progressive autonomy and to protect them from not infrequent cases of domestic violence”.

In the end, people interviewed both in South Tyrol and in MC Turin tend to represent **a peaceful but separate coexistence more than an effective social cohesion**. There are no significative episodes of xenophobia reported in either mountainous or rural territory, with the exclusion of few cases, mainly due to reception initiatives imposed by external actors. A good level of social coexistence seems therefore guaranteed mainly by good projects, sensitive administrations, and active associations, which constitute a protective network against xenophobic phenomena.

From the different opinions collected, however, it is not always clear **whether the mountains or the city are a privileged location for xenophobia**: some say that people in the mountains are simpler and, once the initial mistrust is over, more approachable, and that populist rhetoric is more an urban issue. Others say that the city is by vocation more pluralist and the mountains more closed and traditionalist. Finally, everyone agrees that it is the populist parties that foment xenophobia through social and mass media.

4. ACTIVE PARTICIPATION AND CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS

Accordingly, to the opinions of most of the interviewees, the **prerequisite** for any discussion or intervention related to active participation and citizenship rights is to understand the **differences between migrants**. In fact, there are migrants who consider Italy as an intermediate stage in a migratory project that will take them elsewhere (usually, in northern countries), while other migrants perceive Italian territories, even the rural ones, as an opportunity to take root. Finally, there are temporary migrants, as the ones involved in circular migration linked to seasonal work. For all of them, rootedness, or rather the will to be rooted, is the basis on which a discourse of active participation can be built.

Migrants in transit seem to be prevalent in rural and mountain areas of MC Turin: these territories are not part of the migratory project of the arriving subjects even if, in some cases, they may become during the time. However, the success of the settlement depends on the territory's attractiveness: a welcoming community, valid integration projects, the ease of finding a house and, above all, a job opportunity, possibly stable, are the main factors that come into play. Even when all these conditions are assured by the mountain communities, it is not uncommon for migrants to migrate elsewhere after a while, looking for better conditions in terms of job offer, socialization and quality of life.

There are also **migrants with a vocation to settling down**, who have chosen Italy, and even inner areas, for developing their roots. These types of migrants seem mainly present in South Tyrol: for them, the migratory project coincides with the territories where the migrants are settled and the prospect is a long-term one, to build one's life there, to send one's children to school, to have a house and a stable job over time; and, therefore, to be part of a community.

Finally, it emerges from the interviews of a third type of migrant, **the temporary migrant**. These are subjects hosted in rural and mountain territories (in particular, in reception centres and widespread hospitality, as in the case of MC Turin) who have left these places for other destinations (e.g. for working in southern Italy, in picking tomatoes), and then returning after a while to reside in these areas, both because of the social ties they have created and for the lower cost of living, too, with respect to urban areas.

When considering the issue of local participation, it emerges also the **migrant's interest in mountain and rural places**: in fact, not all of them see the mountains as a place where they can take root. **Many migrants come from densely urban contexts** in their countries of origin, and they seem used to a lifestyle that has little to do with the mountain and rural ones. The values connected to healthy air, authenticity, tradition, food, and social solidarity do not have the same appeal for migrants as they do have for some Italians who are tired of city life. Many migrants consider the cities as the Italians used to do during the industrialization of the early 20th century, as an economically and socially more promising way of life. Moreover, migrants often flee from territorial contexts in which is still present a traditional agriculture, based on a limited knowledge of the farmers with respect to new technologies or organic farming approach. What fuels the dreams and project of Italian "new highlanders" is a narrative based on values that are not yet part of the value system of most of the foreign immigrants.

Considering everyday life and expectations of migrants "in transit" and, even more, of "forced highlanders", as the refugees hosted in mountain reception facilities, **active participation and the exercise of citizenship rights seem not to be a priority** for these categories of people.

In all cases, there is a basic pre-requisite that, following the interviewees, needs to be developed to enhance active citizenship at a local level, that is **legal recognition** of the migrants. As an interviewee says: "The most important thing for a migrant is to have a document that certifies that he/she exists. Without

documents you cannot work and pay taxes, you cannot get a driving license, you cannot go to school. You simply do not exist, you are invisible." (Moro Onlus Association, Ceres, Cultural Mediator, interview WP3ITT7)

The problems migrants face in this regard seems enormous. In the words of the same interviewee:

"Most migrants are not just escaping from poverty but from violence, dictatorship, or war. If they are denied access to Europe, as it happened in Bosnia, it means that history is repeating itself, that the "trains of memory" still exist. (n.b. the interviewee refers to the trains leading to concentration camps during the Holocaust, that young people today remember travelling to Auschwitz by train, the "train of memory"). Except that with today's telecommunications you can no longer say 'I didn't know'. Today you can no longer make excuses and pretend that these things don't happen." And if you don't have papers and can't find a regular job, you don't enter the system but you have to somehow survive and so you end up in the arms of the mafia and the drug trade. But no migrant brings drugs with him/her from Africa."

Therefore, both in the opinions of South Tyrol and in MC Turin interviewees, **to foster participation and active citizenship, migrants must have a recognized and stable legal status**: an irregular or temporary status, which has to be reconfirmed following the lengthy Italian bureaucracy, does not facilitate any kind of participation or sense of belonging to any community. Moreover, migrants often come from contexts where there are not democratic institutions that disseminate the values of a civic culture based on active participation, on shared care of commons, or on the self-organization of citizens through associations or movements that involve the exercise of powers and responsibilities in public policies.

As some interviewees argue, often a **culture of legality** is even lacking among migrants, in terms of both the right to legality (that of obtaining from others respect for social norms) but also of the duty of legality (that of respecting the rules of social and ethical coexistence). This is mainly the case when the subjects who undertake migration paths belong to the lowest social strata of the society of origin. This is the case, for example, of Nigerian women. An interviewee says: "Education to legality also means denouncing the exploiters. Nigerian women arrive in Italy thanks to what they call "mommy water", the goddess of water, who allowed them, thanks to a woo-doo propitiatory ritual, to arrive safe and sound. The woo-doo ritual, and the threat of mommy water getting angry, is the instrument of social control used by organized crime to maintain power over migrants. If they manage to break free from these beliefs, then denunciation of the exploiters can be triggered, and they can begin to acquire a mentality of legality". (La strada - Der Weg Association, Bolzano, Head of Women and Gender Equality Area, interview WP3ITB5).

For those who have already followed these paths, the issue becomes more complex and is translated into the term **representation**. "Migrants do not easily find space for representation on the political scene in rural and mountain regions, because it is well known that those who are in favor of migrants - says one interviewee - get few votes from local communities (Lungomare Cultural Association, Bolzano, C-founder, Interview ITB20). However, as already noted by the next interviewee, it is also **the migrants themselves who do not propose themselves as a political subject** because they tend to behave according to their ethnicity, not to their migrant status, and they never act as a single body".

In the associationism of foreigners" - says the interviewee - "we have seen that **the criterion of association is nationality**, which is obviously more than natural. In metropolitan contexts like Rome or Milan there are international associations, but when you try here to do something different the project does not take off. Of course, there are relations between ethnic groups, but only private, friendly ones. When you move to a political level, like when it comes to electing representatives, suspicions and differences arise and ethnic groups once again become the dominant criterion of aggregation... for this reason, it is not possible to create strong representative groups" (Research and Education Centre on Interculturalism, Brixen/Bressanone, researcher, interview WP3ITB9).

An opportunity, from this point of view, could be represented by the **ethno-linguistic dynamics** occurring in South Tyrol. One interviewee suggests that it would be necessary to "break down the Italian/German dualism by introducing a third pole, a new component capable of standardizing policies

regardless of ethnicity". (Eurac Research, Institute for Minority rights, Bolzano, Researcher, Interview ITB2). To reach this goal, however, it seems that there are two main obstacles: a) the regulations, as that the undoubted entrepreneurial vitality of migrants seems confined to specific areas (so much so that it is difficult for Italians themselves to enter certain economic sectors that are now "controlled" by foreigners) where other sectors of activity, e.g. linked to land ownership, and within specific local regulatory system (the so called "maso chiuso", in South Tyrol), are unable to take off due to traditional normative constraints; b) politics, as until 10-15 years ago it was unthinkable to find migrants on electoral lists: today there are foreign migrants quite in all Italian political parties and this means that in the future migrants will also have the opportunity of gaining a greater political weight.

Finally, for many of the interviewees it is important to consider what we can call the issue of cultural **representation**. This, at least apparently, would seem the easiest or most immediate goal to achieve. From museums to cultural centres, regional and even local communication strategies, even in rural regions, claim for a **new pluralism**, on multiculturalism values. However, some of these strategies remain confined to a new narrative, while in practice public discourse appears more nuanced. Representation and participation are the two sides of the coin of the territorial system that show some difficulty in taking off and proving to be truly inclusive. When coming to **positions of power - where not only people participate but where cultural policies are also decided** - it seems difficult to find someone with a migratory background. As a migrant interviewee says: "The problem is more radical: you can't even find a migrant employee in public offices dealing with migrants, or think about universities, where the experts on African studies are quite never African..." (Research and Education Centre on Interculturalism, Brixen/Bressanone, Researcher, interview WP3ITB9).

5. ACCESS AND QUALITY OF SERVICES

When coming to the issue of services of public interest, and their relationship with local development strategies in rural and mountain regions, interviewees agree that it is necessary to invest in the future on to the figure of the **cultural mediator**. However, there is not always consensus among the people interviewed about the characteristics these mediators may achieve.

Many interviewees state that it should be a **role within the local community**, where the migrants are involved in their integration paths. One interviewee evokes once again the similarity between mountain communities and tribes: "Local development policies for us mean having a mediator between the migrant and the local tribe, where the mediator must belong to the tribe. Then everything is done. Politically, here it's Lega (note: extreme-right party) territory. There is still a great deal of parochialism. So you always ask yourself: who will guarantee these migrants? We need a member of the local community who can guarantee for them, and who can interface between the two parties" (Social cooperative Dalla stessa parte, Ciriè, Coordinator, interview WP3ITT10). Usually, even in the most closed and mistrustful rural contexts, "...there are people who are more open to newcomers and to innovation, who could be a bridge between the migrant and the community. Acquiring an official role as cultural mediators would give them greater legitimacy and individual recognition" (Caritas Bolzano, Member of the voluntary work and parish Caritas service, interview WP3ITB15).

Other interviewees argue that **cultural mediators should have mainly a migratory background**, in order to avoid Eurocentric approaches to problems that can only be solved by looking at them from a different perspective. Moreover, as one interviewee points out, we can add that "... if the white community is afraid of a black man who has just arrived, imagine how afraid a black man is of a tribe of whites who look at him with suspicion..." (District Community Burgraviato, Coordinator of the Integration and Refugee Work Area, interview WP3ITB11).

While discussing the issue of the services for migrant's integration, and considering in particular asylum seekers and refugees, it is underlined a frequent request for a **prolonged accompaniment** of the migrant, not ending with the project in which the migrant was inserted. One interviewee says: "We have set up an improved intercultural mediation desk to deal with the bureaucratic aspects because those who

do not have the tools to understand risk getting lost; if a migrant does not make good use of the project in which he is inserted - such as a training course or apprenticeship - making himself known at local level and becoming autonomous, he/she risks getting lost..." (CISS - Pinerolo (Intermunicipal Services Consortium, Pinerolo, Director, interview WP3ITT4). The problem, an interviewee says, seems connected first of all with the acquisition of the cultural tools, necessary to live an autonomous life project, especially in rural and mountain areas: "Here there is no housing support for migrants leaving reception centers: people must be followed even afterwards, to integrate and internalize the local rules of coexistence, not to find themselves in difficulty and lose their jobs or homes..." (Caritas Bolzano, Contact person for the Caritas Accommodation Search Service, interview WP3ITB4).

One interviewee, however, reminds us of the other side of the coin: "Another problem that is emerging is **the risk of determining forms of infantilization** of people, such a strict accompaniment done by someone can produce effects of endless maternage: in public offices, migrants are never left alone, there is always the operator who accompanies them and translates, and speaks for them. So much so that this produces on the one hand protests from migrants who say, "we are not children", and on the other hand tends to bring out an acceptance of this form of welfarism" (University of Eastern Piedmont, Alessandria, Professor, interview WP3ITT3).

Finally, regarding the contents that should be conveyed by cultural mediators, the interviewees argue that they are not limited to cultural and normative ones but also concern the **labour sector**: it would be useful to have non-EU intermediary figures at work level who would explain the labor sector and its rules to foreigners, becoming a reference point between migrants and the work dimension. In the reception centres, for example, the training and orientation provided to asylum seekers are very general. As states the same interviewee: "We need something more specific. However, it is necessary to be careful because often training and EU programmes are far from the actual working world. It is necessary to revise the programs. The problem is that **European policies dictate the agenda and**, even more, they dictate **the conceptual categories** within which to run the initiatives; European policies insist on training, on a step-by-step approach, on language, on skills. In my opinion, therefore, it depends a lot on the managing body, which must have a sensitivity that goes beyond the guidelines of European policies".

The training and cultural mediation activity must try to respond to actual needs: a minimum amount of planning is necessary to identify needs, to find spaces for interaction. As another interviewee says: "in mountain areas that have less public transport and fewer spaces dedicated to meeting, this need is felt". (NEMO - New Mountain Economy Association, Founder, Turin, interview WP3ITT11). It is therefore **necessary to look at the individual's migration project**. What skills do migrants have? What wishes? What projects? What needs? Many projects on the labour inclusion of migrants seem to respond more to the needs of the clients than of the migrants, and they are not profiled on the actual needs of the beneficiaries. Instead, we should "...think about allocating asylum seekers based on rational criteria, on their individual curriculum, on their migratory path. Have you already been a farmer?" (University of Eastern Piedmont, Alessandria, Professor, interview ITT3).

Of course, there is always the risk, implicit in many excellent initiatives, of a **Eurocentric outlook**. This is the case of those organizations that deal with the accessibility and usability of social and health services from immigrant citizens in their territories. They seem often working very well but do not always have an ethno-clinical culture, i.e. the ability to read certain phenomena not in a psychological but in a cultural sense. This is the case of those who, for example, do not want to have a blood sample taken for religious or cultural reasons. One interviewee refers that: "That's why our association organizes both online and offline ethno-clinical training courses for health workers, which are very well attended" (La strada - Der Weg Association, Bolzano, Head of Women and Gender Equality Area, interview ITB5).

6. CONCLUSIONS

From the analysis of the opinions expressed by the people involved in individual interviews and focus-group, a substantially **heterogeneous picture emerges** with regard to both the characteristics of the

territories investigated and the types of migrants present within these regions. The analysis confirms the importance of the **dimension of place** when considering the social (and even territorial) impact of migration in rural and mountain contexts, evidencing the role of **path dependency** for these processes, and how the local assets of resources and constraints (linked to local history) have a strong influence on them.

The two considered territories, South Tyrol and MC Turin, show **very different capacities in terms of migrants reception and inclusion**: South Tyrol is an economically flourishing region, with a well-established rural and tourist economy and few demographic problems (mainly related to ageing trends), while MC Turin is an economically and socially fragile territory, characterized by a weak rural economy (highly fragmented and showing an uncertain future) and a tourist economy that has difficulty in taking off on its own; in these valleys, the demographic problems are dramatic.

The **needs expressed by the two territories** are also different: in South Tyrol an increasing request of mainly manual and low-skill workers, while in CM Turin rural and mountains areas seem to need first of all the revitalization of villages and their repopulation, contrasting demographic decline and dismissal of essential local services.

Facing these different and place-based needs, and considering opportunities and threats for inclusion and social cohesion, **three main categories of migrants** arise in these territories: the “migrant in transit” (more present in CM Turin), whose migration project does not foresee a permanence and a rooting in local territories; the “settled migrant” (more relevant in South Tyrol), who is interested in a life project even in rural and remote areas; and the “temporary migrant”, who could implement strategies of (partial) rooting at local level, following the flow of seasonal jobs elsewhere, but having in mountain areas a sort of center for his/her residence.

The change of socio-economic status for these different types of migrants seems possible to some extent, but it is made difficult by excessive bureaucracy and constantly changing national migration policies, that often modify the abovementioned local assets, too. The lack of legal channels for migrants to entry Italy by means of a simple work permit, represents the major obstacle for any local or regional policy of social inclusion, while it has a dramatic impact on the concrete possibility of rooting for migrants in rural and mountain region, as in metropolitan ones.

However, it seems that, even among economic and Labor migrants, **the mountains or the rural space are rarely considered as a primary destination**, at least when considering migration trajectories. In fact, many migrants come from urban backgrounds and seem more attracted by larger cities, where they think there are more opportunities to work, and also to socialize and meet with others. Most of the migrants also presumably still have a traditional approach to the countryside and agriculture, so that they do not yet perceive the advantages that new technologies and innovation can bring to the rural/mountainous world. Moreover, their value system appears very far from the one evoked by those, like the Italian “new highlanders”, who choose the mountains in search of an alternative lifestyle.

Considering **social impact** of immigrants, the analysis of the two local contexts shows that between newcomers and local people there are essentially **functional relations**, based mainly on the recognition of mutual usefulness, moving from the labour market needs and offer. While this instrumental dimension of the social world represents the basis for a wider interpersonal and socio-cultural recognition regarding the different communities, by now it seems that **non-instrumental relationships involving migrants are mainly ethnically or religiously based**. This prevalence of ethnicity seems also not to allow migrants, as a supra-ethnic category, to have a real **political weight** within the considered territories, prevailing closure or even separation, within the different communities.

While coming to the issue of **social cohesion**, in rural and mountain areas of MC Turin and South Tyrol it seems that, at least in the majority of cases, **there is no real competition between newcomers and locals** for access to resources. Migrants do jobs, have a lifestyle and live in places that are not attractive to locals. Consequently, it is remarkable the presence of a kind of **socio-cultural impermeability to local contexts**, that can avoid conflicts but, at the same time, do not favor rooting of migrants in these territories, nor the real melting of different population living in the same space.

In this context, there are more disadvantaged groups within migrant populations, such as **women**, who constitute the most fragile category: for them, cultural (and even physical) isolation, lack of social

contacts and interaction with the local community often results in psychological disease, exploitation and mistreatment.

It must also be said that mountain and rural communities often show **characteristics of social closure and parochialism** that do not always facilitate processes of interaction with newcomers; moreover, they themselves appear sometimes **poorly integrated, lacking in internal social cohesion**. In particular, this is the case of mountain communities in the Metropolitan City of Turin, that in some cases appear **exhausted by decades of depopulation**; in this context, the **rhetoric of populism** -fostering the so-called “revenge of the places that do not matter” - takes root easily. By this respect, the situation appears different in South Tyrol: here, local communities of the province experience a structurally two-faced and **dialectic dimension**, with a German majority and an Italian minority, which creates a complex and uncertain scenario for newcomers.

To sum-up, and coming to some concrete indications, **social impact of foreign immigrants in rural and mountain regions can be enhanced** - and, to some extent, even positively intensified, together with a **strengthened social cohesion** - by supporting the rooting of newcomers in these territories. If “place matters”, we need to avoid at the same time any spatial determinism: sense of belonging to rural and mountain territories need the presence of some basic conditions, for the enactment of the local dimension by different population insisting on it. In particular:

- improvement of **public transportation and welfare services**, and more accessible and equal **housing policies**;
- **reception projects tailored according to the size and needs of local communities**, supporting widespread micro-hospitality and territorial development projects;
- **bottom-up approach to local participation**, enhancing local initiatives that bring together local administrations and associations/groups of citizens, while focusing on the effective **agency of migrants** as actors of local development;
- support to **mutual exchange and cooperation** between locals and newcomers, aiming at fostering a shared care of the territory in which they all live, and avoiding to focus on initiatives targeted only on some social categories;
- **active listening to the needs and personal projects of the migrants** arriving in mountain and rural territories, in particular to help some of the “highlanders by force” to become “**highlanders by choice**”, rooting in local communities and developing their own ideas;
- **adaptive training projects for migrants**, capable to take into account the changes in local labour market, the opportunities, and how to cope with them in an innovative way;
- investment on **cultural mediators**, to be intended as **agents of local development**, supporting connections between different social worlds and strengthening the system of mutual trust at local level.

While coming to a comprehensive evaluation of the Italian case study with respect to the social impact of foreign immigration, and considering the two different territories of MC Turin and South Tyrol, a syntethic **SWOT analysis** can help in defining the most relevant outcomes of the investigation:

STRENGTHS

- Attractive job market (South Tyrol)
- Inclusive reception projects for ASR (MC Turin)
- Inclusive rural communities (MC Turin)
- Efficient and inclusive local Welfare (South Tyrol)
- Positive interaction between locals and migrants (MC Turin and South Tyrol)
- No competition between locals and migrants in the job market (MC Turin and South Tyrol)

WEAKNESSES

- Lack of housing facilities (South Tyrol)
 - Lack of job opportunities (CM Turin)
 - Lack of essential public services (CM Turin)
 - Fragmented social context due to ethno-linguistic policies (South Tyrol)
 - Weak relationship between urban and rural/mountain contexts (MC Turin and South Tyrol)
-

OPPORTUNITIES

- Local need of labour force in different economic sectors (South Tyrol and MC Turin)
 - Local need for new inhabitants (MC Turin)
 - Welcoming attitudes towards migrants (MC Turin and South Tyrol)
 - Lower cost of life in rural/mountain villages (MC Turin)
 - Civil society initiatives and social enterprises (South Tyrol and MC Turin)
-

THREATS

- Low skills job offers (South Tyrol and MC Turin)
- Separate coexistence between migrants and locals (MC Turin and South Tyrol)
- Excessive bureaucracy for migrants (MC Turin and South Tyrol)
- Social closure of ethnic communities (MC Turin and South Tyrol)
- Populism, provincialism and rising xenophobia (MC Turin and South Tyrol)
- Infantilization of migrants, instead of their empowerment (MC Turin and South Tyrol)

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1. INTRODUCTION: SCOPE AND AIM OF THE REPORT

This report summarizes findings from the Norwegian data collection on task 3.3 in WP3 in the Matilde project. The overall aim of task 3.3. is to conduct a qualitative assessment of the social impact of TCN migration in rural, remote and mountain areas. We understand qualitative assessment as the use of qualitative methods (semi-structured interviews and focus groups) to gain insights into the impact of TCN migration. Based on findings from WP2, which developed a Matilde toolbox and matrix for studying and analysing impact, this task focuses on analysing impact along four social dimensions:

1. Social polarization
2. Social cohesion and its constitutive elements (social mobility and social capital)
3. Active participation and citizenship rights
4. Access to and quality of services

We use these four dimensions as subheadings and structure for the report in line with the shared guidelines. Moreover, the guidelines for this task states that the aim is to understand the effects (impact) of TCNs arrival and settlement in terms of changes in social structures. It is also stated that the task will focus on practices of social innovation stemming from the direct, indirect, and induced effects of TCNs arrival and settling in destination contexts.

2. METHODOLOGY AND DATA

Based on the data collection guidelines for this task, we have conducted the ten individual interviews and 3 group interviews with policy makers, experts, stakeholders, and public service providers set at the regional and national level. An overview of the different interviews is provided in the table below.

	Informants	Type of interview	Level
GI1 NOH1 NOH2 NOH3 NOH4	NGO/Social enterprise	Group interview 1 (4 informants)	Regional
GI2 NO4 NO5	Directorate	Group interview 2 (2 informants)	National
GI3 NO17 NO18	Advisory council	Group interview 3 (2 informants)	Regional
NO1	Expert	Individual interview	National
NO2	Directorate	Individual interview	National
NO3	Ministry	Individual interview	National
NO6	Municipality interest association	Individual interview	National
NO11	Adviser	Individual interview	Regional

NO12	Adviser	Individual interview	Regional
NO13	Adviser/Caseworker	Individual interview	Regional
NO14	Politician	Individual interview	Regional
NO15	Adviser	Individual interview	Regional
NO16	NGO/Social enterprise	Individual interview	Regional

Moreover, we see this data collection as a continuation of the data collected for T3.1 and D3.1. The informants are positioned at the same levels (mainly national and regional), and the data collection expands on the issues explored in the previous task of the WP.

DATA COLLECTION

Identification of relevant informants was based on advice and suggestions from the local partner and from informants interviewed when conducting the data collection for D3.1 and D3.4. We also used a snowballing strategy, implying that we asked informants recruited for interviews to give advice on other actors that would be relevant to interview. Two researchers participated in focus group interviews, while one researcher conducted individual interviews. The interviews were semi-structured and followed interview guides which were based on the common interview guides shared by the WP leaders.

The interviews were conducted through video conferences (zoom/teams), and the conversations were recorded using a customized mobile app developed to ensure secure transfer and storage of data. The app is specifically designed to meet Norwegian privacy requirements in research.¹⁶ Informants were presented with the Matilde information and consent form, which has been assessed and approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data. The interviews were subsequently fully transcribed and then systematized and analysed. Two researchers participated in the analysis and in the writing of this report.

ANALYTICAL STRATEGY

The research design for this task is mainly reliant on expert interviews. As shown in the overview of informants above, we have interviewed persons with different institutional anchoring and different positions and roles. Consequently, what they emphasized and elaborated on in interviews was dependent on their positions and area of expertise. So, while some were able to respond in depth on certain questions in the interview guides other informants elaborated on other issues. Thus, the eclectic nature of the data implies that a strict and standardized strategy for analysing the data cannot be applied.

While the overall question of this task is on the social impact of the arrival and settlement of TCNs, we examine this question through the lens of experts, situated in different professional contexts and worldviews. Our analysis contains interpretations of their interpretations of the social impacts of migration, which can be termed double hermeneutic (Giddens, 1987). This forms a backdrop for the analysis and for our understanding of the data. As a concrete analytical strategy, we have done a holistic interpretive reading of each of the interview transcripts and then colour coded quotes that links to the four different social impact dimensions directly or indirectly. This forms the basis for our presentation and discussion of findings under each of the subsequent subheadings.

REFLECTIONS ON METHODS AND THE MATILDE TOOLBOX

We include here some methodological reflections on our experience with assessing the social impact of TCN migration along the four dimensions identified through the development of Matilde toolbox. The four dimensions are quite overlapping so they were difficult to keep apart and can as such be difficult to apply as a framework to guide analysis of qualitative data. The data collection of this task sheds some light on the dimensions' linkages to assessments of impact, but in our view, this still requires further scrutiny.

¹⁶ <https://www.uio.no/english/services/it/adm-services/nettskjema/help/nettskjema-dictaphone.html>

Specifically, deepened explorations are needed on the notion of impact. As a start, we include some reflections on how we perceive predicaments related to the notion of 'impact'. We note that the seemingly simple question of social impact of TCNs arrival and settlement in rural and remote mountain areas is more complex than it seems at first sight. Specifically, it seems difficult to clearly differ between questions of impact of migration on the social structures, and the question of impact of policies, measures and programs that are meant to steer the impact of migration in a certain direction.

These two questions of impact can be intertwined, but there is nevertheless important to keep the difference in mind when analysing and discussing social impact. For instance, the gradual increase of refugee immigration to Norway over the years have led to the implementation of policies and programs that are meant to enable and support refugees' opportunities to become financially independent. These policies and programs are examples of social impact, in the sense that they are manifestations of new political prioritization, new legislations, new public services etc. A somewhat different question is whether these programs have the intended effects or impacts – do they for instance contribute to enhance labour market inclusion among refugees which is stated as the formal objectives? While the first question is difficult to answer, and largely dependent on the perspective taken, the latter question is easier to answer as it is possible to develop concrete indicators for measuring the impact of specific integration measures or programs.

Social impact assessment is in the guidelines for T3.3. defined as *'processes of analysing, monitoring and managing the intended and unintended social consequences, both positive and negative, of planned interventions (policies, programs, plans, projects) and any social change processes invoked by those interventions'* (Vanclay 2003: 6). The question is whether we are assessing the impact of migration in remote and rural areas, or whether we are assessing measures, policies and programs implemented to tackle migration and promote integration. We return to some reflections on these methodological issues related to impact in the concluding section of the report.

3. SOCIAL INCLUSION AND POLARIZATION

We find that this dimension, polarization, has been the most difficult issue to shed light on based on the interview material. One informant explained that *'I have many thoughts about this [polarization], but it is not part of what makes me get paid every month. It's more personal. It's going to be very political, I think, exactly what you're asking for. I think maybe I'll refrain from that part'*, **(N02)**. The informant from the ministry explained that in their work there is a challenge in balancing the need to shed light on delicate issues within some immigrant groups and at the same time try not give substance to stigma. He says:

'That is the challenge. On the one hand, if you do not take on specific challenges like that [e.g. negative social control, child-abuse etc.], then you will get criticism for inadequacy and such, and if you have too much focus on it, then it could be perceived as stigmatizing and hanging out groups. We know that violence in close relationships and violence against children exists in the majority population. Lately there have been some discussions about negative social control in Christian communities, among other things. That balance is challenging. But one should not accept violations of laws and rules, no matter who they are. Both aspects are important. Both ineptitude and stigma, which are two factors that are important to consider' **(N03)**.

It may also be that polarization and tensions between groups (between migrant groups and between majority and minority population) are less relevant in the rural and more sparsely populated areas than in the urban areas because the number of immigrants (in absolute numbers) are quite low which may make competition and tensions less relevant. Throughout the interviews conducted for this task, and in the previous task of WP3 (T3.1), we also find that a repeated argument, especially among those working strategically with immigration and integration and/or with regional planning, is that immigration is

important and valuable for curbing population decline in rural and remote areas. As such, being attractive to migrants from other parts of the country and from other parts of the world is a more pressing issue than problems related to polarization and tensions between groups.

Thus, the main narrative repeated through the interviews is that immigration is needed and valuable for the rural regions, even though the informants also reflected that immigration could pose social problems and have a negative impact if it is not managed and dealt with purposefully. Moreover, the municipalities want to settle refugees because it creates local jobs (for instance those working with settlement, training, housing etc.), it gives income for the municipalities because the central government transfers an 'integration grant' to the municipality to cover expenses that they expect that integration will cost in terms of efforts in different parts of the public services. Settling refugees and making them want to stay after the introduction period (2 years), can also be important for maintaining population levels needed to justify that local service provision is maintained. With population decline local services such as schools, may be closed and moved to more centralized areas which may lead to further depletion in the rural and remote areas.

At the same time, the informants also problematized immigration and integration issues, and pointed to risks of tensions and polarizations. However, those working on strategic levels, which are the informants of this study, present it as they are willing to take the costs and make the efforts needed to ensure integration of immigrants to harvest the perceived benefits. Essentially, the perceived benefits are expected to outweigh potential costs. As such, the central governments shift towards a stricter immigration policy (see D3.1 and D6.1) seem to be at odds with the interests, needs and perceptions on immigration issues among central actors in the rural regions. An interviewed policy maker at the regional level reflects on this as follows:

[...] The trend is generally a decline. That's a pity, in my view, because in order to enhance tolerance, we are in need of diversity/pluralistic societies in many ways. And we need citizens, especially in the [rural] districts. That can be part of the solution anyway, to settle more. There are more than enough of those in world that needs to flee and who are searching for a safe haven, and Innlandet [county] could be that for more people, I am convinced of that. But there has been less [refugees] recently. [...] There is no doubt that we could welcome more [refugees] than we in reality do. The national politics control this, it's about what they are open to at the national level. Of course, we can voice our opinions on this, but it is the national politics, I would say, which is blocking in this system. My thoughts is that it is the politicians at the national level, and what they decide on, that is the key. We cannot do anything else but simply to state that if there are more people in need of help and settlement, then there is capacity for that. (NO14)

The official strategy for the Inland County presents immigration as a valuable resource for regional development (as exemplified in the quote above, and in the regional strategic document 'Innlandsstrategien' (Inland County, 2020). However, some informants also point to a potential gap in these perceptions presented by regional or municipal government bodies and the perceptions and attitudes among the majority population in the rural areas in the regions. The informants point out that even though immigration can be a rational response to challenges that many rural areas are facing in terms of demographic change, there may still be resistance and hostility towards immigration and immigrants in the local population which receive or potentially receive and hosts new members in the community. We reflect further below on reasons why this mismatch may exist.

Attitudes and sentiments towards immigration and immigrants in rural areas tend to have a paradoxical nature because even though number of immigrants tend to be low compared to urban areas, the scepticisms and hostility toward immigration is often higher. This is also paradoxical because immigration can be a rational solution to challenges that the local communities are facing, and thus actually often supporting the interests of the rural communities such as strengthening the local economy. The paradox is embedded in the fact that hostility and negative attitudes towards immigration links to gender (women are more positive to immigration than men) and education levels (Brekke, Fladmoe & Wollebæk, 2020). There are more men than women living in rural areas. Over the last 40 years women have been

moving from rural areas to urban areas in a greater extent than men. But this tendency is not as strong anymore, both women and men move from rural areas to central areas. Still there is a skew in the gender composition in rural areas because women move from rural to central areas earlier in their life span compared to men (NOU 2020:15). Those with lower education level is more likely to be sceptical to immigration, and education levels are lower in the rural areas (Brekke, Fladmoe & Wollebæk, 2020). These paradoxes were thematized in some of our interviews. For instance, a policy maker at the regional level quoted below provides the following reflections on this issue:

I think there has been developments in the right direction, I would say, with having less of these almost racist attitudes. But it comes up from time to time that there is a lot of 'grums'¹⁷ [scepticism/hostility]. But it's not just about immigration and those kinds of attitudes. But there this more generally these traditional attitudes that are perhaps more strongly represented outside the larger cities. So, the [rural] districts in Norway are probably marked by this. People may not see their own attitudes as racist when set within the communities they are part of, but it is more scepticism, these sort of undertones. And the less you have met with people who look different from you, the more sceptical, in my experience (NO14)

A similar reasoning is presented by an expert on regional development interviewed provided the following reflections on this issue:

What I have learned is that those who have little experience with immigration they are very sceptical, and the scepticism goes away when you gain experience with it, but I do not know if that is true. But when thinking of the typical rural municipality inhabitant they have a very conscious relationship to the fact that population decline is problematic. They see that fewer children are born, and that schools and kindergarten are threatened. Perhaps immigration has helped to soften the scepticism that may exist in these societies. They need replenishment and if you also have good experiences, it will be very positive in an integration context. Compared to a situation where the problem understanding is overpopulation, then immigration is problematic. The typical Norwegian rural municipality experiences that they have an underpopulation. (NO1)

Therefore, in sum, our interviews mainly shed light on assumptions about polarization linked to immigration from the informants' perspective, and the interviews give some interesting insights on the paradoxical aspects of tensions and polarization in rural and dispersedly populated areas with relatively few immigrants. However, our data is not suitable for understanding actual polarization in rural communities, this would require other methodological approaches and data sources. For instance, the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) commissions an 'Integration barometer' which has run 9 surveys since 2005. The survey measures the Norwegian populations attitudes towards immigration, integration, and the creation of new communities, and examines the populations perceptions of different groups of immigrants, stereotypes and prejudices. According to the barometer for 2020 (based on a survey completed in 2019), 40 percent of the population perceive immigration as positive for the country, while 28 percent perceive it as negative. 20 percent believe that integration is going well, while 47 percent believe that it is not going well (Brekke, Fladmoe & Wollebæk, 2020). The barometer looks at how attitudes towards integration links to gender, age, education level and political positioning, but not at the differences between urban and rural areas. Other studies based on quantitative data have also explored how attitudes towards immigrants and immigration in Norway has changed over time (from 1993-2015) (Hellevik & Hellevik, 2017). So, these are sources that can provide more in depth understanding of polarization and tensions linked to immigration in Norway.

¹⁷ This is an expression used in Norwegian which refers to the waists often gathering at the bottom of liquids such as coffee, wine or in a pond or lake. When used in this context it refers to negative attitudes and hatred which is kept somehow under the surface and which gives negative associations.

But keeping aside other sources that can be helpful for understanding attitudes towards immigrant and tendencies of polarization in society, we find that there were mainly two aspects of polarization that were raised through our interviews: 1) (assumed) hostility towards immigrants and/or immigration in the majority population and tendencies of migrant hierarchies and competition between groups at local levels. We present below how these issues were expressed through interview quotes.

I want to place that [issue of negative attitudes] with the majority. If someone does not like me, is it my problem, or is it their problem? Then we can analyse: Why is it like that? It relates to the level of knowledge, experiences, and politically defined identities, belonging, where immigrants do not share the same history, and do not get access to belonging. A common cultural and social platform can perhaps lead to an additional identity, or 'hyphenated' identity. Belonging is a process, and a mutual process. (N012)

[...] the less you have met with people who look different from you, the more sceptical, in my experience. It's hard to say too much about it, because it will imply stigmatization of groups. But one thing is the older generations, they have something with them from the past. But it is also among younger generations, its' the experience that people are a little hostile. Like if there is talk about an asylum reception centre that will be established, now there will be new families coming, like that. There are different attitudes. One thing is people who come from outside the EU, but there is also this: They come and take our jobs. Labour immigration from elsewhere in Europe as well. These are the underlying things. But you have to try to confront it or try to counteract it by having this on the agenda. (N014)

In one of the group interviews, the participants also reflected that they observed tendencies of 'migrant hierarchies' in the local communities they engaged with, in which labour migrants from Europe were 'ranked' higher than refugees. At the same time, they reflected on how labour migrants from Europe also tended to become somewhat invisible in the communities, and how efforts to change their position could create tensions and elements of competition between groups.

We see that work immigrants, they are quite invisible in many places. But when they have put in place measures to include them, there have sometimes been conflicts because the rest of the community finds that they [migrant workers] are being favoured to make them stay. In places where they have been dedicated to including work immigrants, there has been discussions in the local newspapers on whether they take better care of work migrants than the rest of the population. (G2)

In another interview, it was reflected those tensions and tendencies of competition could arise in relation to provision and access to labour market measures. These measures are funded by the government and may involve different kinds of activities such as educational programs or vocational training, internships with companies etc. Questions of who should be entitled to these measures are debated. For instance, when it comes to specific measures targeting people with immigrant backgrounds, one of the informants underlines that there is always a discussion of fairness in relation to service provision for groups that struggle within the majority population. Discussions in this is in his view important to go into:

'Because here we have a group that receives targeted efforts. They receive costly training and qualification measures, with subsistence covered. The normal [situation] is that you live on student loans, for example, when you undergo this type of education. I will not conclude whether it is right or wrong, but what I can conclude is that this type of measure is socio-economically beneficial.' (N02)

One interview also highlighted potential competition over scarce access to unskilled jobs, which could create tensions between youth and immigrants:

There is competition over those jobs that do not require formal education (unskilled jobs). There are ever fewer of these jobs in the first place. And in this area, there are youth versus immigrants. That's the groups that are most relevant [for those jobs] they are the once fighting over those jobs. (NO15)

4. SOCIAL COHESION AND ITS CONSTITUTIVE ELEMENTS

SOCIAL INCLUSION

Different issues were discussed in the interviews regarding mechanisms for social inclusion and what may hamper and enable social inclusion. The role of employment and the workplace as an arena for inclusion was highlighted by many of the informants, as exemplified in the following quote:

For most of us, work is the main arena where we get in touch with people and meet people. Then we have social arenas "on the side", which are also important, but if it is where we spend our time, and where we invest, for the vast majority, it is at work. So, if you do not succeed with the qualification over to work, then it becomes demanding to succeed with the social (inclusion). If you succeed with that, you also succeed with the rest, a little simplified, are my thoughts (NO2)

Considering mechanisms of social inclusion in rural and dispersedly populated areas, social inclusion was also seen as affected by geographical distances and problems with travelling and transport:

Huge geographical municipality. No centre. If you are placed in a house there, how do you feel then? You depend on a car to get from A to B. (NO1)

Children's participation in sports and other recreational activities after school hours is also perceived as a central mechanism for social inclusion. This form of participation is crucial for children and family's sense of belonging because social networks are built in these arenas between children but also between parents. Thus, building down barriers which may prevent children from immigrant backgrounds to take part in such activities is seen as important means for ensuring social inclusion in a broader perspective. Some thoughts on this regarding the commitment required from parents is expressed in the following quote:

It's not large figures [e.g. yearly football fee]. But in sum there are many things needed. If you are going to drive a kid [someone else's] for ten years. Of course, there are some parents who think it is very ... Not unfair, but ... They may think: Now I have been driving for ten years so that this child can play football. It's very important, but some people think it's a little too much, I've noticed. (NO1)

Since integration efforts in Norway is largely organized and left to the government and formalized programs and schemes, discussions on integration and social inclusion in Norway raise questions on how this may contribute to create a distance to more organic forms of social inclusion which may take place in more direct contact with people in community. What happens, for instance, after working hours of the public services and formal organizations involved in integration work. This is raised in the following quote:

My claim is that integration takes place after four o'clock. When adult education, work, school, NAV and all this is closed. After that, what do you do then? (NO13)

Linked to this, it was argued that the ability to create arenas for social inclusion, beyond the minimum provided through government programs and public services, relied on the role of enthusiastic individuals. These enthusiastic individuals were seen as the reason to why some communities were more successful with social inclusion than others:

This differs a lot [efforts of bridging between immigrant and the local population]. In some places, this is extremely successful, in other places you [immigrants] are totally cut off from the local community [...] it requires enthusiastic individuals and the creation of meeting places. (N015)

SOCIAL CAPITAL

The literature on social capital differentiates between social capital as individual assets, which is largely associated with the work of Bourdieu (1986), and as collective assets which is more related to the work of Coleman (1988) and Putnam (2001). The literature also differentiates between social capital as bonding (high levels of trust and close relations within groups) and bridging (building trust and development of relations across groups). The distinction between bonding and bridging is important in the context of immigration and integration, because high levels of bonding social capital may lead to fragmentation and disintegration at community and societal level if certain groups get too tight and closed (bonding) and cut off from society at large. Besides, bridging, or developing 'weak ties' can be important for getting employment and thus for social mobility (Granovetter, 1973). However, research into relations between bridging and bonding social capital among immigrants has shown that bonding social capital may be provide valuable 'building blocks' for acquiring bridging social capital. Bonding social capital becomes in this way a prerequisite rather than an impediment for bridging social capital (Larsen, 2011; Nannestad, Svendsen, & Svendsen, 2008). Ager & Strang (2008) also includes linking social capital, which can be seen as an extension of bridging social capital. Thus, the notion of social capital is multifaceted.

An NGO that coordinates volunteering in the municipalities found that they played an important role in building social capital:

I think I have succeeded in building bridges or getting people together. Whether it's the little ones or the older ones, all the stories that emerge; how much can be learned from each other and how the new locals can be a resource for the local community. That's very nice to see. (G1)

At the same time, it was also acknowledged that building bridges between the new members of the community and the local population was not easy as it could be difficult to engage people for the majority population:

At least we try, since we have these language cafes where we invite locals and the new locals, but it is not always successful. Often, it is not many locals showing up but at least we keep the doors open and welcome everyone and do what we can. (G1)

Another interview, with an association at the national level, highlighted the role of the municipalities as a government actor in building collective social capital by mobilizing resources in the volunteer sector and civil society:

Regarding the role of the municipalities as community developers, and facilitator of collaboration with the volunteer sector, the local community and all, we think that the municipalities are doing a great job on that, however, this probably also varies. There are differences across the municipalities, regarding how high up this is on the agenda, and to what extent they have sufficient resources to make a focused effort in this area. I think many municipalities realize that this is important and want to prioritize this. (N06)

Many informants also highlighted that while the volunteer sector could potentially play an important role in creating bridges and strengthening social capital in the communities, those engaged in volunteer work are often the elderly and they have problems with recruiting younger members:

So, there are many good measures at both individual and group levels. But what I have been wondering is: What is integration? How do they [immigrants] meet regular Norwegians in the street? How can we work with integration collaboratively with them [immigrants]? At the same time, it seems like many volunteer organizations have problems with recruitment. They have many elderly, active participants, but they lack recruitment of young people. So my question is: How to recruit this group [immigrants] as full members of these organizations? So that they can learn about organizational development and that bit, and be an active, full member of the organization. Cause that is truly integration, that's when we can talk about integration. Not like what can we [volunteer organizations] provide for you [immigrants] not like you [volunteer organizations] should care for them [immigrants] but how they can be invited in? (NO15)

The same informant also reflects on the lack of overall strategy and coordination of resources embedded in the volunteer sector:

I mean, who has that responsibility? I just wish that, whether it is the county, NAV or in collaboration we should drive processes with the volunteers because they want to contribute. They are searching and exploring. What are the opportunities here? How can we [volunteers] contribute? What can drive these processes with volunteer organizations to get a better system for this? I feel it is too much ad hoc, too much serendipity, and lots of good thoughts. Sheds (BUA) that provide access for loaning equipment and all, but there is so much more that could have been done here. (NO15)

Another informant experience that there is a considerable variation across the municipalities regarding how well they succeed in collaborating between public services and voluntary organizations, and it is underlined that these collaborations depend on dedicated individuals. When responding to the question 'what characterizes municipalities that succeed in cooperating across public services and NGOs?', the informant says:

We experience that it is a bit person dependent. We have a municipality where it works very well. This is, for example, XX municipality. There is one employee at the adult education centre who is also involved in volunteering (...) Then it is a closer connection. But where you do not have these personal links, we may find that the collaboration works a little poorer when you [NGOs] must go through traditional, official channels all the time. It often becomes a bit person dependent. (NO16)

The same informant also describes a difficulty to keep engaging people in voluntary work when the numbers refugees and immigrants shift from many to just a few due to the stricter immigration policies. The organization needs time to adjust their activities, and they refer to this as "the voluntary delay":

When needs suddenly change significantly, it can be difficult to maintain the commitment [of volunteers]. There are fewer and fewer participants [immigrants] who show up, of course, because there are fewer who are available and get involved in it. Adapting and changing activities to the existing needs... We often talk about a "voluntary delay". There is something about the changes that are happening in society, they take a little longer within volunteering, just because it is voluntary efforts that are the basis for it. It's use of their leisure time, it's commitment, it's what motivates. Then it takes time to make the big changes in relation to activities and to adapt. (NO16)

SOCIAL MOBILITY

In the policy brief we assessed some of the long terms of integration policies, in short, this research focus on how the children of immigrants are doing in terms of integration. Descendants of TCN immigrants are overrepresented in elite professions such as medical doctors, law, and economy, but the employment rates are also lower for this group than for the majority population. Interestingly, within this group, a higher proportion of women compared to men take higher education. The overall findings give a basis for claiming that the Norwegian welfare state model, with free access to education, a regulated labour market and clear

norms for gender equality provide structures which enable social mobility for second generation immigrant groups. Still, there are also studies that show that children of immigrants' experience discrimination at work, and that they face hindrances in recruitment processes (Midtbøen, 2020). The policymaker we interviewed put some of these hindrances into words when asked about immigrants and their possibilities in the Inland county:

But we know that there are some prejudices. Some limitations. That if you have a slightly different name may be enough to get you side-lined in an [work] application process. Just being able to make use of the education from your home country is very difficult. You may have to start a new education, take vocational training, to get a job. We see that people with good education from their home country come here and work with cleaning, are taxi drivers, and things like that. It's about class politics. I think we must take this seriously. (NO14)

5. ACTIVE PARTICIPATION AND CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS

Regarding participation and citizens' rights, the common thread in the interviews is that while there are formal structures and legislation in place to ensure equal basic rights for all, there are still different forms of barriers, at local and structural levels, that may hinder active participants for immigrants. This links to issues discussed in the previous section, regarding opportunities for social mobility, and it links to issues raised under the heading 'social inclusion'. Based on our data material, we see that participation pertain to three main issues when seen from the perspectives of the informants: Participation in the labour market, participation in civil society and the third sector (clubs, associations, volunteer organizations etc.) and hindrance for participation beyond the formal citizens' rights.

PARTICIPATION IN THE LABOUR MARKET

Participation is commonly linked to participation in the labour market, i.e. to labour market inclusion or participation in education as a means for participation in work life. The most comprehensive and strategic integration measure in Norway aimed to enhance labour market inclusion is the introduction program, targeting refugees¹⁸ (see further details on this in D3.1 and D6.1). As explained in the reports for the other deliverable, the impact, or effects of this program is closely monitored and evaluated. It is deemed relatively successful, in terms of its ability to strengthen the conditions for participation among refugees, even though the national targets which state that 70 percent should be in education or work after the program is generally not met. One of the informants at the ministry level reflects on the results as follows:

We see that no matter what we have done, around 60 per cent in total are in work or education the following year [after the introduction program], around 70 per cent of men and 50 per cent of women. One has tried to do different types of efforts, without seeing great effects (NO3).

To improve the results of the program, and enhance opportunities for labour market inclusion, the same informant stresses the importance of enabling participants in the introduction program to gain a formal education and qualifications beyond the language training and work training included in the introduction program:

Formal education/qualification is important whether you have immigrant background or not: (...) figures from Statistics Norway show that it is often the education that counts more than

¹⁸ The right and obligation to participate in an introduction programme shall apply to newly arrived foreign nationals between 18 and 55 years of age who need to obtain basic qualifications and who have been granted asylum (or a residence or work permit hence to the Immigration Act section 8, 9 or 22 with the restrictions mentioned in the Act). The term refugee is used in reference to both asylum seekers granted residency and resettlement refugees.

perhaps that you have immigrated, the statistics shows us that if you compare immigrants who have taken upper secondary education in Norway, then they have approximately the same employment rates as the rest of the population. These are the steps you must take. This is something we are trying to do through the integration reform (N03).

The same issues are raised in this quote:

What the municipalities are struggling with is this; there is the population decrease and the general trends, people get older and all that but more specifically, it is this about getting access to skilled labour. This is a huge challenge. Recruitment, especially within health and care. There are huge discussions on this regarding labour market inclusion, how to ensure that those who are excluded and don't want to be excluded can gain competence/skills that enable them to contribute.

There are needs for qualification paths [educational programs] adapted to the needs of different groups, which give skills that can actually be used, so I am very positive to that. (N06)

Thus, education and formal qualifications have become ever more important for participation in the labour market in Norway. There are few unskilled jobs, and there is considerable competition over the few that exist, typically between youth and immigrants as discussed earlier. Since employment rates are high in Norway, for both men and women, the labour market become a very important arena for participation which has implications for many other aspects of life. Since the workplace is the arena where most adults spend most of their time, it also an arena where people socialize, create networks, and also develop their identities and often sense of belonging. Thus, being excluded from the labour market does not only imply lack of income, and potential stigma related to that, but it also implies exclusion from important arenas for socializing and personal development. Consequently, participation in or exclusion from the labour market has a range of social implications. Thus, labour market inclusion, and investment in education as means to labour market inclusion, is in Norway pursued as the central strategies for participation and social inclusion at large. This has been a gradual development over the years, but it is very clearly expressed in the new Integration Act (2020).

PARTICIPATION IN CIVIL SOCIETY

Another important arena of participation is in clubs, associations, and different kinds of volunteer organizations. Under the heading 'social inclusion', we discussed the importance of enabling children to take part in organized activities after school hours. Since the majority population is largely engaged in such activities and have increasingly become so especially over the last years, participation in these arenas has become highly important for social inclusion. This is not only about the children's participation, networking, and socializing, but also about the parents because they tend to take part in organizing events, raising funds, cheering on the side-lines, driving etc. So, children's participation in these arenas have implications for the whole family. Ensuring that children of immigrants are able to take part in organized activities, for example sponsoring fees, helping with transports, equipment etc., can be an important measure for integration. Without taking part in such organized activities, there is a risk of social exclusion because arenas for more informal interactions and engagements between children in Norway are diminishing. This is also discussed in previous, interlinked studies, which raise the concern that families with access to these arenas for participation may be in a better place regarding social inclusion than immigrants that are alone (Solheim & Rønnebak, 2019). Moreover, the contrast to the life of families with children, which often have high activity levels, can enhance feelings of loneliness and estrangement (ibid).

However, while children participation in organized activities can be an important means for integration from a broad perspective, one of the informants reflects that there may be excluding mechanisms in the way these activities are run and organized:

Sport is an important arena, but we cannot hide behind the spirit of voluntary work. I love the spirit of hard voluntary work, but we must expect professionalism from the sport to include everyone, both

immigrants and ethnic Norwegians who need a network when they are new [in the communities], and not least immigrants in general (...) Norway has become a multicultural country. When was the last time the sports or the voluntary organizations changed its articles of association to adapt to the new Norway? That is, a multicultural society. No one answered. No one has made any changes. That's a crucial point. That organization [Norwegian Sports Confederation] was founded in 1817 (...) and no changes has been made. I mean that's crazy. (G3).

It should also be noted that there are different levels of participation in civil society and the activities of volunteer organizations. This is reflected on in the quote referred to in the subsection of social capital. On one hand, engagement with volunteer organizations can involve taking part in events or arenas that volunteer organizations set up; receiving care or services from volunteer organizations that can be important arenas for socializing, participating in social arenas with different groups. A problem with these arenas is that they tend to be organized *for* immigrants *by* a few members of the host community. They may be good arenas for meeting other immigrants, but it is not necessarily arenas for interacting with different people from the local community. Another form of involvement with volunteer organizations, is by volunteering, being part of the organization of events and providing services and care alongside other groups. This form of participation can be valuable for socializing, learning, networking and some also receive documentation on work experience from volunteering that can be valuable when applying for jobs. Engagement with volunteer organizations may also take place on a third level, through participation in boards, management and development of organizations, clubs, and associations. Participation at this level, is often lacking according to one of our informants. To pinpoint what we mean by participation on this third level, we repeat parts of the quote we referred to above:

How to recruit this group as full members of these organizations? So that they can learn about organizational development and that bit, and be an active, full member of the organization. Cause that is truly integration, that's when we can talk about integration. Not like what can we [volunteer organizations] provide for you [immigrants] not like you [volunteer organizations] should care for them [immigrants] but how they are invited in? (NO15)

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Political participation was scarcely addressed in the interviews, but the following quote indicates that immigrant's active political participation may be limited, but also that it is a topic that deserves more attention:

Yes, it is a theme [immigration and integration], but you can always reflect on the fact that it may be a theme that has not received the attention it deserved. [...] To put it this way, in XX region, when I was there [in the regional council], it is very rare to have politicians who had a different background than natives. (NO11)

HINDRANCES TO PARTICIPATION

As a response to the question of citizens' rights and conditions for participation among immigrants, one informant positioned at the national level in a directorate, reflects as follows:

As I see it, the rights [of immigrants] is not so challenging, it is more the opportunities that are challenging. To be able to utilize the rights you have, which in a way requires both language skills and an understanding of the society you are in. An understanding of the system that everyone who has grown up here has, but which you must, to a greater extent, build when you come from another

country and other culture. This means that you do not always have an understanding and awareness of your own rights. **(N02)**

Similar concerns are shared in this quote:

*They [immigrants] have the same rights, but I don't think that is where you find the problems. It is not easy to navigate in the public systems [...] evidently, newly arrived immigrants they don't know the language or the culture, they will not have the same prerequisites at least in a short-term perspective and there may be many challenges [...] it is not just about equal formal rights, but about understanding how the society works, what is the governments' role and all that. **(N06)***

So as pointed out in these quotes, immigrants may have formal rights and access to participate, but lack of understanding and awareness of these rights, and lack of insights on how the systems in a welfare state works, may be a hinder to active participation. Gaining understanding of individual rights, and with how the system works links also to language barriers, which is highlighted as central impediment for participation in the following quote:

*Language, participation. If you are sitting with your own group, then it fails. It is about participating in social arenas. It could be at a workplace, or a football team for that matter, or a crafts club. It can be so many things. But getting over that threshold is very difficult. We do not quite know what the key is to achieve that. But someone needs to be the one making connections. It does not happen completely on its own. Some are very good at taking the initiative locally. But I would think many in rural Norway finds that language is a clear barrier. **(N14)***

6. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF SERVICES

IMPACT OF IMMIGRATION ON LOCAL SERVICES

Generally, the settlement of refugees in rural municipalities in Norway creates jobs in the public service sector because the municipalities are responsible for providing a two-year introduction program to settled refugees consisting of language tutoring, work training civic classes and more (see also D3.1 and D6.1). However, with the new integration act (2020) there is a change of strategy from an active geographical dispersal policy in which refugees have been settled in all municipalities including the very small and remote ones. The new act encourages settlement of refugees in fewer, bigger municipalities based on the reasoning that this will make it easier to provide integration services of better quality to the participants. Small municipalities struggle for instance with providing differentiated language tutoring adjusted to the level and educational background of the participants. Small municipalities imply small classes and few staff, which means that a group of participants which may start on very different levels when learning the language will be taught in one group and the pace and progress of the teaching may be too fast for slow learners and too slow for fast learners. In bigger municipalities they will be able to differentiate and group those on similar levels together and they may thus provide more targeted teaching.

Relatedly, the new integration act seeks to embed plans for educational programs within and/or in extension of the introduction program to enhance chances of employment and labour market inclusion. Bigger municipalities can be able to provide different programs with various kinds of educational specializations so that the refugees have different options to choose from so that it can match their skills, backgrounds, and motivations. Being able to run, organize and sustain such programs requires that a relatively regular and substantial number of people are eligible as participants. This may be possible in bigger municipalities, but difficult in small and remote municipalities with few participants.

Thus, the announced shifts of strategies in the new integration act (2020) are meant to enhance the quality of integration services provided for refugees in rural areas. A potential downside to this, is that the small and remote municipalities may be the ones that are eager to settle refugees because they need people. As such, they may be particularly motivated to include and welcome immigrants also in the more informal arenas other than the formally organized introduction program. The downside, seen from a regional development perspective, may also be that the small and remote municipalities may be further impoverished.

However, it is a fact that problems related to logistics and transport tend to be a constant struggle for immigrants in dispersedly populated rural areas, and it affects their ability to make use of services that are supposed to facilitate integration. Problems with transport and travelling are highlighted in many interviews. This quote exemplifies:

The educational opportunities are so scattered. If you live in XX, you must travel to XX to study. Many of these who come moving, do not have the opportunity to do so. If you move here with four kids and do not have a driver's license ... We know that the bus offer is not good enough. (NOI6)

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES AND TRAINING

By large, reflections on services and access to services in the interviews were mainly focused on language training, vocational training, and educational programs (less of instance on housing, or other social services). When discussing training, and educational programs, the informants reflected on strategies for improving the quality of these so that they better met the needs of immigrants, and refugees in particular. One such strategy is to divide educational programs into modules, which are different building blocks that can form a full vocational education program when put together. At the same time, by completing one module participants can document that they have gained competence in certain areas. A representative from the labour and welfare services explains:

What we are also planning for this target group (immigrants) is to develop module-based education programs (yrkesopplæring). We started a comprehensive program, a virtual type for six to eight different specializations (...) About half of the participants had immigrant background, so that's quite good. Even though not all complete the whole educational program, they may complete modules and get certificates for that. In this way, they don't end up starting an education which they fail to complete and then end up with nothing. Then, at least, they are left with something. So that is positive. I am confident that this is the way forward. (NI5)

Another way of redirecting training programs and service provision that are supposed to help immigrants have a better chance of gaining employment is to place more focus on previous learning and experience. This would require the development of better systems for 'prior learning assessments.' In Norway, these systems are quite scarcely developed and there is potential for using them more actively and more flexibly:

So, more focus on prior learning assessment. This thing with people having to complete upper secondary school, then high school, and then higher education. Like if you didn't manage to bring all your papers, despite the fact that you may have long working experience in an area. If you don't have formal expertise, then you are still on a higher level when starting [education/training]. (NOI6)

The same informant also contemplates deficiencies in the existing service systems, in the sense that the systems tend to be more focused on the small groups of people that are *not* motivated to work or to prepare for work through education. Instead, she reasons, more focus should be placed on developing service systems that are suited to support the larger group of people that want to work and get qualified for work. She underlines that this is a personal fad:

I used to say that there are idiots everywhere. People who want to utilize the system, whether you are Norwegian or multicultural. But one cannot set up the whole system based on the small one percent that will ruin things for others. Within the immigration policy, there is far too much of just that. That the rules and the system are set up to take those who may not be interested, while these 98-99 percent who actually would have liked to get work, get a job, earn something and feed a family, and who would like a life ... There are so many obstacles, because you must take those who are not interested in it [getting work]. Of course, there are some who are not interested in it. But the proportion we experience is very small compared to the other (N016)

7. CONCLUSION

The dominant narrative conveyed through the interviews of this study, is that immigration is expected to have a valuable or positive impact on rural communities in Norway. Immigration is perceived as valuable because it can help counteracting tendencies of population decline, and immigration is assumed to help keeping rural areas 'alive'. The interviews highlight potential positive impacts on the local economies; potential positive impacts in terms of enhancing cultural diversity and tolerance in rural areas; and it is seen to potentially help rural municipalities to sustain local service provision such as local schools. However, the informants also discuss a range of potential pitfalls, and they are concerned with how different kinds of integration measures need to be in place if immigration and settlement of immigrants from outside Europe will have the kind of positive impact that they envision.

The interviews do not give clear answers to which integration measures that will be most effective, or which ones that will have a clear impact when it comes to actual integration processes. As discussed under the reflections on methods in chapter 2, we find that it is important to make this distinction between discussions of impact of immigration on local communities, and the impact of specific integration measures on integration processes. (for instance, do specific programs lead to the intended outcomes, i.e. do systematic language training enhance labour market inclusion among immigrants). Overall, the informants are concerned with the multifaceted nature of integration, and with how a broad set of resources require mobilization to make integration work locally – within the labour market, employers, civil society, volunteer organizations, and the public sector. The need for such holistic approaches at the local level is stressed in most interviews. The following quote summarizes some of these key issues raised across the interviews:

We are a municipality with declining populations as well, so we see a positive effect [of immigration] in many ways. As I said, the prerequisite is that they receive follow-up from the start. [...] There are some challenges, and these needs to be addressed early and that they are informed about things that should be corrected when possible. Many [immigrants] leave to larger cities or to other places where there may be more people from their country or there are more opportunities to get a job, there is more activity. Small communities do not have the same variety of offers. I see there are many who have moved because we may be a little too small for them (G1)

SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACT

So, as expressed in the quote above, and in other quotes presented throughout the report, immigration, and settlement of refugees in particular, may have a positive impact on the municipal economy. However, there are also potential pitfalls in this reasoning. The municipalities receive funds from the state to cover expenses and investments when settling refugees. But we see that there is a risk that the transfer of integration funds to from the central governments to the municipalities are not actually invested in the integration measures, but that they are instead spent to cover up shortcomings in the other parts of the municipal budgets. With these strategies, rural municipalities run the risk that settled refugees move once

the introduction period is over (around two years) if they have failed to give the new community members a sense of belonging, for instance failed to enable development of networks locally (bridging and linking social capital). And/or the municipalities may have failed in helping to provide networks, skills and competence that may enable settled refugees to be included in the labour market, which force them to move to other places to search for jobs. These predicaments regarding immigration, integration, and impact of settling refugees in rural areas are highlighted in the following quote from one of the interviews:

Whether it has socioeconomic impacts, it depends.... It relies on the understanding and awareness among municipal leaders. I think this [awareness] is quite high when it comes to work migrants, this is very clear and evident [that their presence is important for the local economy]. But when it comes to refugees, we see examples of municipalities that... well, during the introduction period they get a lot of money from the state, which contributes to the municipal budgets. This money is not earmarked, so the municipalities can spend these as they like. There have been some examples that not all municipalities are conscious of actually investing in these people [refugees] in this period, the introduction period, they rather think like 'this increases the municipal budget so we are in a financially better position to provide services to our citizens' (G2)

Thus, while the funding is meant to be used for integration measures, across different organizational units and service sectors in the municipality, the funding is not earmarked in a rigid and specified manner. The central government trust the municipalities to make 'good' or purposeful decisions on how these funds should be distributed and spent, based on the reasoning that the decision makers in the municipalities know the conditions, needs and challenges in their municipalities the best. This system is in line with long traditions in Norway, with placing emphasis on local self-governance in the municipalities. The central government tends to grant the municipalities leeway to make priorities in line with their insights and understandings of local conditions and needs. This distinguishes Norway from for instance Sweden, which have a history of more centralized control. This is reflected in differences in how the introduction program to refugees have been administered and implemented in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark (For a comparative analysis of the introduction program in Scandinavia see Tronstad & Hernes, 2014).

At the same time, a new Integration Act (2020) has been implemented which has been valid since January 2021, and which replaces the previous Introduction Act (2003). The new integration act contains elements that downplay the local autonomy of the municipalities and entail more standardization and centralized control regarding the local implementation of the introduction program. The implications of this, when it comes to the impact of the introduction program for the integration of refugees, are yet to be seen and analysed.

CULTURAL IMPACT AND TOLERANCE

The informants reflect that more immigration to rural areas has the potential to enhance the level of tolerance and reduce hostility and resistance towards people that look different and have different customs and traditions. It is reasoned that more exposure to cultural diversity may lead to heightened levels of tolerance and acceptance. Thus, the informants do not expect that increased numbers of immigrants will lead to disintegration and increasing level of antagonism, but rather the opposite. Again, our data are not documentation that this is in fact is the case, but it is how the informants perceive these dynamics, as expressed in these quotes:

The less you have met with people who look different from you, the more sceptical, in my experience (NOI4)

What I have learned is that those who have little experience with immigration are very sceptical, and the scepticism goes away when you gain experience with it, but I do not know if that is true. (N01)

This informant reflects further that attitudes towards immigration and immigrants is likely to be shaped by the majority populations direct experience with immigrants, as well as with direct with the effects of demographic changes and local transformations following this:

The typical rural municipality inhabitants have a very conscious relationship to the fact that population decline is problematic. They see that fewer children are born, and that schools and kindergarten are threatened. Perhaps immigration has helped to soften the skepticism that may exist in these societies (...) Both municipalities and individuals ask, "what's in it for me". If one experiences that immigrants add something positive. E.g. finances or families that help save the kindergarten. This is received in a completely different way here than compared to a society where you fight for jobs and the wage level is driven down. (N01).

So, following this reasoning, by concretely experiencing the impact of immigration as positive for rural communities, for instance when it comes to sustaining local services, more positive attitudes towards immigration and immigrants will follow. The informant discusses this as 'structural benevolence' as an alternative to structural resistance: *I have never thought about it like this before, but if you accept that structural context means something for resistance, then it must be possible to think that it means something for lack of resistance. (N01).* We do not have data to state that such synergies or interdependencies exist in the region where our project is set, but the reflections correlate to the reasoning underpinning the Matilde project, and the upcoming case studies at the municipal level may allow us to explore this in further detail.

INTEGRATION AND IMPACT OF IMMIGRATION

Integration has become the dominant policy strategy in Norway for managing difference and introducing immigrants to the new society (NOU, 2017; see also Gruber & Zupan, 2021). Integration is defined and understood as a strategy which places emphasis on cultural diversity, in the sense that minority groups are expected to be able to maintain cultural identity, heritage and religious practices when settling in a new country. The term is understood in contrast to assimilation, perceived as the dominant strategy of the past, where minority groups (indigenous groups/Sámi people in Norway) were forced to adapt to the majority culture. However, in addition to emphasis on cultural diversity, the integration concept also entails objectives to ensure that *'all citizens are able to utilise their resources and participate in society. All citizens have rights and obligations, and should have the opportunity to participate in, and contribute to, working and social life'* (Meld. St 6 (2012-2013, short version of the report, p.3). Thus, integration policies place emphasis on the rights of immigrants to maintain cultural heritage, and to participate, but also on their obligations to participate. Moreover, integration is in the policy discourse understood as a two-way process which require that immigrants make efforts and show willingness to become integrated, and that the host society are open to integrate immigrants and to put measures in place that may facilitate integration.

Hence, the policy discourse on integration forms the backdrop for how the consequences or impact of immigration is discussed in Norway (see also the Green paper NOU 2017). Largely, integration is among our informants perceived as a process or means to an end rather than an end (impact) in itself. Different kinds of integration measures are perceived as necessary means to ensure that immigration will have desired impacts (such as providing a better life for people in need, building sustainable communities in rural areas, building culturally diverse and tolerant societies etc.). However, which integration measures that are suitable for reaching these ends, how they should be organized etc. are debated, and different suggestions are provided through this report.

Integration as a policy strategy differs from integration as measure or indicator of degree or level of immigrants' embeddedness in society. However, assessing whether the governments' policy strategies are working or not require the development of indicators or tools for measuring this. The main indicator used for measuring integration in Norway is labour market inclusion (and enrolment in education). This is set at the main performance indicator in the monitoring of the introduction program, the most comprehensive integration measures for immigrant refugees. The program is provided by the municipalities for refugee

immigrants, who have the rights to and are obliged to participate in this program. The aim is to ensure that 70 percent of the participants are in work or education after completing the program.

Whether labour market inclusion is a good indicator for measuring integration is a different question. Labour market inclusion can be important for the inclusion of a range of other social arenas, as discussed in this report (see the section on participation in the labour market, p.26). Since Norway is a country with high employment rates for women and men, exclusion from the labour market has broad implications in terms of exclusion. Still, a too narrow focus on labour market inclusion as an indicator of integration entails the risk of shadowing other dimensions of integration. As pointed out, for instance by Agger and Strang (2008), integration is multifaceted and covers a range of domains in addition to employment. Taking a more holistic approach to integration, exploring it along different dimensions, may reveal that at an individual level people may feel included and yield a high level of participation without being employed, and alternatively people may be employed but at the same time feel scarcely integrated or included, and may have low scores on other forms of participation. A related risk of mainly focusing on labour market inclusion as means and indicators for integration, is that other forms of measures may be neglected so that immigrants that are not eligible for work (for instance due to health impairment) become further marginalized and excluded because measures targeting these groups are not prioritized.

When looking at immigration and integration from a research perspective, it is a problem that integration as a policy strategy tends to get conflated with integration as an analytical term (see for instance Rytter, 2018). Thus, a clarification may be needed. When we refer to integration in this report, it is mainly linked to how it appears as a policy concept, since we have interviewed people in formal positions that in different ways are involved in policy making or implementation of policies related to immigration and integration at different levels. However, we also acknowledge that 'integration' as an *analytical* concept may entail something else. Assessing whether immigration result in integration (integration as a form of impact) or studying whether given integration measures lead to certain impacts of immigration (for instance curbing population decline and sustaining rural communities) would require studies of integration as social processes locally. These kinds of detailed studies of integration, and of relations between integration and impact of immigration, can be followed up in the planned studies of WP5. This WP will entail case studies at the local level. This can cover research of how impact is *experienced* by immigrants and members of the host community, and it can cover collection of quantitative measures that give insights on impact (population rates, employment rates, social security levels etc.).

FINAL REFLECTIONS OF HOW IMMIGRATION IS HANDLED

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF STRATEGIES FOR HANDLING IMMIGRATION

As discussed above, and in the previous policy briefs, integration constitutes the dominant policy strategy for handling immigration in Norway. 'Integration', within the Norwegian policy discourse, implies that incentives are put in place that should enable immigrants to maintain their cultural heritage, but it also refers to the rights and obligations of immigrants to make efforts to become part of the new society. The most comprehensive policy measure implemented to support this over-arching integration policy is the 2-year 'Introduction program' targeting refugees when they are settled in the municipalities. The municipalities are obliged to provide such programs and settled refugees have the rights and obligation to participate. The government's comprehensive investments in such integration measures, which are meant to work as a scaffolding and help immigrants take part in the labour market and other social arenas, can be considered a *strength* of existing strategies for handling immigration.

On the other hand, the Norwegian strategy of investing comprehensively in a large scale, national and relatively standardized introduction program can also be seen as a *weakness*. It implies that the responsibility for integration is formalized and located in government institutions and public service systems, while civil society may become more detached. There is also a risk that full time participation in the program for two years creates a kind of 'lock-in' effect by putting immigrants in a classroom with other immigrants, and as such detached from the regular society they are supposed to become part of. In recent

years, efforts have been made to counteract these potential weaknesses of the introduction program by creating relations with volunteer organizations and civil society and placing more emphasis on internships and training in the working place as part of the program. This is expected to ease the transit to participation in society after the program ends (metaphorically; the scaffolding is removed). It varies how successful such efforts have been, and there are considerable differences across the municipalities.

Another potential *weakness* of investing comprehensively in an introduction program for refugees and asylum seekers granted residency, is that it implies that scarce investments are made in integration measures aimed at other groups. For instance, labour migrants receive no financial support to take part in language training, while participants in the introduction program participate free of charge and receive benefits for two years to be able to take part in the program fulltime. This can create tensions between groups, and marginalization of groups that are expected to handle interactions with the majority population without extra support.

Norway has also placed emphasis on a geographical dispersal policy when settling refugees. Some would regard this as a *strength* because it distributes the resources and the potential burdens related to refugee settlement equally throughout the country, and it supports broader prioritizations in Norwegian regional policies to maintain distributed settlements also in remote and relative inaccessible places. (Whether this is perceived as a strength depends of course on whether distributed settlement in the country is perceived as a societal value).

Some would also claim that the geographical dispersal policies are a *weakness* of how immigration is handled in Norway because it implies that persons that are likely to have problems with being included in the labour market are settled in areas with scarce labour markets and few job opportunities compared to more urban areas. This may further weaken their preconditions for gaining employment and contribute to increasing social inequalities between immigrants and the majority population, with risks of increasing polarizations.

OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS OF THE WAYS IMMIGRATION IS HANDLED

Opportunities when it comes to the way immigration is handled in Norway can be seen in relation to what we discuss as weaknesses above. Opportunities can be found in the identification of strategies for counteracting potential weaknesses. As pointed out by several of our informants, there are considerable opportunities for handling integration processes more as a collective societal responsibility, rather than as the main responsibility of the authorities and public services. In practical terms, it was reasoned that this would entail efforts of integrating and bringing together resources within the labour market, civil society/third sector, and public services. It was also pointed out that this requires that integration is embedded in all strategic plans at the county and the municipal level.

Threats to the existing ways that immigration is handled is that the weaknesses of existing strategies sustain or are reinforced. For instance, that hindrances for labour market inclusion elevate and the social inequalities and polarization become more relevant. A threat discussed among our informants is also that the central government is practicing an increasingly stricter immigration policy which contradicts the interests of decision makers at regional or municipal level that are dependent on immigration to counteract population decline.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Migration policy oriented to the integration of the foreign population in Spain is established based on a standardized access to welfare state benefits. That is the general rule, except for the Basic Law 14/2003 (reforming Basic Law 4/2000 and Law 7/1985, amending the Immigration Law approved in 2000). These two laws granted undocumented immigrants' access to the basic benefits of the national health system, education system and social services system for all foreigners in an irregular situation as long as they were registered at a town hall (Lobo Abascal, 2007).

Spain is a highly decentralized state in both the political and administrative terms. The Autonomous Communities (CC.AA.) and local governments have the responsibility of management of the integration process, i.e. reception, housing, education, work, health, or social services, always within the framework of national guidelines (Cachón, 2008). Spain has not, however, had a defined integration model. The relatively easy labour insertion of foreigners in a labour market that demands cheap and low-skilled labour has ensured the first level of integration. It is a model that positively conditions subsequent coexistence with the host population (Moreno-Colom & De Alós, 2016). From this point of view, conceptualizing immigrant integration as a governance technique – oriented to the stimulation of economic growth – makes sense (Hadj Abdou, 2019).

To know the degree of social inclusion, as a result of a dynamic and multifactorial process that positions immigrants outside or within life opportunities, is especially relevant in rural and mountain environments. Simplifying the situation into two limiting and opposing categories – inclusion versus exclusion – significantly reduces the multitude of perceptions that subjects have about themselves and about others. But, above all, it reduces the possibility of intervening regarding continuous improvement in the social inclusion process.

PRESENTATION OF SELECTED ACTORS

The migration impact assessment in rural and mountain areas requires collecting information from different perspectives. Given that there are numerous actors involved in the processes of reception and integration of the migrant population, it was necessary to incorporate different profiles of informants. Some come from the environment of the local public administration, trade unions, social services but also other non-profit organizations, all of them established in rural areas. These organizations are present throughout the rural territory in Aragón, but some have a very local involvement.

Despite the predominance of civil servants as actors, regions reflect a great diversity of policy actors involved in the decision-making network (Zapata-Barrero, 2011). The actors that dynamize and articulate the individual and collective processes of social inclusion are always multiple and varied in nature, and particularly in Aragón. Despite the scarcity of non-profit organizations established in the territory, the existing ones have articulated an intense social action since the beginning of the first migratory flows and have also involved civil society and other public and private actors, as in the case of schools.

It is also necessary to collect the multitude of perceptions that the subjects have about themselves and about others. That is why we have also incorporated informants with foreign origin, having representation of the various migratory projects settled in the territory: seasonal workers and long-term workers, initiators of the migratory project and regrouped, regular, and irregular, and of different nationalities and countries of origin. We would like to thank the research participants who were so generous with their time and sharing part of their lives.

MATILDE CONTEXT IN ARAGÓN

The magnitude acquired by the migratory phenomenon in Spain since the end of the 20th century has profoundly transformed the profiles of the Spanish society. On the one hand, the weight of the population of foreign origin has rapidly increased to reach its maximum level in 2011 with 5.7 million people - in 2019 exceeded 4.5 million people, around 11 per cent of the total population - (according to the Municipal Register of Inhabitants, INE). On the other hand, Spain already has a level of multiculturalism comparable to that of the main host countries in the European context.

In particular, the presence of foreign immigrants in rural areas in Spain is important, although their numbers are bigger in urban areas, according to data from the Municipal Register of Inhabitants for 2019. Among all the foreigners, only 3.1 per cent reside in municipalities with less than 1,000 inhabitants, 17.2 per cent in municipalities between 1,000 and 10,000 inhabitants, 26.7 per cent in those between 10,000 and 50,000 inhabitants, and 40 per cent reside in the largest (> 100,000 inhabitants). However, 6.1 per cent of the population in municipalities with less than 1,000 inhabitants is of foreign nationality, 11.4 per cent of those living in municipalities with more than 100,000 inhabitants, while 12.5 per cent correspond to municipalities with population between 50,001 and 100,000 inhabitants.

Since the mid-1990s, Aragón has been an attractive region for immigrants. In 2020, 12.2 per cent of the population in Aragón have the nationality of another country and almost 14.7 per cent is born in another country. Among those of the last group, 58.9 per cent belong to countries outside the European Union (TCNs), representing 7.2 per cent of the population residing in the region (Municipal Register of Inhabitants, INE). Currently, this group is made up mainly of people of the following nationalities: Morocco, Colombia, Ecuador, other non-EU European countries (EU-28) and Venezuela. Similarly, the percentage of foreigners TCNs over the total population of each of the three provinces of the region shows very similar data: 7.4 per cent Zaragoza, 6.9 per cent Huesca and 5.9 per cent Teruel. These figures indicate that the absorption capacity of the foreign population – in particular, TCNs – is homogeneous throughout the territory; also, a similar proportional relationship between natives and foreigners is maintained in the three provinces.

Attention to the phenomenon of immigration from the regional government was something after the beginning of the arrival of immigrants. Thus, the first plan of attention to migration appeared in 2004 (*Comprehensive Aragon Immigration Plan, 2004-2007*). The second plan was the *Comprehensive Plan for Intercultural Coexistence in Aragon 2008-2011*. The third one was the *Plan for Inclusion and Intercultural Coexistence in Aragon 2014-2016*. Lastly, the plan that was recently approved was the *Comprehensive Plan for the Management of Cultural Diversity in Aragon 2018-2021*¹⁹. The progressive evolution of these plans has been towards the introduction of a global and egalitarian vision of the entire population that lives in the territory.

The most immediate response to migrant integration started from the NGOs, working basically in covering the basic needs (food and accommodation) and giving legal and social advice to the population in an irregular situation (Del Olmo et al., 2008). Subsequently, areas of social action were developed focused on the regularized immigrant population, offering services aimed at integration: Spanish classes, job training, and labour legal guidance; thus, this population can comply with the administrative procedures, for their stay in Spain and for family reunification. In addition, there has also been a parallel growth of the immigrant population and of non-profit organizations in Spain, which favoured an equalization in volume, in about ten years during the 1990s, to the situation of social action in other developed countries (Gutiérrez Resa, 1995). For this reason, non-profit organizations, along with Unions, have been the best informants of social reality. However, its scarce presence in rural areas of Aragón has made integration and inclusion processes more difficult in rural and mountain society.

METHODS AND ETHICS ASPECTS RELATED WITH THE INTERVIEWS

Both the University of Zaragoza and the CEICA (Research Ethics Committee of the Aragon Autonomous Region) gave permission to the research team for the collection and use of information collected, even

¹⁹ <https://www.aragon.es/-/plan-integral-para-la-gestion-de-la-diversidad-cultural-de-aragon-2018-2021>.

during the fieldwork. In this way, information from the interviewees has been taken and treated very carefully keeping the ethic consents. Moreover, researchers always offered the possibility of interrupting the recording if they wished to make any remarks off the record, guaranteeing their anonymity throughout the process.

In many cases before conducting the interviews (mostly conducted virtually, but also some of them face-to-face), interviewees received the list of questions to allow them to prepare and arrange the interview. Also, before the interviews all interviewees had the 'Consent Form for research participants' and the 'MATILDE participant information sheet'. With these documents, they were informed about the purpose of the MATILDE project, about the treatment of the collected information and about how this information will be used and stored.

The interviews were recorded with the interviewees' consent, and the interviewers took notes with which to draft a preliminary summary of the interview. The questions were asked as in the script, although the interviews spontaneously touched on other related subjects. Each interview lasted between half an hour and an hour.

2. SOCIAL POLARIZATION

It is evident that non-community immigrants (TCNs) start from a marginal position in the labour market, which conditions their social inclusion, spatial and relational situation. Three axes can be seen that stratify the position of TCNs at the lower end of the social structure, frequently placing them outside the margins of inclusion: first, the documentary situation; second, national origin -considered as an analytical category delimited by language, culture, and lifestyle-; and third, professional training (qualified or not).

OCCUPATIONAL POLARIZATION: TEMPORARY WORKERS AND UNDOCUMENTED

As has happened in other Western European countries of recent immigration, diversification in productive structures has generated low-status employment in various sectors (Kasimis & Papadopoulos, 2005). In Aragón, during the years prior to the economic crisis between 2008-2014, the existence of a dual labour market in the agricultural industry was reinforced with the supply in the construction sector; furthermore, the domestic service sector and especially care sector, has been very important as employment niches for foreigners.

Non-community migrants stand out in the agricultural and livestock sector, in which men mostly occupy direct positions in the countryside, while women tend to be more present in fruit warehouses. Men are also more present on farms and in the meat industry; likewise, exclusively male jobs are those related to herding. On the contrary, the cleaning staff, domestic workers and those dedicated to the personal care sector are mostly women; however, due to the increase in the male population living alone in rural areas, there is an incipient demand for male caregivers, preferably Latin Americans:

"In meat slaughterhouses, the profile, 100 per cent, is immigrant. Especially in the early stages (slaughter and meat processing). Then, when it goes to packaging and over there, it does change, you already have more people from the territory." (WP3ES008).

The wide offer in the agricultural sector is conditioned by several factors. Firstly, because the native labour force has moved to other sectors with better working conditions (industrial sector and services), so it is difficult to find national workers for some manual and low-skilled jobs in the countryside. Secondly, because the size of the agricultural companies has increased (This is because investment in agricultural machinery is more profitable in large areas of land). Thirdly, due to the changes in the lifestyles of the population: picking fruit in the most intense months was a family activity, and young national students were added to this, taking advantage of the summer to obtain extra money as shown below, although all this has changed:

“When I was a kid [the fruit picking] was a family activity, all together, we had a great time, students who came to get a little money also helped (...) they worked hard, but it was something else, too there was more neighbourhood solidarity.” (WP3WP4ES008).

The agricultural sector seeks low-skilled workers for manual jobs in harsh conditions and high turnover, which has contributed to generating de facto “fixed discontinuous” workforces. Many times, from one year to the next, workers already known in previous years are used and contacted again (personal relationships between employer and employee) who, from season to season, trust each other to repeat their contractual relationship.

In rural and mountain areas, the agro-pastoral sector requires special attention, since it has lost a lot of workforce, but it continues to be an essential activity in the rural and agrarian world. However, it differs from other activities, since there are usually more workers (shepherds) in an irregular situation (without permits), and therefore with more limited rights, low wages, and poverty of life (Farinella & Nori, 2021). In Aragón, especially in the province of Teruel, these jobs are held by people from the Maghreb, sub-Saharan countries, some Pakistani and occasionally), some applicants of international asylum protection. In addition, some men arrive from Uruguay to shear sheep.

In relation to nationalities there is also diversification; those coming from the Maghreb and other African countries – in addition to Romanians and Bulgarians – are more represented in the agricultural and livestock sector, especially engaged in agricultural tasks (Viruela, 2013). For example, sub-Saharan Africans (from Ghana, Mali, and Senegal) are usually hired for the direct collection of fruit and farm products. The migrants from Africa accounts for the largest number of seasonal workers, initially many who arrived and hired irregularly and with low levels of training (Ródenas, 2016).

These profiles are highly demanded by employers for their high level of productivity, even when weather conditions are adverse. Not only are these workers needed to fill these positions, but immigrants are the only ones who want to fill those positions, sometimes receiving low wages in uncomfortable jobs (Morén-Alegret & Wladyka, 2020). This explains the fact that the autochthonous population, despite high unemployment rates, generally does not come to meet the demand of the agricultural sector. A common statement from unions and employers is the important role that these workers have played in the farm industry, and in general in the agri-food sector; furthermore, its role has become even more evident throughout Europe during this pandemic period (Brovia & Piro, 2021).

Within the group of TCNs, Latin American men represent the other extreme. Their situation is regularized, they know the language and adapt easily to the lifestyle in rural Spain, given that there are fewer differences in the work culture. In addition, lately, they have a higher level of training and professional qualification that allows them either to choose other types of jobs in competition with the native population, or to progress in a short time towards better positions. However, this is still a theoretical position due to the difficulty they have for the recognition of their degrees, producing a polarization regarding the recognition of their competences (Arnot et al., 2013; Souto-Otero & Villalba-García, 2015).

GENDER INEQUALITIES: AFRICAN WOMEN

In addition to the differences by nationality, it is worth highlighting the differences that occur between immigrant women, conditioning their social inclusion in the different places. While for most men, job opportunities are the main reason for settling in a rural municipality, there are notable differences among women according to their origin. Thus, Sub-Saharan and Moroccan women came to rural areas of Aragón mainly as a consequence of family reunification. Although some of these women are currently working in the agricultural sector and on farms, they did not really come to work but joined because their husbands worked there (Nienaber & Roos, 2016). Even though work was not the reason for the woman to migrate, it was the reason for their husbands was to stay and to marry somebody who is willing to work on a farm as well (Nienaber & Roos, 2016). Thus, these women not only did not choose to migrate, but they also did not choose to live in a rural environment; furthermore, their work activity has been conditioned both by the work activity of their couples and by the niches left by the native population:

"My husband has brought me; I came in 2012 and in 2013 I had a son [...]; my husband was here for 15 years, he came alone, and then when we got married, we got married in Guinea and then he also brought me here." (WP3ES015).

However, immigrant women from Latin America and from other non-EU European countries such as Ukraine and Moldova, were initiators of the migratory project, either as a family or individual decision; in any case, work was the priority reason for migration, and that sometimes endowed it with new family roles (Oso, 1998, 2018; Alcalde, 2014) and with new spaces for socialization and participation in the society of reception. Thus, the former (sub-Saharan and Moroccan women) have these limited spaces. Furthermore, these relational structures also reproduce social structures of origin, hindering their social inclusion.

As for the care sector in rural areas, it is a highly demanded activity in which a large immigrant population is employed. Small municipalities where there is little population left due to depopulation are not capable of generating resources to serve an increasingly aging population. This is in addition to the reality of an immigration law that requires three years to remain undocumented to obtain regulation by rooting [arraigo]. Both circumstances make the care sector -in particular, the service of internal workers- [this means that the immigrant person lives and sleeps in the home of the elderly person they care for] a labour niche with clearly very unequal working conditions. These women work without a contract on many occasions, without regulation of working hours, without labour inspection; they also do not usually have relationship/contact with other workers, which allows them to be aware of their own situation, or to make demands. The regulation of the sector is an old demand from the unions, who are very knowledgeable about their situation. However, despite the situation of inequality that this sector represents, for many women and families it has been a means of entry, regularization, and family reunification. In any case, according to both individual informants and through discussion groups, there is unanimity in stating that at the end of all groups there is always the gender category:

"The face of poverty in Aragón is a foreigner woman living alone with family dependents." (WP3ES001).

However, if the ethnic-cultural variable is added, the situation of exclusion from the host society manifests itself with greater intensity in relation to the situation of young Muslim women:

"I am going to be too categorical, but I think that the one who has the worst way to integrate is young Muslim women, for cultural reasons, language..., and because of the pressure they exert between them." (WP3ES007).

RESIDENTIAL POLARIZATION

The demand for housing in some areas has increased with the arrival of foreign population; the lack of a provision for public housing coupled with the aging of the rural housing stock has increased the rental prices. The demand for a housing policy in rural areas is an important demand but it has not yet been addressed in the country. The solutions usually come from local public initiatives, with the participation of non-profit organizations. Despite everything, the social and political actors manifest powerlessness in the face of the situation. Among the seasonal workers, during the months of the campaign, there is a polarization in the use of public space, both residential and leisure and provision of supplies, limiting contact with the native population and host society institutions:

"Many seasonal workers are housed in the farm itself, who only take them down one day a week (on Saturday) to be able to buy from Fraga [city]. Imagine! So, on Saturday that is... supermarkets at full throttle... and that creates much more resistance from the population, that day they [the locals] do not come." (WP3ES009).

However, from the point of view of social inclusion, the situation of discontinuous (temporary) workers but settled in the territory is more worrying. The position in the work activity not only determines low and intermittent income, but also forces people to occupy a certain residential space. The migrant population

from Africa, particularly single sub-Saharan men, have greater difficulties in renting a home. Many of them share rooms during the months they reside in Aragón, but the residential situations are different; some flats are rented by people outside the municipality, and in turn the tenant sublets rooms; they are the so-called "patera floor" (WP3ES007):

"We have seen flats that are rented by a person who does not live here, who sublets rooms, which even they do not know. There are people who are living in a rental apartment and are paying for a registration in another apartment." (WP3ES008).

Although it has not been verified by direct observation, some informants show that spatial segregation occurs more in larger rural municipalities where housing is more expensive. The autochthonous population tends to move to single-family homes in the suburbs, while the older homes are acquired by the foreign population (of Moroccan origin, in particular) who reform them by modifying the traditional aspect:

"Yes, those from the town have gone to the newer part, those who can have become "towers" [type of local housing] with a swimming pool on the outskirts; the oldest houses are bought by Moroccans and renovated; the town is not what it used to be... wooden doors have been replaced by sheet metal doors... the centre has changed a lot." (WP3ES007).

EDUCATIONAL POLARIZATION

School segregation in educational centres is one of the most analysed phenomena in the literature on immigration of foreigners (Carrasco et al., 2011; Garreta & Bolacha, 2009; Murillo & Belavi, 2018). However, this phenomenon does not appear to occur or be significant in rural areas of Aragón. Integration in the school occurs in a normalized way, joining the moment in which their parents arrive at the agricultural season (in the case of seasonal workers), regardless of the documentary situation of their parents and the time they are going to stay in the town. Unlike urban areas, where there is more supply of private schools, in rural areas there is none, and that is why all students (natives and children of foreign immigrants) attend the same public schools. They are cared for as far as possible and based on individual needs; in particular, this focus is on training in the Spanish language, which facilitates their adaptation to academics and social life.

School integration and adaptation programs are the longest programs in time and most in demand in some municipalities. These programs are fully topical, despite the difficulties in adapting to current health regulations after declaring the Covid-19 pandemic situation. The phenomenon of indirect segregation; whereby parents of the natives do not choose schools where there is a greater presence of immigrants – occurs to a greater extent in concerted private schools (private with public financial contribution), which it is a less widespread model in smaller and rural municipalities. In any case, school segregation also occurs within the public network, and can generate a negative effect of inequality of opportunities.

"It is quite normalized. That is to say, the schools know that, during the course, about 40 children are going to join - they are entering - of people who come from other countries. They are aware that this is a phenomenon that happens, and they have it quite integrated, really. Yes, there is a school in Fraga [...] which is the one with the largest migrant population and the largest gypsy population. So, it is the school that people... [...] have the most reluctance when it comes to taking their boys and girls. But it is highly integrated into society, where a large immigrant population comes, and they are welcomed throughout the year." (WP3ES008).

THE EXCLUDED: PROSTITUTION AND VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING

The last place in the migratory chain are women engaged in prostitution and people, men or women, victims of human trafficking. However, we have not obtained much information on this phenomenon during field work. They are migrants who usually come alone and are not aware of the irregularity and exceptionality

of their situation; furthermore, they often remain undocumented and are coerced into paying their debt and obtaining freedom of movement. They are difficult to detect in the rural world, and these people are attended mostly by social entities:

"Trafficking networks capture people who have dreams, who have the dream of a migratory project to find an alternative life... and they take advantage of this [...]. In the uptake we already found differences; they can be very beastly means, of aggression and such.

The social network that many have is scarce; they have a lot of responsibility on their backs to be able to meet the needs of their family. They have their honour - as a human person - and their dignity and having to return to the country is not an option. They are not aware that what has happened to them has been a crime; working all this is complicated." (WP3ES009).

"At the level of women - because in rural areas we work on prostitution a lot - the profile has not changed much. Sometimes they tend a little more towards Latin America and, other times, a little more towards the East, but the nationalities, basically, have not changed much." (WP3ES011).

3. SOCIAL COHESION

SOCIAL MOBILITY

The diversification of the productive structures mentioned above has also had effects on the social structure, in particular because it **has favoured upward social mobility for some population groups, native and foreigners**. Thus, it is relatively easy to find non-community migrants who began their work activity as undocumented seasonal workers, then maintained their migration project as temporary worker with the same employer, until they became permanent. Many informants state that it would be desirable to be able to keep these workers during the winter, however, the type of product only allows keeping at most between 15-20 per cent of the workforce for pruning and maintenance tasks.

The incorporation of labour in the agricultural sector has also in many cases allowed a subsequent mobility towards other sectors, going from being agricultural seasonal workers to being salaried in stable industries (Ródenas, 2016). This fact has special relevance not only from the point of view of the individual possibility of upward social mobility, but also of settlement in the areas close to their jobs, thus preserving their rural settlement. Thus, even if they must travel to the workplace, they have less difficulty meeting the economic and housing conditions required for family reunification. In this process, the African population can invest about ten years, but it is somewhat less for those from Morocco; once they are settled, they then incorporate their wives and minor children under conditions of documentary regularity.

However, mobility to another labour sector is not a priority for everyone. African immigrants maintain intense ties with the extended family residing in the country of origin, or even the transnational family. In short, the translocality of their migration even leads them to reject a career progression that would allow them a more comfortable economic situation and above all keep going:

"My husband left the [packaging] factory because they wanted to fix him [...], but then you can't travel to spend time there with the mother [in her country]." (WP3ES015).

Foreigners from non-EU European countries and Latin American countries have greater possibilities of social mobility, mainly through work; in addition, also due to the greater development of relations with the native population that facilitates the increase of their social capital. Factors such as the level of training, the acquisition of required skills and cultural similarity are key elements in job and social advancement:

"Latin Americans learn right away; they get their license if they don't already have it and they learn quickly to drive the tractor." (WP3ES008).

"At the lowest positions in the chain, are the Sub-Saharan Africans. Latin Americans may start at the bottom, but then move on to managerial positions [...], of course, customs are more Western. Remember that the issue of the gaze - let's say - cultural, is important. They quickly adapt, both by language -when they are Latin American- and by cultural issues. Although there are things that are different, but it is easier." (WP3ES008).

Groups of TCNs are quite enterprising, despite the difficulties they encounter in the "bureaucracy". They can be found in businesses in the service sector (transfer of bars, small greengrocers, hairdressers) and in the transport branch:

"In transportation, we especially see men from Eastern countries: courier carriers, courier vans... and Latin American men. The presence of people from Eastern countries has a lot to do with the ease of validating driving licenses; here in Europe you don't need to do anything." (WP3ES009).

"Yes, they have opened businesses and closed, but it has had more to do with the economy [economic situation] than anything else. In general, business initiatives are not where they are the most. But we return to the issue of bureaucracy." (WP3ES005).

The success of some of these businesses is determined by ethnic differentiation, since there is a whole market for imported products from other countries aimed at both compatriots and new consumers from the society of origin, especially greengrocers.

Finally, in relation to the documentation and administrative situation, the most numerous applicants for international protection and recipients of humanitarian protection are, at present, Venezuelans and Colombians, which have been greatly affected by the pandemic. From a regulatory point of view, this group has work and residence permits until the administrative situation is resolved. Currently, this period has a shorter duration, but the number of denied applications has increased, which returns them to a situation of irregularity. This situation again makes their access to the regular labour market difficult; as a consequence, also their social mobility is hindered. To this it can be added that the homologation of degrees is a long process:

"When they came few of them, they could be denied or not, but the term was like very long and that allowed them to be in a legal vacuum that protected them - they even got to give them authorization to work. Now, with the boom that has occurred, it is the opposite: they have streamlined, and what used to be resolved in two years [...], now is in a few months, and they are told no. That it was also a chore because there were cases that took two and a half years. Then, they were denied it and went into an irregular situation and lost their job." (WP3ES006).

The recently arrived Venezuelan population is usually granted work and residence permits under the guise of humanitarian protection. However, it is necessary to specify that the profile of this population differs from that of economic migrants, since it has experienced downward social, economic, and professional mobility in the migration process:

"I locked myself in the bathroom to cry so that my children wouldn't see me, they were also destabilized. To have our house, each one's room, their toys, their family, their friends... [...]. It is very difficult when you have to part with a life that you liked, and I liked my life." (WP3ES022).

Finally, everything indicates that the scenario may change in the next generation. Some foreigners have expressed their desire for change for their children, and as with the young local population, they also do not want to develop a career similar to that of their parents (Ray, 2018). **Intergenerational social mobility is for the immigrant, which is the most reliable indicator of their social inclusion.** In addition, subsequent generations will benefit from the accumulation of social capital developed during the migration process by their parents and by their community of origin, which will allow them a better social inclusion (Coleman, 1988; Portes, 1998; Zhou & Bankston, 1994).

SOCIAL CAPITAL

The foreign population seems to have greater difficulty in increasing their social capital, although social networks are a central element of social capital (Putnam, 1994). However, for a large part of immigrants settled in rural areas, their contacts and social life are limited to family members and friends from the local community and other migrants in similar marginalized situations (Rye, 2018):

"Obviously, I would too: the first friend you meet is from your country." (WP3ES005).

"They tend to gather in places in Fraga [city]; and they come together of the same nationality." (WP3ES009).

Some authors have shown that there are no agreed indicators in the countries of the European Union to measure the strategic value of social networks, both individually and in groups. However, 5 indicators are usually applied that collect two dimensions: social networks and intergroup relations (Godenau et al., 2014), considering the indicators of "households with minors", "linguistic capacity" and "acceptance". In rural areas, there are notable differences from one nationality to another, and depending on the type of migration and their expectations regarding the duration of the migratory project.

As has been previously shown, the settlements of seasonal workers who work on agricultural holdings and reside in shared dwellings among them, make social relations with the native population and with other immigrants settled in the territory difficult, making it difficult to establish ties. **The temporality of the stay, together with their family situation and their phenotype, do not help to establish relationships with the autochthonous population**, and in general, they are less accepted by the local population:

"I would start by distinguishing between the settled population and the foreign population that comes in season. [...]. The profile of the seasonal worker is people between 20 and a few and 40 and many, single, of colour, and sub-Saharan. We have noticed a change in that, in terms of the settled population, those who registered and settled in the area were more Romanians and, at present, they are North African and sub-Saharan." (WP3ES007).

Indeed, the population that is most closely related to the social group -native or immigrants of other nationalities- are families with children. But while some relate only to each other such as the Maghreb and sub-Saharan families, others do so with the host society, as is the case of Latin Americans:

"There is that small part of Moroccan families, which is not the same. Women have little relationship with each other; the men quite between them." (WP3ES005).

"The profile of a Latin American immigrant is quite similar to Spanish, and so they integrate easily. On the one hand, they take jobs and don't take work from anyone. On the other hand, they integrate well. From an economic point of view, they are a consuming population, which energizes the economy." (WP3ES006).

In general, there is the perception that the Asian population, mostly Chinese citizens, in rural areas, do not relate to other groups or to the local population:

"Chinese people are all linked to the bazaars, there are three, and the Chinese restaurant. It is true that they are less integrated, with less contact. They work all day, but they don't have a relational life, a social life. But not between them either. I think it is a general pattern, because it is not that they make a ghetto, it is that they do not relate to each other." (WP3ES005).

However, there are exceptions. Among those who have developed their migratory project outside the network of compatriots, as that has allowed them to generate more contacts with the native population, the capital stock has increased. It would be necessary to delve into this relationship between the scarcity of networks of origin and the possibility of increasing social capital in more detail.

As outlined in the review of integration policies, city councils, in collaboration with social action entities, are aware that participation in community life also strengthens ties. These agents have as a priority

objective to develop activities aimed at the coexistence of different groups, such as the "Living in Fraga" program, especially with minors; however, cultural differences limit the possibilities of increasing the social capital of the second generation for some nationalities:

"The South Americans, in sports teams, in schools, with their participation in local activities... they integrate well. In a White Week [school holidays in February in which they go skiing], a South American child participates like anyone else, but a Moroccan child does not participate." (WP3ES006).

Other experiences also reflect solidarity initiatives that contribute to the creation of social ties. In some municipalities, summer camps are developed to facilitate the parents' work during the most intense months of the campaign in which both parents work; in short, both natives and immigrants benefit from this activity, and it also contributes to new spaces for coexistence:

"Campus in summer... instead of a monitor now you have to have 10; we did it for immigrants; we helped ... we [the farmers] put money to get it started ... What happens is that now the children of Zaragoza or Huesca send them with their grandparents, here to the town, and they also benefit from it." (WP3WP4ES008).

In general, in labour and neighbourhood relations as well as in the school environment, a progressive development of acceptance of foreigners is observed, which shows the recognition of the positive social impact of immigration in their municipalities:

"They are well received. The older population likes to see children in the village, they bring joy, and they get together." (WP3ES008).

"The elderly are very grateful [to the Latin American women dedicated to care]; they do a great job, they take a lot of affection, if it weren't for them..." (WP3ES008).

NOT BELONGING TO THE COMMUNITY: XENOPHOBIC AND ANTI-IMMIGRANT ATTITUDES

Xenophobic attitudes are often linked to the volume and visibility of economic immigrants. The social impact of the foreign population is perceived more intensely in small towns. Although, in Aragón, only 12.8 per cent of foreigners and 15.9 per cent of TCNs reside in municipalities with fewer than 2,000 inhabitants (data from the Municipal Register of Inhabitants, INE), it is important to consider that there are currently 55 municipalities under 2,000 inhabitants with a TCN foreign population rate higher than ten per cent; most of these municipalities are in the province of Teruel, where 35 municipalities have rates of foreign population TCN between ten and 27.7 per cent.

Most of the xenophobic and racist attitudes are related to the presence of groups of seasonal workers, mainly young men from the Maghreb and sub-Saharan countries. Their visibility in the central areas of the municipalities from spring (when they arrive for the fruit harvesting campaign), is perceived as a threat to the idyllic tranquillity of rural life:

"In Fraga, there is an index of foreign population, I think that of 21 or 23 per cent. So, there has always been. People who always work -that is, who have come to work and maybe- are normalizing themselves, the kids at school. Imagine! At school, institutes... there is a very high rate of immigrant population. So... with acquaintances there is no problem. But when they come from outside [those who are temporary workers], it is what provokes a little more rejection." (WP3ES009).

But the "problem" is not origin, but the perception of being people in transit who do not identify with local concerns or cultural norms. That, perhaps, is what generates the most controversy, which is why **the feeling of not belonging to the community determines most of the racist attitudes**. For this reason, settled families, and particularly those with children, have not stated that they have been subjected to xenophobic attitudes. As the literature has shown, children are key elements in socialization; on the one

hand, because they establish relationships between foreigners and the people/elements of the host society (preferably, through institutional and personal relationships in the school environment); but also, because they provide a vision of stability and continuity of the peoples and from the demographic perspective, perceiving themselves as equal to the autochthonous population.

The perception of belonging to a different and different ethnic and cultural community continues to condition these racist attitudes. However, these attitudes have been added to other excluding elements such as nationality, which triggers new xenophobic comments. In society as a whole there is a stratification according to national origin. This classification is established in the collective imagination based on economic development, the political system and the welfare model developed in the country of origin. Hence, those from African countries, and to a lesser extent from Asians, are at the bottom; all of them are the most likely to be the object of these attitudes, both by the native population and by other immigrants:

"If the street was dominated by gypsies, the Maghreb arrived, and in some way, it can be said, they 'stole' their street. And these realities, sadly, are like that. It doesn't just come from white to black. They do a lot of damage to each other. And they extort themselves a lot." (WP3ES011).

Immigrants who share some cultural elements and historical ties (mainly from Latin American countries), declare that they have not suffered xenophobic or racist actions:

"Getting here to Jaca, to a small town, was a success." (WP3ES022).

However, as in other areas, stereotypes are multidirectional, and can be found not only among natives (Morén-Alegret & Wladyka, 2020), but also among foreign groups with respect to other foreigners. In particular, this occurs against the population of Asian traits by people from Eastern Europe:

"Yes, I have felt racism from other foreigners." (WP3ES019).

Community membership is also subject to social and economic integration. "Class racism" is particularly visible in anti-immigrant attitudes, making it difficult to separate xenophobia from aporophobia (rejection for being poor). The increase in racist attitudes increases in periods of crisis (Cea D'Ancona, 2015; Diez Nicolás, 1999, 2005; Diez Nicolás & Ramírez Lafita, 2001), although the years of maximum immigration had contributed to a "political correctness and social" in the surveys. However, the current increase of ideologies and of some extreme right-wing political party in Spain (Vox), offers and feeds a social framework of public opinion against immigration:

"There are also micro racisms and bar conversations in rural areas. Well, yes, because things are getting very complicated in that sense, and the message of poor against poor is being fed a lot. The truth is that, on a social level, this has a lot, a lot of danger." (WP3ES011).

As it has been possible to verify in this current period of pandemic by Covid-19 and the economic crisis that it has generated, the health situation has been incorporated into the economic condition: **immigration, poverty and Covid-19 have been new arguments for rejection of temporary foreign workers:**

"As a result of Covid-19 this changed a little bit [...]. There was a knock-on effect such as papers being made for immigrants; Many people came who had nowhere to sleep; because, although it is recommended, it is not mandatory for employers to have accommodation for the people who work for them; recommended, but not required. Back then, many businessmen who had places to accommodate ten people, could now accommodate four, due to the Covid issue. So what happened? The people sleeping in the Station ... which, at the image level, is complicated. People who are already quite reluctant to people who come from other countries... on top of that, with this Covid [...]. I think the rate of racism and rejection has risen." (WP3ES009).

"Looked at with a magnifying glass. Now, with the issue of Covid, a lot [...]. Sure! Well, people avoid going through there. [...]. We, who are on the street and such ... well, there is a lot of rejection." (WP3ES009).

In this sense, the groups traditionally receiving social assistance have encountered new competitors, also awakening attitudes of rejection. If these are established as permanent, they would hinder the social cohesion of the region:

“Fortunately, there is no conflict with them. Normally, they are people who are not problematic at all, who are not conflictive at all, who are well integrated. I think the population values this and they integrate well. Another thing is the tagline that is usually said: in Social Services you only attend to immigrants and gypsies.” (WP3ES005).

In the interviews, other classic elements of these attitudes, such as the phenotype, have not been explicitly evidenced as a trigger for rejection attitudes. However, it has been seen that there are attitudes (at the micro level) that can condition social inclusion. In any case, old attitudes towards ethnically differentiated groups are repeated (with special emphasis on the phenotype) such as gypsies, with culture and lifestyles different from the cultural majority (Del Olmo Vicén, 1995). Although the object varies, the attitude remains:

“Since I have lived, gypsies have been the social target of racism. Since I have worked in immigration, African people, particularly North Africans, are the substantial target of racism.” (WP3ES001).

4. ACTIVE PARTICIPATION AND CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS

The possibility of active participation as a right of citizenship is determined by the individual documentary situation. However, in rural areas, the lack of documentation does not prevent, in most circumstances, an implicit recognition of their status as a citizen by the institutions and the local population. In fact, it can be said that **the recognition of the migrant population as citizens is to a great extent more a “practice” than a formal recognition.**

The migrant population in a regular situation (with a residence permit, and applicants for international and humanitarian protection) enjoy the same civil and political rights as natives, except for the right to vote in national elections. This right to vote for the national parliament is only recognized for some third-country nationals in local elections based on agreements between countries. This totally limits the political participation of the majority of TCNs, as well as their participation in political parties. These people, therefore, live quite outside the current situation and political debate in Spain. For all regularized workers and those who are awaiting resolution of the international protection claim, **the labour area has developed legal and regulatory mechanisms that allow greater individual participation;** this means greater representation and obtaining rights for the group as a whole:

“When you enter a company, after six months of working, you can participate in union elections. This means that a person, for example, an asylum seeker, even if he is temporarily in Spain and after 8 months in a company, if there are union elections, he can vote and choose [...]. This has forced the unions to say that if you want to win the union elections, you have to incorporate the cultural diversity of the company.” (WP3ES001).

Despite everything, the participation of foreigners in the unions is quite scarce and of a discontinuous nature. In general, regularized immigrant workers state that they do not receive different treatment compared to natives, both in terms of salary and working conditions:

“They pay you the same. There is no difference.” (WP3ES012).

The political participation of undocumented foreigners begins within immigrant organizations and is initially based on a principle of solidarity (Meyer & Fine, 2017). However, unlike urban space, the scarcity and temporality of immigrant associations in the rural areas of Aragón, has initially impeded this development. However, there are exceptions to this, as occurs among certain immigrants from specific geographical areas (such as sub-Saharan countries) and in specific rural areas (such as the Comarca de la

Litera). Thus, for example, sub-Saharan Africans have developed some associations of immigrants with different profiles and purposes: cultural, religious, focused on the development of cooperation plans with the country of origin, women, etc. In most cases, these associations follow the guidelines of the autochthonous population, generally not very participatory, and are justified to a greater extent by their migratory situation.

As mentioned in a previous section, there is greater participation in activities aimed at coexistence among minors proposed by the school environment and social action entities. The participation of women is also usually more intense than that of men, because in general, there is a traditional distribution of roles based on sex in families. For this reason, mothers mostly attend all activities related to the socialization and well-being of the child. Participation in cultural and leisure activities is higher among young migrants and among adults with a prolonged settlement in the area, while the second generations have behaviours similar to the native population. In rural areas there is still a low demand in relation to recreating the culture of origin, in a certain way conditioned by the situation of residential and labour administrative instability of the population:

“No, there are people who don't want to. But we have asked that they allow us 5 minutes to pray, and they have accepted it. They say there is no problem [...]. The truth is that we can fast all month and nothing happens, no problem. But on the day of the Ramadan festival, there is a problem], because they don't let you stay at home all day.” (WP3ES012).

These practices have little social impact because they are carried out within immigrant communities, with minimal invasion of public spaces; therefore, it does not generate rejection by other social groups or limitations from the local administration.

As a conclusion, it can be stated that municipalities in collaboration with third sector entities and schools offer joint activities. But outside of these activities, there is no joint participation between the native and foreign population (or between immigrants themselves of different origins). Trust relationships are generated mainly within the workplace in a stratified axis between employer-employee, which makes it difficult to develop bonds between equals.

5. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF SERVICES

The foreign population shows a good reception from the institutions, in particular, by the social services that grant financial aid and information for the schooling of minors. The limitation of resources of the municipalities in rural areas is compensated by collaboration with social entities. These entities are more oriented to the most vulnerable population, especially the undocumented:

“We came directly here [...]. Since we arrived, we have received a lot of help at the time of schooling the children [...]; upon arrival, the region assigned us a social worker who assisted us as a family from the beginning and my children enjoyed scholarships throughout the region [...] we have found a lot of support from the Spanish government.” (WP3ES022).

However, it is important to point out that there is a great heterogeneity of situations among the foreign population, in relation to their documentary situation but also to their network. To a large extent, both factors determine the type of demand they make to the entities of the host society. For example, the Chinese community stands out, whose members rarely go to aid entities and in general express high satisfaction with the services they use under the same conditions as the native population:

“For us, asking for help is now the last resort, because we are ashamed to ask for help. Before we would ask a family member for help.” (WP3ES019).

In general, the demand for services produced by the arrival of a foreign population is satisfied with an increase in educational and social-health resources, which ultimately benefits the population as a whole. The sector that has benefited the most has been the education sector, which, thanks to the presence of the

foreign population, has managed to maintain schools and complementary services in areas at risk of disappearing due to depopulation:

"Immigration not only comes to occupy jobs that are in demand, but there are studies that say that for every seven foreigners who settled, an eighth job was generated, while the population increased. Because of course, you have to have more people who are cashiers in a supermarket, or you have to have more doctors, or you have to have more teachers..." (WP3ES001).

But unlike in urban areas, the variety of services offered is still scarce in rural areas. For this reason, it is necessary to travel to the comarcal / provincial capitals to access some health and education services, and to carry out labour and social security administrative procedures. However, in this aspect there is no difference between the non-EU population of foreigners and the rest of the population. Thus, for example, the lack of an efficient public transport network makes it difficult to reach the most essential services; the difference is that the natives have more of their own resources (materials or networks of family and friends) to overcome deficiencies:

"We have services, but what about access? Where is free transportation to get to these centres? Where is educational reinforcement? The services are there, but how do you get to them?" (WP3ES007).

This fact, as mentioned, is also causing an incipient development of the passenger and parcel transport sector in rural areas, which indirectly benefits the older indigenous population. These initiatives, developed especially by people from Latin America (and Eastern countries) usually have their business centres in the largest municipalities, but allow an interconnection of rural and urban spaces:

"It can be a job niche [...]: the elderly for the pension [...]; there are fewer and fewer bank branches ... [...]; they need to be carried." (WP3ES008).

The absence of policies and services at the local level is not covered by third sector organizations either, because they tend to be more concentrated in cities:

"Its scope of intervention decreases as we move away from urban centres." (WP3ES011).

However, as indicated, there has been an increase in the number of people hired in third sector organizations, as well as greater investment in programs and activities aimed both specifically for the foreign population and to improve intercultural coexistence:

"In 2010 it was small; it was only in Huesca and it began to expand. Those of us who are here right now [5 workers] are hired." (WP3ES009).

But without doubting, difficulty in accessing housing is the turning point, because that lead to immigrants ascending towards full inclusion or descending towards social and institutional anonymity. Integration implies making immigrants and their children's full members of the society in which they live, having equal access to protection systems, the political system, and also to labour and housing markets (Alba & Foner, 2017).

In Spain, as analysed in the review of immigration policies, access to services is conditioned by registration at a town hall, which only involves presenting proof of a fixed address. This might seem simple, but in rural areas there is a significant lack of housing with adequate habitability conditions. As in other countries, the increase in the demand for housing in rural areas of recent immigration has triggered the phenomenon of temporary and often overcrowded housing known as "Houses of Multiple Occupation" (HMOs) (Doley, 2018). But this is not regulated in Spain and many municipalities have limited the number of people who can register (and reside) in a home. However, the lack of housing, together with its high price, causes the measure to be violated, leading the "surplus" immigrants to administrative anonymity. In this situation we find immigrants with long residence in the municipality who, since they cannot register, cannot access basic welfare services, nor can they regularize their situation due to roots, nor obtain a work permit; From that firm they are left homeless and, in case of need, they can only receive assistance from social action entities. However, if immigrants are registered in rural areas, access to integration seems easier:

"What every immigrant is looking for is to get residency by rooting. All want to be able to be registered for three years and, with a job, to obtain residency by arraigo [rooting]. So, of course, the rural world is a huge opportunity for these irregular people. Because, in the rural world, everything is simpler: you can have a goat, an orchard or work in the rehabilitation of a house - it is wrong to say so - without being hired ... And the urban world is much more hostile and leads you to the black economy and, let's say, crime." (WP3ES002).

In summary, faced with the migratory phenomenon, **there is evidence of a lack of foresight and coordination between the productive sector on the one hand, and the public administration and third sector entities, on the other.** The transformation into an immigration society occurred from an exclusively economic articulation that, once again, neglected the attention to working people and their families. Although the regularized population has normalized access to basic services such as education, health, transportation, etc. (as for the population as a whole), this access is conditioned by the scarcity of supply in rural areas.

"The establishment of companies in rural areas, many times, means that, since there is no parallel programming at the social level -understood in the broad sense: housing, education, health ...- it seems that the problem is in immigration, when the real problem is the deficit of these structures and social services." (WP3ES001).

Sometimes, this shortage of services implies competition between natives and foreigners. There is an acceptance that foreigners occupy jobs that natives do not want. But also, there are complaints because of the difficulty of accessing resources due to the increase in the foreign population. In particular, the competitiveness for the economic resources offered by social entities and social services is evident between differentiated ethnic groups (gypsies) and the foreign population. There is a latent complaint from the population as a whole, as mentioned above.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The inclusion model proposed from the integration policies clearly establishes equal rights and opportunities for those who are regularly in the country. However, its implementation takes a bottom-up scheme from the local level. The municipalities - and even the regions, at the immediately superior level - have lacked enough time to adapt to the increase in the demand for basic services for the population. Currently, these levels of administration lack financial capacity and technical support to develop them. However, the perception developed during these years about the need for institutions to adapt to the migratory phenomenon is positive, as part of the process of demographic change and the economic model of the area. Indeed, the difficulty lies in the implementation of the policies:

"From the State, it was designed through intercultural integration plans, and it would be ideal if it came and went further in that direction. In other words, it was already said that it would be intercultural, because now it would be good if it were better implemented." (WP3ES018).

Entry into the protection system is through the administrative act of registration, regularization by roots, reunification of family members, etc. All are documentary processes that require the registration of a home. The lack of housing in conditions of adequate habitability in rural areas makes it difficult to settle in smaller municipalities. In this sense, an adequate housing policy is important and necessary to receive the population. Failing that, **the occupation and transformation of the most degraded houses in the city has a visual and economic impact (due to the transformation of shops in the environment) that would be necessary to analyse in depth.**

Other services have been increased, with an important contribution to the revitalization of rural areas from an economic and demographic point of view. In particular, the presence of families has made it possible to increase school places, conciliation services and activities related to intercultural

coexistence; This occurs thanks to the arrival in rural areas of families such as the Latin American ones, or as a result of family reunification from Maghreb and to a lesser extent from the sub-Saharan countries.

Other positive aspects of this process have been **the coordination of public services with third sector entities, which has made it possible to cover part of the needs. In general, there is also a revitalization of civil society through participation in non-profit organizations.**

Although perhaps in rural areas it is still too early to take stock of the bidirectional market for products -tangible and intangible- that causes immigration; however, this has already started, with the setting up of small businesses (some “ethnic” greengrocers and halal butchers) and with the demand for times and spaces for cultural and religious practices (particularly Ramadan).

The difficulty in accessing vital opportunities related to physical well-being (services, housing) and social well-being (social interaction) has led to the development of a **more stratified rural society than before the migration phenomenon**. If from the economic and demographic point of view there seems to be a consensus on the positive impact, from the social point of view there is no unanimous vision. At this point, it is unknown whether social polarization in rural areas is a transitory process during the period of integration of immigrants or is a structural fact with a permanent feedback - fruit of the imbalances between demand, supply of workers and shortage of services-.

Regarding the endogenous factors that facilitate full inclusion, there are those related to the administrative situation of immigrants and social, cultural, and human capital. However, it is also necessary to review the phenotype. Considering origin as an analytical category, some immigrants, such as the **sub-Saharan** population and somewhat less the **Maghreb** population with employment as seasonal workers, have more **difficulties for their social inclusion**. The settlements outside the urban centres, their temporary nature and the lack of family, prevents a greater relationship with the population as a whole, limiting the development of networks that help them in their labour insertion and to face other difficulties derived from the project migratory. Ignorance of the language, economic precariousness, -and to a lesser extent the phenotype, as a trait associated with a different culture- condition its acceptance. The difficulty of developing a status of “belonging to the community” is fed back, making their inclusion difficult.

On the opposite side, there are other immigrants who arrive with greater human and social capital and who have greater labour mobility and greater ability to access the resources that the host society offers them, enhancing their **integration** and that of their group. The population from **Latin America**, either economic migrants or under humanitarian protection, have key cultural elements, such as language, which allows a greater relationship with the native population, and a better access to the labour market accompanied by more social progression. In addition, they have greater regulatory ease for the acquisition of nationality and therefore, better access to citizenship rights. On the other hand, their family migration helps them to establish ties beyond their internal group relationships. In this group, those with greater cultural capital stand out, which allows them greater upward social and labour mobility in less time, as well as rapid socialization in the host society.

Regarding endogenous factors, one determining factor for inclusion is **the lack of housing** in rural areas. The houses are old and scarce and there has been no forecast from the local entities, which lack the economic resources to alleviate the situation. Another factor that hinders integration is linked to the lack of public transport that allows better access to services; this difficulty is shared by social groups - natives and foreigners - less economically favoured and with fewer networks and contacts.

Spatial segregation during leisure time also has a negative impact because it makes it difficult to establish ties with the native population and recognition as part of the community; however, this is an aspect that requires more attention and analysis.

SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

- Equal rights and opportunities through standardized access to protection system services.
- STANDARDIZED LABOUR INSERTION FOR REGULAR IMMIGRANTS.

- ACTIONS TO STRENGTHEN A MULTICULTURAL COEXISTENCE MODEL: 'PLAN FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN ARAGÓN 2018-2021'; GLOBAL AND EGALITARIAN VISION OF THE POPULATION THAT LIVES IN THE TERRITORY. SCHOOL INTEGRATION AND ADAPTATION PROGRAMS IN RURAL AREAS.
- PERCEPTION OF THE MIGRATION PROCESS AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE AND THE ECONOMIC MODEL.

WEAKNESSES

- LACK OF ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL CAPACITY IN RURAL AREAS TO IMPLEMENT REVITALIZATION POLICIES.
- DEFICIENCY OF BASIC SERVICES, COMMUNICATIONS AND HOUSING.
- Development of a model OF SEASONAL ECONOMIC ACTIVITY.
- LITTLE DIGITALIZATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESSES AND IN RURAL AREAS.
- Perception of migration as a temporary and discontinuous process.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Development opportunities for local administration.
- Revitalization of rural areas: basic services, communications (physical and virtual), offer of continuous training.
- Greater rural-urban connection.
- Revitalization of civil society in rural areas.
- Possibility of development of social enterprises (cooperatives).

THREATS

- Residential and relational stratification.
- Concentration of unqualified works, enhancing differences centre (urban) - periphery (rural).
- The development model centred on economic growth.
- National legislative limitation to participate in electoral processes among TCNs.
- Reproduction of social structures of origin that prevent the development of women belonging to endogamic groups. This hinders the socialization of the second generation.

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1. OVERVIEW OF THE INFORMANTS SELECTED FOR INTERVIEWS, METHODS AND KEY FEATURES OF THEIR EMBEDDING CONTEXTS

Dalarna county includes two larger municipalities/cities, Falun and Borlänge with 38,000-42,000 inhabitants. The other 13 municipalities in the county consist of towns with a population ranging from 5,000 to 12,000 inhabitants. In the region there are places with segregation patterns similar to those in the metropolitan regions (neighbourhood segregation) and places where the rural structure of housing means that migrants live primarily in rented apartments while natives live primarily in their own private houses. A report from Region Dalarna (2020b) states that housing segregation in Dalarna has increased between 2005 and 2015 within some specific population groups. Depending on how data is structured, these groups are; the foreign-born, visible minorities, new arrivals (visible minorities and new arrivals are also included in the group of foreign-born) and in different income groups (regardless country of birth). The foreign-born live in segregation in several municipalities, but mainly in Borlänge, Avesta and Ludvika.

Our case municipalities are: Vansbro with 6,801 inhabitants (of which 2,042 in the municipality center); Älvdalen with 7,033 inhabitants (1,863), Hedemora with 15,432 inhabitants (7,371).²⁰ International migration is of crucial importance for demographic stability. The foreign-born population in Dalarna (as well as in Sweden as a whole) is significantly younger than the native born and has a larger proportion of people of working age. (Region Dalarna 2020a) Migrants play thus an important role as resources filling vacancies in the labour market, especially within health care and elderly care according to several of our interviewees (see also Stenbacka 2013). Also, the tourism sector normally offers many jobs within diverse kinds of services (the tourism sector in Dalarna involves both winter and summer season). The current situation with travel and other kinds of restrictions has affected the tourism sector negatively.

In the previous policy-analysis the integration-related challenges that Sweden is facing are summarized as: the reception of asylum seekers, housing, education, language, and employment. These five topics all relate to the issue of social impact of migration, and as such they will continuously be referred to in this report. How these challenges are handled in practice depends largely on the government funding, but important are also local supply of housing, competence and workforce and the extent of the civil society. The state financial compensation involves establishment grants that are to support the types of efforts that the newcomers need during the first two years. If migrants are not self-sufficient after the two-year establishment period has ended, the municipalities are financially responsible for their subsistence. Municipalities oversee language and civics courses, schooling, childcare, and elderly care.

In order to improve the establishment of new arrivals in the municipalities, with regard to the labour market and in society, a new law was adopted in 2016. This law obliges all municipalities to accept new arrivals for residence (the Settlement Act). When distributing new arrivals among municipalities, account shall be taken of the municipality's labour market conditions, population size, total reception of newly arrived and unaccompanied children and the extent of asylum seekers staying in the municipality. Responsibilities should be shared and the situation for new arrivals should improve concerning their establishment in the labour market and in society. (SFS nr: 2016:38) From the interviews we learn that the establishment period of two years is experienced as short, for many migrants it takes longer time to be established and self-supported.

When the flow of refugees has decreased, the municipalities receive reduced compensation. This means that parts of the structure that has been built up around the refugee reception can now no longer be financed; jobs are likely to disappear, and the local population (migrants as well as natives) may experience

²⁰ Figures regarding the population in the municipality are referring to 2020-12-31 and figures regarding the municipality centers refer to 2015-12-31. SCB, Swedish Statistics.

a deterioration in service. In parallel, some interviewees mean that it happens that urban municipalities, after the establishment period has ended, appoint migrants to rural municipalities, providing them with resources for moving, rather than provide for housing in their own municipalities. This phenomenon has been investigated by Statskontoret (The Swedish Agency for Public Management 2020:19), who states that many municipalities have received people who have been actively encouraged to move from the former home municipality. This has sometimes been called social dumping because it is about people who are dependent on the municipality's support; if these migrants cannot support themselves, the recipient municipality is responsible for their support. These circumstances are emphasized in some of the interviews and can be summarized as: a dissatisfaction with how responsibilities are distributed; lack of a national strategy that applies at the local level, a shared agreement on what the goal should be; and lack of communication between different sectors and levels ("stuprör").

This report is based upon an interview study that has been ongoing from October 2020 until March 2021. The collected empirical material consists of 12 in-depth interviews with a total of 14 interviewees at a national and regional and local level. Their positions include policy makers, expert groups and stakeholders and public service providers, practitioners and organizations working on migration (directly or indirectly) related fields. The informants represent national institutions (Swedish Migration agency, The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions and The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth), regional institutions (Region Dalarna, County Administrative Board, The Federation of Swedish Farmers, RF-SISU Dalarna) and local institutions (Älvdalen municipality, Komvix/SFI Hedemora, Adult education Avesta, Public Employment Agency). By interviewing representatives from all levels, we are able to get insight into how policy making on regional and national levels are perceived and implemented on the local level. It is also possible to discern information on how different levels and sectors interact and cooperate, including qualitative assessments. The regional level, for example, informs about initiatives aiming at gathering local key actors, increase learning among municipalities and about their role as project coordinators. The local level brings us to the context where integration is expected to happen. These actors are able to talk about what people are doing, what is happening in the municipalities and how local discourse develops.

Due to the Covid-19 restrictions, most of the interviews were conducted virtually. Exceptions were formed by a few interviews with representatives from the local level since we were able to visit the three case municipalities in October and November 2020. We have also conducted three focus-group interviews, also virtually, with three to six participants and two researchers in each group. These three groups focused on a) provision of services of general interest, b) regional development and planning, and c) CSOs and social enterprises.

Before each interview, the respondents were provided with a one-page information sheet about the project and contact details for the involved researchers, a letter informing about their rights and how the collected material would be used, and a consent form. At the beginning of each interview, the respondents were asked to fill in the consent form and they had the opportunity to ask questions about the project and the consent form. The interviews were recorded, and the researchers took notes during the interview. Some of the interviews were meant to be conducted as individual interviews but turned out to become group interviews since the respondent wanted to bring a colleague. We found that it was preferable to accept this, rather than asking a person to leave. Our initial visits to the municipalities were organised as meetings with a few key actors in the municipalities. Since these meetings were recorded and focused on the questions as expressed in the interview guide, we have also included these in our material. This means that we have conducted individual interviews, group interviews and focus groups.

At this stage field work includes interviews and focus group interviews with key actors at local, regional, and national level. This means that the migrant perspective is present if a key actor has a migrant background, but we have not yet focused upon reaching migrants. Even though we have used the same interview guide, the themes might be more or less pronounced in the interviews. An issue that is much developed by one or some respondents are not touched upon at all by others. Our aim is not to quantify the material, but rather to account for and illuminate experiences; explore mechanisms and connections. We notice that one key-actor that we approached denied participation in the study, the institution responsible

for health care for asylum seekers and migrants (Asyl- och migranthälsa Dalarna). The reason was that they could not see that they would provide any useful information.

2. SOCIAL INCLUSION/POLARIZATION BETWEEN TCNS AND LOCALS

Even though the social impact of migration to rural areas can be understood as more than the question of integration, Swedish integration policy and rhetoric can tell something about how the impact of migration is understood by the authorities, and how it is supposed to be managed. Historically Sweden has been known for its generous migration and integration policy and has been described as the flagship of multiculturalism (Borevi 2010, 2014). In some ways, Sweden has stood out from the other Scandinavian countries, particularly by upholding a stronger rights-based approach, treating immigrants and the majority population on equal terms (Borevi 2010). Equal access to welfare services has been seen as a precondition for people to successfully integrate, rather than a bonus for integrating (ibid.). The overarching integration policy goal has been and still is to promote equal rights, obligations, and opportunities for all, regardless of country of birth or ethnic and cultural background (Regeringskansliet, 2009, Prop 2020/21:1 Utgiftsområde 13).

However, a large inflow of migrants and refugees, particularly during the refugee crisis in 2015/2016 made Sweden introduce more restrictive regulations for immigration and integration in order to halter immigration and adjust to the line of other European countries (Act 2016:752). The regulations included, among others, temporary rather than permanent residency permits, restrictions regarding family reunification and requirements for language training and civics. The act was introduced as a temporary act to be able to gain control during the national crisis, but the regulations have now been suggested as permanent changes to the migration legislation (Regeringskansliet 2021).

It can nevertheless be argued that a stronger demands-based approach was on its way long before the crisis, particularly regarding self-sufficiency and the adaptation of migrants to the labour market. During the 1990s the introduction program was implemented in response to political concerns about high unemployment rates among newly arrived, which again was connected to concerns that refugees and asylum seekers would become welfare dependent (Borevi 2010, Fernandes 2015). The introduction program has been described as focusing on shaping the individual to fit the labour market, but without addressing structural constraints that can inhibit labour market integration (Fernandes 2015). In 2010 the “activation reform” was introduced which was re-enforced in 2018, emphasising the migrant’s individual responsibilities for labour market establishment and possibilities to withdraw financial support if the established plan is not followed.

Some researchers (Borevi 2017, Bech et al. 2017, Fernández and Jensen 2017, Grip 2020) have also discussed whether Sweden has gone from a right based, multicultural approach towards more explicit civic integration requirements. The idea of civic integration builds on an understanding that successful integration rests as much on the migrant’s individual commitment to learning the language, culture, and norms of the host society as on economic integration in terms of self-sufficiency (Goodman 2010, Grip 2020). Policy instruments can thus contribute to shape migrants into citizens through socialization. Bech et al. (2017, 2) suggest that in Sweden “*immigrants may express religious and cultural minority identities but must also become good citizens: they must be self-supporting, affirm liberal-democratic values, have good command of the host-society language and civic knowledge, and be loyal and inclined to participate in civic life*”. This might not be expressed explicitly but lies in an undefined expectation on how to participate and be a citizen. In most of our interviews, language is particularly mentioned as crucial for getting access to the labour market and becoming part of the local community. Participation in association life is also described as a way to become integrated and is often mentioned in relation to women and children, underlining the value of gender equality. There are still no legal requirements regarding language tests, however newly arrived are obliged to join language classes to obtain financial support.

Up until recently there has been low support of introducing requirements of knowledge of Swedish language and civics for the acquisition of Swedish citizenship. However, the implementation of such requirements is now being discussed (SOU 2021:2) with the argument that it will strengthen the significance of and commitment to the Swedish citizenship.

While TNCs social inclusion into the Swedish society is to be achieved through the same measures as the general population, this is also supplemented by targeted support of newly arrived immigrants. Among our informants are those who operationalize national integration policies and implement them on a local community level and therefore their concerns revolve around issues of integration. Many of the interviews reflect upon how the so-called refugee crisis in 2015/2016 was handled by the local community understood as the municipality and the civil society, and what has happened since then.

During 2015 the Migration agency experienced a shortage of housing for the large group of refugees that arrived. Many rural communities, also in Dalarna had properties that stood empty, and many, both municipalities and private people, saw the opportunity to rent out buildings to the Migration agency. This meant that private actors could make agreements with the Migration agency to house asylum seekers, without involving the municipalities, however the municipalities had to provide basic services such as health care and schooling to the refugee children. Interviewees describe how people, upon arrival to Sweden, were placed on busses without a planned destination and it was up to the municipalities and the civil society to solve the problem ad hoc (Policy maker, interview 1, focus group 3, civil society, interview 10. See also Stiernström et al. 2019). The local authorities thus had few possibilities and little time to plan for the new arrivals.

Rural communities were faced with a large responsibility to cater to the newly arrived refugees and describe this as a tough situation, but also a situation where the municipalities and the civil society managed to rise to the occasion and work together to provide basic services, larger school spaces, teachers, and volunteers to distribute clothes and provide social activities. *“So, they kept the school open during evenings until nine, with teachers and volunteers there so that there would be something to do for the newly arrived. So, in times of crisis the cooperation between the local authorities and the civil society worked well”* (Focus group 3, civil society, interview 10). A general understanding from the interviews was that, during this period, the inflow of refugees in general was welcomed, and many private persons wanted to contribute as volunteers alongside the civil society sector. However, the pressure on the social services and the education system was high, particularly for some of our case municipalities who received a relatively large number of unaccompanied refugee minors.

While adult asylum seekers are the responsibility of the Swedish Migration Agency, it is the social services in the municipalities who are responsible for the unaccompanied minors. Representatives from one of the case municipalities, Hedemora, describe how the social services almost broke down and that many of the employees quit their jobs due to the high work pressure. *“It was a bit too tough for such a small municipality as ours. (...) There were so many that came. The state should have governed the distribution better”* (Municipality representatives, interview 15).

However, the interviewees underscore that they have built valuable competence in the organization, and that particularly the schools in Hedemora have managed the situation well. All teachers are now educated in the language developing work-practices and Swedish as a second language, and the schools have been able to recruit mother tongue teachers and study supervisors. What they see as troubling is that asylum-seeking children are often moved around and do not get rooted in one place. This also leads to a large rotation of students, something that affects the social milieu in the classes as well as the teaching quality. The educators also mentioned that they had experienced that conflicts between groups in the former home country might continue in Sweden, which for example could impact on who could interpret for whom and who could provide mother tongue instructions to whom (Municipality representatives, interview 15, Municipality representatives interview, 16).

While in 2015/16 the focus was on solving an acute situation, today, the focus is on integrating the ones who stayed and how rural communities can keep these individuals and make them into working and contributing citizens (policy maker, interview 1). Reflecting on the time that has passed since 2015, the interviewees from Hedemora underscore that many of the refugees have managed to establish themselves

in society in a relatively short amount of time. For others the path to becoming self-supporting is however longer, due to their low level of education.

“A lot of those who came are integrated actually, but we don’t think about them, they have become Swedes now. But then there are those who are left behind. Most have succeeded, but what we see is of course the problems, and the problems are a bit too big at the moment, but everything takes time ... and it will work out eventually” (Municipality representatives, interview 15).

The municipality of Hedemora has the highest level of unemployment in the county. Among young adults in the age group 18-24, the unemployment rate is at 20 percent, of which 40 percent are foreign born (Municipality representatives, interview 15). This has led to significant expenses for income support, as municipalities are responsible for migrants who are not able to economically support themselves after the two-year establishment phase. There is an overall agreement among the informants in our study that the two-year establishment phase is too short and that many who came during 2015/16 are still in need of integration measures.

“ It feels like one should still be taking care of those who came in 2015/16. We have left them to themselves, even if they still need a lot of help. They are not involved in any labour market measures because they have lived here so long, but they still need integration” (Group interview 1, welfare provision, interview 8).

There are several established strategies to include TNC’s in both work and social life in Dalarna. For example, the region spanning project *Välkommen in!* (Welcome in!) which can be described as a platform for strategical planning and cooperation between different partners in the integration system, in order to simplify and hurry up the process of migrants becoming self-supportive and to secure skills supply and welfare in the region.

Another important aspect is that since 2015/16, the number of people who were granted a residence permit for protection reasons have continuously decreased in Sweden and the municipalities thus received fewer new arrivals. Fewer arrivals can also be challenging for small municipalities as it demands downsizing, all the while keeping up the capacity to cater to the various needs of different groups of migrants. Some of our informants that were involved in building up the reception for unaccompanied minors during the crisis are now worried that the knowledge and expertise that they have built in the organization will diminish and that it will be difficult to rebuild the capacity should the number of asylum-seekers increase again (Focus group 1, welfare provision, interview 8, Municipal representatives, interview 11). At the same time, municipalities still take care of unaccompanied minors that came in 2015/16. A change in the reimbursement system for unaccompanied minors in 2017 (Regeringskansliet, förordning 2017:193), is described as something that has changed the prerequisites for working with this group.

In Älvdalen, the integration coordinator explains that they used to have a well-established organization for taking care of unaccompanied minors because they used to get financial support for the minors until they turned 21. Now, the reimbursement per individual has been lowered²¹ and they are not able to uphold the high level of support they would like to:

“In the beginning we got 1900 SEK per individual per day until they turned 21. That made it possible to have personnel who could work full time with the minors, who could work both with practical knowledge... but also regarding different cultures, and we could give them the right guidance ... we could be with them all the time, in different situations. And when we “let them go” when they turned 21, they had reached so far! If we look at how it went for ten of the first [unaccompanied minors] we welcomed in Älvdalen, all of them are self-sufficient today. But that is a record we are not able to keep

²¹ Since 2017, the general reimbursement per individual is 1350 sek per day until the age of 18 (Regeringskansliet, förordning 2017:193).

up any longer as we are not able to work with them to the same extent” (Focus group 1, welfare provision, interview 8).

This is in line with findings from earlier research regarding unaccompanied minors, that has stated that Swedish municipalities often struggle to maintain a high quality of social services for this group and that they in general have very little adult contact (Lundberg and Dahlquist 2012, Seidel and James 2019).

The unaccompanied minors are also in focus when the interviewees speak of structures that inhibit integration in the region. In several of the interviews the interviewees mentioned the difficult situation for unaccompanied minors especially occurring after the “upper secondary act” (Gymnasielagen) from July 2018. The act gave unaccompanied minors whose application for asylum had been declined, a new opportunity for a residence permit to continue their education in Sweden. However, the permit is only given for 13 months at a time and demands that the youths manage to get a job and become self-supporting within six months after finishing their studies. As one interviewee says: *“They are supposed to get a job, but these are rules that do not correspond to what the labour market looks like today. It does not match up with reality”* (Focus group 3, civil society, interview 10). The informants tell us that the unaccompanied minors that they meet are put under a lot of pressure leading to ill mental health and difficulties in managing their studies.

“Then, when they finally have started to rise from their traumas, then they pull the rug from beneath them and say that they will not be able to get a permanent residency. Now you will only be able to stay if you study or get a job. And then they feel depressed and have difficulties managing their studies” (Focus group 1, welfare provision, interview 8).

Several of the interviewees express a sense of despair that these young people’s lives might be wasted and that the education that they have invested in might not be used, even though they would be much needed in the regional work force due to the lack of people in working age. These views reflect a common worry among educators and service providers across the country. In an open letter to the Department of Justice, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (2019) calls on the government to carry out a review of the “upper secondary act” as they question how it fits either a humanitarian or a societal purpose. According to their mapping of the prevalence of permanent employment in the municipal sector, only 16 per cent of foreign-born people under the age of 25 have a permanent job in the country’s municipalities, 20 per cent have a fixed-term job and as many as 64 per cent are employed on an hourly basis. On a general basis, over 50 percent of Swedish youth under the age of 25 hold a fixed-term job (ibid.). This means that the prospects for this group of unaccompanied minors to get a permanent position and hence a permanent residence permit looks bleak.

A factor that is lifted as something that might lead to polarization between migrants and the majority population is the closing down of general welfare services in rural areas. While refugees are often placed and encouraged to settle in rural areas in order to prevent rural decline, these areas might not always be well equipped to fulfil the populations needs in the first place. Interviewees on both local and national levels reflect on this and wonder if it might lead people to draw simple conclusions where migrants become used as scapegoats.

“In several of the remote villages they shut down the health care centre and opened asylum health centres. To implement such politics without having a dialogue with the citizens; it’s like rubble in the machinery, that sadly enough leads to everyday racism and polarization” (Focus group 3, civil society, interview 10).

Interviewees from the civil society particularly talked about young adults from the majority population that they describe as outside of society because of lacking education and opportunities for work. A civil society representative who works with local youth projects in several rural areas in Dalarna, explains that young people are particularly vulnerable when rural schools shut down and that for some youths this might lead to feelings of being neglected. A recent study by the Swedish agency for youth and civil society (Saarinen

2019), revealed that more than 50 percent of the rural youth did not feel included or as they were actively participating in society, connecting this to access to education and public transport. Some of our interviewees who work with young people say that they fear that some of the local youths might become an easy target to extreme right-wing groups, who they see as offering easy explanations to rural problems of decline.

“These young adults feel like they have no place in society, but [in their view] a place is given in society to migrants, and they get money, in terms of public subsidies, so they are able to get by. But this group is totally criminalized and pushed away” (Focus group 1, welfare provision, interview 8).

Interviewees emphasise that it is important to treat everyone the same so that everyone, majority Swedes and migrants alike get the same possibilities. *“We need to look at the individual, not groups. If migrants get better offers than young Swedish born, then it is a danger that conflicts might occur”* (Civil servant, interview 7). While this is exactly what is the intention of the 2018 “activation reform” where rules regarding the establishment of migrants in education and the labour market are now similar to what applies to jobseekers in general, it might not be the case that this reform contributes to a change of attitudes. An insight that might be considered when formulating national and regional policy, is that individuals’ or groups’ experiences of one sector in society as ‘mistreated’ or not being able to answer towards a sense of justice or the expected responsibility of the state, might affect how other sectors are viewed. If for example the public welfare services are becoming scarce, dissatisfaction with migration policy might occur.

Informants have also highlighted that TCNs that are not in need of protection (refugees/asylum seekers) fall outside of the target group for integration measures, and therefore they know little about their participation in society (Municipal representatives, Interview 11). One such example are highly skilled migrants, who are a sought-after group in many of the region’s industries. The region also has a large group of women from Thailand who work and are entrepreneurs within for example restaurant businesses or the berry picking industry, but which are seldom mentioned in the interviews. This might point to how integration rhetoric’s is understood and operationalized where being self-supporting is seen as the major goal and that which eventually will lead to social inclusion also in other aspects of society.

3. SOCIAL COHESION AND ITS CONSTITUTIVE ELEMENTS

Novy et al (2011) systematises social cohesion as an “open concept”, distinguishing between its socioeconomic, cultural, ecological, and political dimensions. The authors (p. 1876) argue that the popularity of the term social cohesion derives from the ineffectiveness of existing social policies and a reluctance towards applying alternative, redistributive policies. Aspects beyond the economy are of interest because of how they relate to economic functionality. For those working with economic and social policy on the local level, social and economic interest are hard to separate; economic development affect how diverse kinds of social, public services and welfare are provided, and vice versa. In a report by Region Dalarna (2020b) it is for example emphasized that strengthening the position of foreign-born people in the labour market is important both for the individual and for solving the current labour shortage in Dalarna.

A pronounced message in the interview material is the crucial role of labour market participation for reaching integration and society participation in broader terms. One informant (Local organization, interview 11) speaks about “real integration” (or *integration på riktigt*), that is about participation in already existing contexts and activities directed towards the whole population:

“Integration is really important. Small projects flare up a bit here and there, they live for a while, but the job is for real, the football club is for real and the Baptists are also for real. It is sustainable over time. /.../ We’ll have activities such as “language friends”, etcetera and it’s just sparklers. Must find integration for real. It’s the job, the school, then it works.” (Local organization interview 11)

With these words, he shed light on the important but also limited role of civil society. It is about reaching the long-term basis for inclusion, and also the way immigrants and natives meet one another. Civil society efforts devoted towards integration might sometimes strengthen the relationship where the majority population give support and the migrants receive. This does not mean that the importance of civil society support measures will be neglected; but that more sustainable networks will be achieved in other ways. Several interviewees express similar reflections. However, it should also be emphasized that civil society also takes several measures that are aiming to increase labour market participation, similar to what the public sector offers. They thus do more than “soft” efforts. In addition, it is emphasized that newcomers are often treated in relation to what they miss, rather than what resources they hold. (Focus group 3, civil society, interview 10)

The probably most important pillar in the process of social upwards mobility is labour market participation. An asylum-seeker is allowed to work (employed or self-employed) after he or she has applied for and has been granted “AT-UND” status, an exemption for a work-permit (Swedish Migration Agency 2016). The Swedish welfare system means that the municipality provides for all individuals but being supported by the state also means a minimum of economic means. In order to change your economic status, to get an increased room for manoeuvre, pay your bills and maybe by car, you need a salary. Several studies have shown that it takes a relatively long time for immigrants, and especially refugees, to establish themselves in the labour market in Sweden. There are also big differences between men and women in terms of both participation in activities within the establishment program and establishment patterns in the labour market. One explanation lies in the structural transformation of the labour market; the proportion employed in the service sector has increased (while the proportion employed in industry has decreased) involving requirements for knowledge in Swedish.

A recent project in Avesta municipality is “Vilka är vi?” or “Who are we?”. This project aims to create an inclusive and sustainable working life; an increasingly inclusive community with a conversational climate where everyone's voices are heard. Participants are all municipal employees in Avesta municipality and in the partner municipality Orsa. In total approximately 2,500 people will receive training in issues related to integration. Funding is provided through the European Social Fund. An educational material has been produced in collaboration with Dalarna University. The participants in Focus group 2 (interview 6) discuss the problematics in relation to working on projects; short-lived but with the aim of changing big and long-term structures. Such projects create values while they are implemented and should also work from a longer perspective rather than just disappear. Another aspect is that projects can have the role of trying something new; maybe it did not turn out as you had intended but you still learned from it.

The view that establishing oneself thus takes a long time is confirmed by several interviewees, and it might not be possible to change structures within two to three years, which is a normal time frame with regard to integration projects and evaluations of measures (Governmental organization, interview 6; Focus group 2, regional development). Increased automation and digitization have probably also affected the type of competence demanded. (Andersson Joona 2020), the labour market content might differ to a large extent, between the home country and the country of arrival:

It is not at all easy. And this is something we have to discuss. We are a developed country which differ a lot from other countries that are not as developed, where the labour market looks completely different. It is a knowledge society that demands other qualifications. To be a car mechanic in an African country is not the same as being a car mechanic in Sweden. There you don't need an education at all, but here it demands knowing the technology and having an education. We need to clarify this and not promise people that they will be able to be fully established in Sweden after six months and that there are enormous possibilities, and that people easily will get a job. It's not like that. It is important to be really honest and explain to people what is actually demanded of you to get a job in this country (Civil servant, interview 7).

Besides the structural transformation of the labour market, the organization of employment services has changed; the two major changes are a transfer of responsibilities and a decrease in local representation. Before 2009, the municipalities were responsible for the new arrivals. The new law, Act on Establishment Initiatives for Certain Newly Arrived Immigrants (2010:197), moved the responsibility to the Swedish Employment service and most of the resources were also transferred. (Governmental organization, interview 4) This shift is described as bit “messy”:

“...the institutional memory is blurred. What was the purpose, the ambition of this reform? It was not really specified within the broader mission of the Swedish Employment service. But the mission was a bit broader compared to their ordinary assignments. And in addition, the Swedish Employment Service is decreasing their local offices. They have lost the content of their mission a bit.”
(Governmental organization, interview 4)

The re-organisation of the Swedish Employment Service means that from the end of 2020 there will be in total 112 physical offices in 106 Swedish municipalities (in total 290). This can be compared to 238 offices in 218 municipalities at the beginning of 2019. Among these 112 offices, 88 will be staffed and 24 will be “offices” that staff will travel to. (Swedish Public Employment Service 2020, p. 24) A disadvantage with decreased local presence is that: *“...knowledge about the local labour market, the local business life and the local employers risk to get lost.”* (Governmental organization, Interview 4) This knowledge is described as crucial for being able to implement smart and individual solutions and lack of such knowledge risks to delay labour market participation. Such close contacts with different actors are described as important, in addition to the character of the local labour market.

In Älvdalen, one of our case municipalities, the integration manager comments upon the re-organisation. He means that because the Employment service receives the funding *“we have to fight to get a piece of the cake”*. But he also stresses that the cooperation with the Employment services functions very well locally, partly because of individual engagement: *“It depends on the people, again, whether it is committed people who make decisions.”* (Local organization, interview 11)

While in theory all individuals have possibilities to social upwards mobility, in practice there are laws and rules in place which may provide obstacles for progress. In one of the focus groups the problematic with rules and incentives is discussed. People who cannot support themselves are entitled to economic support, but this support will decrease if a person gets a job. The incitement for accepting the job offer decrease: *“Whether you can take a job without risking getting less money in your wallet. If you take a job for a few hours a week, you risk losing your income support. Great difficulty in knowing how to juggle this as a private person.”* (Focusgroup 3, Civil society)

Rural areas might be advantageous for migrants social networking because of visibility and that it is easier to become “a person” rather than being “one in a group” (Mathisen & Stenbacka 2015). Visibility may, however, also involve negative experiences, for example when individuals’ bodily appearance leads to negative reactions, as shown by Mathisen (2020) in a study on young international migrants to rural Norway. One interviewee talks about an occasion when she was walking around in the village with her migrant students and heard people shouting racist allegations. Racist expressions are quite common among younger persons, she says. (Focus group 1, welfare provision)

From the interviews we learn that immigrants’ possibilities to build social capital and networks, that in turn might lead to employment, is a process that depends on the migrants as well as the majority population. Some employers are interested in networking, vocational training and employing individuals with diverse backgrounds, while other employers might be sceptical. One policy measure, “New start job” (*nystartsjobb*), is described as a positive contribution regarding improving labour market access. The employer can receive financial support when employing a person who has been unemployed for a long time or someone who has just arrived in Sweden.

There are three from the course who are already hired, by people who think a bit differently; that you actually have to be in a workplace and study at the same time to get both pieces of the puzzle – to

enter the society and learn Swedish. They have dared to take that step. (Focus group 1, welfare provision)

The amount of trust and recognition among employers cannot be taken for granted. One strategy has been to involve employers at an early stage – something that is described as a key to success. The cooperation with the public sector, care and health care has led to permanent employment for several migrants:

“...and we have had many meetings and talks, partly before the course, what they [students] need in order to get a job afterwards, and we have developed course plans together [with the employer] and we have had development talks, progression reports and so on over time. And it is possible because we do not actually have huge groups, but we can adapt individually, and that is very important.”
(Focus group 1, welfare provision)

One of the informants suggested there to be a strong regional identity in Dalarna, involving proudness and a will to cherish this identity. This might also lead to social barriers, and to difficulties in accessing the labour market. An example of a side-effect when promoting the regional identity is discussed in one of the case municipalities, where a contemporary development project is about preserving the local dialect. It has been encouraged to use the dialect more in everyday speech and to pass it on to future generations. In this endeavour it has happened that individuals with a migrant background, who have struggled to learn Swedish, suddenly find that there is another language/dialect that is used in the coffee room: “This makes it hard for the new arrivals”. The informant links this to a more pronounced patriotism as a possible consequence of fear from the majority population. (Focus group 1, welfare provision) For migrants, these attitudes might result in discrimination. A study on employer discrimination in Sweden gave at hand that ethnic hierarchies are critical and means reduced employment chances due to ethnicity. Vernby and Dancygier (2018) state that “immigrants have few tools at their disposal to escape ethnic penalties and that efforts to reduce discrimination must address employer prejudice”.

Dalarna, the region, is sometimes described as special, insofar as the local networks have developed over time and are strong. It can be important where you come from, even if you are Swedish-born, and the background can affect your opportunities. Partly serious and partly with a smile one informant says: “*Dalarna is the most accent sensitive region in Sweden!*”

That social inclusion is closely connected to participation in the labour market stands out in our material. A job offers a social context, colleagues, and daily routines. Several informants state that knowing the language is the road to get a job and to be socially included and that the combination of language classes and vocational training is the preferable way to reach inclusion. (Governmental organization, interview 4; Focus group 1, welfare provision)

A concluding comment regarding social cohesion and its constitutive elements concern where to put the efforts; in existing contexts and structures or in new projects. From the material presented here we can discern that inclusion is probably easier to reach within already existing activities, rather than through new initiatives. (Governmental organization, interview 4, Regional organization interview 3) Civil society activities should be seen as complementary, the linchpin is all public (state, region, municipal) activities and measures and sometimes the media picture contributes to exaggerate the role of civil society, which is not to say that they are unimportant. (Governmental organization, interview 6)

4. ACTIVE PARTICIPATION AND CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS

Being part of an association such as a sports club is a central part of the social pattern in Sweden and is considered to be a vital meeting place where migrants and majority population have a chance to meet and bond over common interests. The importance of sports movements is a recurring theme in the interviews:

The importance of the sports movement. To establish relations with Swedish-born; culture and unwritten rules and so on. /.../ Take advantage of the informal structures, to be truly integrated. Learn the language and go to school, of course, but somewhere you also have to get down to the individual level, make friends. Get to know other people born in the country, get to know each other that way. All this is based on civil society and especially the sports movement (Focus group 3, civil society, interview10).

An interviewee who herself came to Dalarna as a refugee, and now holds a position as an integration coordinator within the region sports association speaks of the football club as an important arena to create valuable social capital that is important also in the educational system and thus for social mobility. What she emphasises, however, is the possibility to create a common identity that is not based on being a refugee or in some sense different, but rather on common interests.

"I came to Dalarna as a child together with my family who fled the war in Somalia. The second week in school my classmates passed a ball to me. Two weeks later I played in a boys' team. I was quite norm breaking you could say, a Somali girl playing in a boys' team. Luckily more of my friends were active in sports. But the possibilities this has created for me and the whole family has been incomparable, really. That my dad could sit and talk – in a natural way – with my team mate's parents. You get another identity (than the refugee-identity). (...) I really believe that if all children get the same possibility to play sports on equal terms, we can decrease the social differences remarkably. To get that support from trainers and everyone in the team, when the parents might be in need of support themselves to establish in a new society. Then the focus will not be on religion or skin colour or nationality or so. (...) Some of my friend's parents owned large companies and things like that, but now we are equals. We all have good educations and everything else. I believe that that was because we had this platform where we saw each other as equals and could build a common identity" (Civil society, interview 12).

The Swedish national sports organisation has since 2015²² been allocated funds from the government to offer sports activities and introduce newly arrived migrants to the Swedish association life. Particularly in Dalarnas rural municipalities, the migrants were welcomed and were seen as an asset to the local sports associations as the existence of several teams was threatened and thanks to the in-flow of younger male football players the teams could prevail. In larger centralised municipalities however, the situation was quite the opposite, as sports associations found it difficult to cater to the large number of new members. According to the sports association's regional integration coordinator and representatives from civil society (Civil society, interview 12, focus group 3, civil society, interview 10), many from the majority population left the local sports associations as they felt that much of the crucial voluntary work fell on their shoulders. The interviewees also emphasised that several migrants in the city area, on their part, did not feel welcome in the existing associations and instead started their own football clubs. While this is not viewed as optimal, since several clubs are quite homogeneous with teams made up of either native members or members with a Somali background, the integration coordinator underscores that the migrant groups are using their democratic right to start associations and engage in their local communities. Research has shown that generating social capital within ethnic enclaves is important for participation as they, for example, can create opportunities to become self-employed (Andersson and Hammarstedt 2015). Social inclusion in a local community can thus happen even though the migrant and majority population do not mix in all areas of daily life. Our interviewees told us that football clubs organized by migrants also set up other activities in relation to the club, such as school tutoring for children and youths, and thus become valued actors in their communities.

²² In 2015 the government decided to allocate 10 million SEK to the civil society's work with refugees, to be administered by the Swedish Red Cross (SOU 2017:12, p 108).

Other clubs are more mixed, including members with different migrant backgrounds, languages, and cultures. However, this kind of mix is according to the integration coordinator, not what is viewed as diversity by the larger society:

“I feel that this is not valued in the same way as it would have been if it were 50 percent Swedes and 50 percent of migrant background. That is what is valued as diversity. (...) But one doesn’t have to exclude the other. It is a valuable experience to know how to run a sports club, to sit in a board and so on. And these clubs have valuable cultural competence, so if we can get all the clubs to cooperate with each other, this competence will be of good to everybody” (Civil society, interview 12).

Information regarding participation of TCN’s in voluntary organisations other than sports, is limited. We know from our interviews (Civil society, interview 10, Municipal representatives, interview 11), that the church has been vital in including individuals who are practicing religion, independently of religious affiliation. However, studies have shown that there is an absence of and difficulty in recruiting TCN’s to participate in voluntary associations (MacKay et al. 2016; Arora-Jonsson 2017). One informant emphasizes that migrants (referring to asylum seekers) probably are very busy with their own process of establishing their personal process of integration. Thus, they are less active in finding ways to contribute to integration processes in society in a broader sense (Policy maker, interview 6).

Arora-Jonsson (2017) writes about the characteristics of many rural organisations and how they value tradition and culture, and as a side-effect integration practices are about assimilation rather than multiculturalism. One informant says that: *“There is a large step for in-migrants to enter the local history society”* [hembygdsföreningen]. The same informant also explains that the folk music movement, where she is active, is progressive and invites migrants to common activities (NGO, interview 3).

The interviewee from the regional sports association speaks about lowering the threshold to enter the clubs and be able to volunteer as trainers or board members. She discusses how the organisation has worked hard to move from thinking that it is those who want to join them who have to adapt to the way they are doing things, to moving the perspective inwards, looking at how the associations can adapt to the needs and interests of the target groups they want to recruit. A study of the recruitment of migrants as volunteers to civic associations in rural areas in Norway (Lydersen and Aure 2015), showed that the lack of volunteers from the migrant population could be explained by the associations prefixed ideas about who the ideal volunteer is, lack of cross-cultural networks, and internal recruitment among those who already know each other. The researchers conclude that it is important to open up closed majority networks and broaden the potential arenas for recruitment. Recruiting individuals with various migrant backgrounds in key positions can be a way to build trust and understanding among the migrant population, as well as finding new ways to reach the target group. As in Dalarnas case, one way of doing this is to scrutinize the associations own standpoints and routines.

In all the interviews the gender aspect came up, as women were perceived to have a lower access to both work²³ and association life. Informants underscored the importance of profile courses targeting non-educated women and highlighted labour market initiatives such as “Yalla Borlänge” a social enterprise specialised on sewing (in collaboration with IKEA), cleaning and catering. However, there was little discussion of the causes behind women’s lower participation, part from low education levels and traditional gender and family roles. These are of course valid factors as childbearing and parental leave are important reasons why it takes longer for migrant women to establish themselves on the labour market. Research has shown that there are few alternative routes for those who are on parental leave during the first years in Sweden and are not able to attend ordinary establishment measures. In addition, different expectations of men and women are re-enforced in Sweden as shown in the meeting with the Swedish public employment service, where men more often than women get access to labour market-oriented initiatives. One of the most important explanations for women’s lower access to the labour market is discrimination based on the

²³ 27 % of all foreign-born women aged 16-64 are outside the labour force compared to 16 % of women born in Sweden. Foreign-born men outside the labour force are at the same level as domestic-born men. Domestically born men are at 14 percent (Jansson 2020:5).

intersection of gender and ethnicity, where migrant women report being systematically underestimated and expected to perform traditional gender roles also in the eyes of the majority population. (Nordiska Ministerrådet/Oxford research 2018, Jansson 2020)

Also, when talking about association life, it is implied that the participants in football teams are male. In one focus group the conclusion is that they don't really know what the women and girls are doing. This picture is however nuanced by the sports associations integration coordinator who explains how they work to recruit migrant girls to their associations.

"We are working hard to create opportunities for girls. They are the target group that the sports association in general have the hardest time reaching. We cooperate with the municipalities and other actors so that sports can become a natural part of the girl's everyday lives as well. When doing so, we are focusing on the thresholds that exists within the organization itself. How do we greet girls that show up in a long skirt and a hijab, and whether we consider them to be able to play, for example? How can we break these norms? And we also try to find forums to discuss these things with the parents. There exists a strong resistance against girls, particularly from the age of 13 and up, playing sports. That there is a cultural and religious barrier. But we can see a progress, more and more people come to understand (its value)" (Civil society, interview 12).

5. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF SERVICES

A repeating message from our interviewees is that immigration of TNCs to rural areas in the county is unambiguously important to be able to perpetuate local service, boost economic development, and "turn a declining population into its opposite" (Policy maker, interview 6). An ageing population causes economic constraints for rural municipalities, as there are fewer people of working age to support the growing proportion of elderly people and children. The foreign-born population in Dalarna is however significantly younger than the native born and has a larger proportion of people of working age (Region Dalarna 2020a). More staff is particularly sought after in the health and home care sector and migrants are advised to educate themselves within this line of work: "Almost half of the home care staff here are now unaccompanied boys. It's super cool!" (Focus group 1: welfare provision, interview 8).

A recent challenge is the closing down of housing for asylum seekers. In 2015 it was difficult to find enough housing in a short time. Now, with declining numbers of asylum seekers, it is the opposite situation. Municipalities want the Migration agency to keep the housing in place, as it helps to avert population decline and provide work opportunities for the rural population (Policy maker, interview 5). Another issue is the municipalities' possibilities to plan for the future, for example regarding the school economy. Municipalities are economically compensated for the education of each asylum-seeking child (Swedish Migration Agency). For small rural schools, losing students also means less money to keep their full teaching staff something that might have consequences for the quality of teaching for the children who stay.

In theory, TNCs have the same access to welfare services such as schooling and health care as the population in general. However, there might be differences in their possibilities to make use of various services. According to one of our interviewees, there are no lack of resources regarding services of good quality, but there are significant geographical differences in where these services are to be found: "Good service is available, but not necessarily in the often remote places where migrants live" (Policy maker, interview 6). The distance to service providers is also connected to an information problem, as many migrants do not understand the complex immigration bureaucracy and thus do not know how to navigate the system and what help they can get. Closeness to important institutions and personal guidance has been underscored as an important factor for successful integration.

"We are trying to identify what the success factors are. It has a lot to do with being close to institutions and personnel, which can give guidance and coach them personally in an initial phase. Which is not

really compatible with the service on distance (i.e. digitalization of service) trend that we are seeing now” (Expert, interview 4).

While some rural areas seem to struggle with distance to services, others have informed us that the fact that they are a small municipality and have a small number of migrants facilitates the integration process because they are able to personalise their information and integration measures. In the focus group with welfare providers, they informed us about their participation in a project initiated by the delegation for young people and newcomers to work. The delegation has been given the governmental task of promoting state and municipal collaboration in order to streamline the establishment of young people and newcomers on the labour market.

“It is really positive! Mora, Orsa and Älvdalen have an agreement to collaborate. Within the working group we go through each person’s situation to see what kind of help each individual needs. The integration coordinator is there, labour market coaches, SFI, the folk high school and the Public Employment Service. Everyone works together to see what each person needs. We have a really good collaboration with the Public Employment Service. The distance between the institutions is short. SFI can say that “this person doesn’t function here, can (s)he come to the folk high school? And we say, this person is highly skilled, can (s)he go directly to SFI? It is incredibly individualized” (Focus group 1, welfare providers, interview 8).

The focus on individualizing the path to education and work is something that is also lifted by other welfare providers. An interviewee who works with adult education particularly underscores the amount of information the migrants get in different languages both through posters on the school walls and using translators and student counsellors. In his view, education is the most important factor to be able to get ahead in the Swedish society. He welcomes a stricter demands-based approach as it makes people aware of what is required of them to be able to become self-supported.

“We at the adult education collaborate with the health care administration to a large degree. So, their non-educated employees have the possibility to educate themselves at our school and get language training at the same time as they work. If you have a full-time job, we offer you distance learning. If you don’t work full time, then we offer a vast number of courses you can take here on campus. Now, because one has started to set stricter demands, there are more people who work and study at the same time because they understand the importance of being educated. And to get a good education one also needs to know the language, to be able to pass theoretical courses and get a grade” (Civil servant, interview 7).

The Covid-19 situation has in more than one way affected the immigrant population in Sweden. Not only are they among the group that has been dramatically affected health wise, newly arrived are also negatively affected by the lack of civil society initiatives and face to face encounters. The interviewees from the civil society speak about how this affects the newly arrived migrant’s chances to build a social network in their societies, but also to learn the language and find work. Some also look to the future with worry and wonder if the activities, such as language cafes and the like will be able to start up again after corona (Focus group 3, civil society, interview 10). Another problem is a lack of access to and competency in using digital solutions to communicate.

“Right now, the school has many poorly educated women who often have very modest digital competence and also lack digital tools. We have solved it by meeting them in very small groups and giving them support, and we use Messenger to send out information. Everyone knows how to use Messenger. However, the students miss out on the most essential thing about the folk high school, which is the social encounters between people. And the practical parts of the education are difficult

to implement, for example in the health and care education for new arrivals” (Focus group 1, welfare provision, interview 8).

In addition, the pandemic has hit the restaurant and tourism sector in Dalarna hard and the interviewees describe the difficulties they are experiencing when trying to find workplaces where their students can practice as trainees.

6. CONCLUSION

How many refugees Sweden receives is determined by the state and the distribution within Sweden takes place according to a national model. How the establishment will be performed is also largely determined by how the state distributes the financial resources. The work with integration is however very local, and measures and engagement will depend upon local structures and individuals' interest. Often there is interest at the local level, since people care for their closest surrounding and believe that it will gain everyone if newcomers are supported, local key actors are also responsible for a labour market in balance. However, it is not always a successful process to match labour market demand with supply and one reason might be the lack of local anchoring by the responsible institution (The Swedish Employment Agency) and that a centrally governed authority not necessarily work under such incentives. (Governmental organization interview 4)

Compared to skilled economic migrants, labour market readiness among refugee migrants takes time and it might be hard to foresee refugee migrant labour market participation. Variances in professional skills and educational backgrounds among the category of refugees affect the potential for labour market integration (Desai 2016), as does the labour market structure. An important part of integration policy and practice is to implement measures that lower the time it takes to labour market participation. Desai (2016, 84) points out that one government agency cannot effectively manage the processes on its own, rather several governmental agencies at multiple levels and private and non-profit participation is needed. Such multilevel bureaucracy cooperation is challenging; each agency has its own goals and national goals might be hard to integrate with local prerequisites and objectives.

Goals regarding migration and integration are formulated at a national level. These goals should then be implemented locally, but support to enable this implementation needs to improve. There is a risk that intentions get “lost in translation” since local prerequisites are so diverse, the room for interpretation is wide, and there is an unawareness on national level (the Swedish Migration Agency) of how local structures work. These circumstances are emphasized in the material and can be summarized as: a dissatisfaction with how responsibilities are distributed; lack of a national strategy that applies at the local level, lack of a shared agreement on what the goal should be; and lack of communication between different sectors and levels (“stuprör”). A policy that exemplifies this is Gymnasielagen or the Upper Secondary Act. This law could be seen as a hindrance for integration and interviewees find it difficult to understand the societal purpose of investing a great number of resources in educating this target group when the conditions for utilizing their future skills look so bleak. They worry about their mental health and that they might end up living in a parallel society. The youths are much needed in the work force but the possibilities for them to find a permanent job within six months after graduating from their education is unrealistic.

There is a pronounced focus on participation in the labour market. To achieve this, one must work with the issue from two directions: migrant employability and the employer's treatment. In the case region there seems to have been a shift from initially emphasizing migrants' characteristics and skills to also including employers' opportunities to change their own structures and attitudes. Above all, good collaborations with the public sector are presented, the collaboration with the business community needs to improve and become more active. In some municipalities, the refugee migrants' contribution to the care sector is crucial for fulfilling the need of staff. Interviewees relate to their closest surroundings, relatives and friends, and notice that it would have been impossible to offer the needed services without the migrants. Local cooperation between the municipality and the local labour market agency is important for reaching labour

market integration. The employment service's declining number of offices contributes to complicating this work, and knowledge about the local labour market risks are weakened.

The in-migration of migrants and the receiving of refugees are part of political goals that connect to other areas in policy and society. Even though migrants contribute to filling labour market vacancies in the municipalities, the attitude towards migrants may be negative. This might relate to other parallel processes such as an increased financial commitment for supporting individuals outside of the labour market and a decrease in public service in many municipalities. The public labour market agency has closed their offices in many municipalities, health care centres have been closed, libraries have financial difficulties and concerning private services, banking services is becoming scarce. State withdrawal may lead to dissatisfaction that will show negative attitudes towards migrants. (Governmental organization interview 4, Governmental organization interview 6, Focus Group 3, civil society) From a municipal perspective, it can be perceived that the municipality in question takes its responsibility and contributes to meeting the national goals, but when it comes to meeting local goals, there is less support from state institutions.

Approaching gender equality in integration processes is complicated, focus is put upon labour market participation which can be seen as following an overall Swedish policy of dual-income households and access to public welfare that should allow for gainful employment. Migration to a new country means that gender relations will appear in a new context, they will transform, and they will be challenged. Gender structures in the departing countries are also active in the new context. (Stenbacka and Forsberg 2020) For example, there might be a tradition of male breadwinners and women staying at home in the home country, a separation of men in productive activities and females in reproductive activities. It is possible to discern such assumptions also in contemporary labour market measures; men more often than women get access to labour market-oriented measures in their contact with the Swedish public employment service (Nordiska Ministerrådet/Oxford research 2018, Jansson 2020). Because the Swedish model and provision of welfare is based upon a dual-income system, such household strategies as well as structural inhibitions not only complicate integration, but they also have a negative effect on the household economy. In addition, discrimination on the labour market on the grounds of gender and ethnicity needs to be addressed in order for migrant women to fully participate.

It is possible to discern two approaches towards how to reach social inclusion. One is emphasizing labour market participation and the other civic engagement and social networks. Crucial for both approaches is the development of language skills. There are still no legal requirements regarding language tests, however newly arrived are obliged to join language classes to obtain financial support. Being engaged in association life is described as an important way to learn the language in a more informal way and as a way to become familiar with social patterns and gain social networks. Social networks are essential also to access the labour market as many jobs in the region as well as in the country in general are distributed through social networks. The regional sports association in Dalarna addresses issues of the recruitment of practicing athletes, trainers, and board members; by scrutinizing the associations actions and routines in their out-reaching as well as self-reflecting practices.

Civil society activities are important, for social meetings as well as for offering activities aiming at strengthening certain competences. The role of the public sector, and all public (state, region, municipal) activities are however viewed as most important, since they set the base for other initiatives.

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1. INTRODUCTION

As of February 24, 2021, the total number of Syrians in Turkey in the status of temporary protection is more than 3,6 million, and with the other international migrants, the country hosts more than 4 million foreigners (DGMM, 2021). This has a huge impact on the lifeworld of everyone living in Turkey and leads to a change in the public administration of the country. Thus, to what extent it is recognized is still questionable.

Syrians, first as accepted as *guests*, are granted the “temporary protection” status in 2014 by Act No. 6458 on Foreigners and International Protection and Temporary Protection Regulation (AFIP). With this regulation, the right to health, education, access to labour market, social assistance, and interpretation services become possible in the provinces they are registered but to what extent these rights turn into capabilities needs scrutiny. In Turkey, there existed already inequalities and regional development gaps which have caused limitations on the capabilities of its citizens (Karatay et. al., 2016), faces many problems: poverty; informal economy; child labour, and access to qualified education for all (Uyan-Semerici et. al., 2013; 2014 and Uyan-Semerici & Erdogan, 2017). Yilmaz (2019) concludes that although the current situation in Turkey can no longer be treated simply as emergency, humanitarian assistance programs and the implementation of different policies and projects are provided in sense of emergency support to Syrians. Unfortunately, this is still a valid observation. The role of the public sector, including municipalities, increases especially in social assistance and health care. Local authorities cooperate with international organizations and civil society organizations to provide free services. Thus, competition among the most vulnerable groups concerning social assistance and job opportunities in the informal labour market creates further tensions, even before COVID-19.

Syrians are still not regarded as a permanent part of the current and future society in Turkey. An important reflection of this lack of future perception results in not learning the Turkish language, particularly by women and the elderly population. For children and youngsters, the difficulty is not about learning the language, but rather, poverty, bullying, and exclusion. For harmonization, there is still a long way to go.

In order to assess the effects of TCNs arrival to and settlement in the region, Bursa and local Karacabey, and to analyse migration-related social policies and governance related to TCNs integration process, 23 stakeholders (including ministries as well as their affiliated public administrations, municipalities, international umbrella organization, NGOs, institution operating on asylum and refugee care, education, and training institution, and individual researcher) with around 50 people (including policy implementers, public officers responsible for beneficiary relations/livelihood program/protection program/refugee liaison, representatives of professional associations as well as practitioners such as trainer, health mediator, a doctor in charge with migrant healthcare, nurse, clinical psychologist and/or sociologist) contacted for the data collection request. Although three of the contacted people showed interest at first and the interviews were already scheduled, they had to be cancelled afterward because they did not get upper-level official approval/permission. Two of the contacted stakeholders, operating as NGOs at the regional level Bursa, refused to participate in the field research. In addition, the Bursa Provincial Directorates and Karacabey District Directorates of some public administrations affiliated with different ministries had to be excluded from the data collection process primarily due to their request for an additional official approval at the ministerial level. Although we have official confirmation and approval from the Ministry of Interior to conduct the research in the field, their request for additional official approval from different ministerial was challenging. It takes several weeks due to the official procedures, and at the time of writing this report, our requests are still being in the process of evaluation.

After all, regarding the migration-related social policy analysis, in-depth interviews with nine different actors/stakeholders were conducted at national (Turkey), regional (the province of Bursa) and local (Karacabey) levels during February and March 2021. Three of them were carried out as group interviews/small focus group with the participation of either two or three different people (Please check out the Data Collection Plan attached at the end of the report to see the details about pseudonymized interviewees). Because of the existing Covid-19 conditions, it was not possible to visit their offices and/or arrange focus group meetings with participants from different organizations, these group interviews give us the possibility to learn more about the field with different expertise's views from the same institution/organization. In order to understand processes and practices in terms of healthcare services especially in rural areas, we also carried out 1 focus group with the participation of seven interviewees, having the job titles of either nurse and/or health mediator in the region, particularly serving in the agricultural areas, mobile health service to seasonal agricultural workers.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, all the interviews were conducted remotely by using the Zoom conferencing tool. After having received the interviewees' consent, all interviews except one policy implementer (*Informant 12*) were audio-recorded. Afterward, they were transcribed verbatim and were analysed using thematic analysis. We also utilized the information gained from the first interview series already conducted between October and December 2020 for Deliverable 3.1 therein this report. In this regard, 8 additional interviews with the participation of 10 people from different stakeholders had been carried out during the previous round.

Although very few Afghans and Iraqi Turkmens were mentioned, TCNs in Bursa are almost all Syrians and how they live, work; how they exercise their cultures, customs and to what they have access to rights and furthermore to what extent they are able to participate in decisions that affect their lives, and overall, their wellbeing are tried to be reflected based on the interviews and focus group analysis. Thus, as expected, these interviews reflect the views of people who are working in the field and some share the perception and concern of the local population, and some, with different experiences, are advocates of migrants/refugees and their rights.

In order to understand both the positive and negative impact of immigration on the functioning of the society the following headings: social polarization; social cohesion; active participation and citizenship rights, and access to and quality of services are elaborated respectively.

2. SOCIAL POLARISATION

The findings of our earlier research on the perceptions towards Syrians show that there is a large – unfortunately negative – consensus in the Turkish public opinion, which polarizes almost every issue along with party identity (Erdoğan and Uyan- Semerci 2018)²⁴. The existing anti-immigrant attitude is mostly framed as a threat to the economic wellbeing of the Turkish citizens and a threat to lifestyle (Uyan-Semerci and Erdoğan 2016; 2020).

Income inequality across socio-economic groups and the co-existence of different ethnic groups and minorities have been important problems in Turkey. Thus, with the arrival of Syrians, the country also has been experiencing a new reality in which “social cohesion”, the first time its history, for refugees whose numbers exceed 3,6 million. “The concept of Syrian itself is like a curse at school” is stated by Informant 16 (*National level, research facility*), a very striking quote one of the authors of this report already heard during a training she conducted on migration. The same informant underlined the fact that there is not enough contact and she said, “those prejudices are not broken without contact anyway”. Competition among the most vulnerable groups with respect to social assistance, access to rights and job opportunities in the informal labour market create tensions, this point is repeated by almost all informants:

²⁴ For the findings of the Dimension of Polarization in Turkey 2020, please see <https://www.turkuazlab.org/en/home/>.

"Because in the first wave of migration, all social assistance was directed to Syrians. And needy local people could not benefit from this. But it has been overcome immediately after a year, with the transfer of other sources." (Regional level, asylum and refugee care, Informant 17)

As stated for the seasonal agricultural workers in Karacabey, to what extent they are welcomed may change from one village to another. The inhumane living and working conditions of the seasonal agricultural workers and their families do not easily change (Uyan-Semerci et al 2014; Uyan-Semerci and Erdoğan 2017), from infrastructure to child labour, seasonal agricultural workers are one of the most vulnerable groups in Turkey. Thus, acceptance of low wages, accepting lower daily wages than Turkish citizens create further tension. Due to the pandemic, fear and to increase the distance contribute to this tension:

"Seasonal agricultural workers have not arrived yet when we visited the tent areas at the very beginning of the project. It was April. We were in contact with the local people living in the village and the headman. At that time, we had such reactions. Let the state care for its people first, unfortunately. You look after the local people living here first. For this reason, we spent time in villages for 3 or 4 months of the year with the villagers" (Regional level, international umbrella organization, FocusGroup1a).

Seeing the economic difficulties in Turkey as the main source for prejudice, Informant 9b argues that contributions to the textile sector, or food culture need to be stated as a positive development: "Because, in general, one of the biggest obstacles between immigrants' harmony with the local population is the prejudiced "they took our jobs away" judgment. Because of this judgment, people are actually not willing to accept Syrians, and they may even fall into a resilient position for such reasons". (*National & Regional levels, NGO, Informant 9b*) Furthermore, misinformation contributes to negative attitudes and prejudices. Misinformation on the available services and rights and misinformation on the budget that is spent all increase social tension:

"Misinformation is created, to give an example, Syrians enter the university without an exam, they get a salary, and so on. People's prejudices somehow turned into hatred because it could not be clarified properly. The economy is still very bad." (National level, NGO, Informant 10)

"When it is said that we have spent so much money for refugees and that this year's gross national product has actually dropped, this actually shows whom to blame...In other words, the source of the money spent for this example is not specified, it is not specified where it is made or whose money, what is it, where it comes from, so the local people are generally having problems in knowing to the source, but it is regarded as money taken from our own pocket. This is the perception." (Informant 9b)

Bursa, "a city which has a memory of migration" is a common saying that contributes to a dialogue with the institutions in terms of "harmony". However, migrant groups who have settled in the region long before Syrians also have negative attitudes:

"I do not know how to express this, but currently the most discriminated group is Syrians. Not speaking the language definitely has an effect. Their latest arrival definitely has an effect. Interestingly enough, because there is a conflict between immigrant groups. It is not as if we are immigrants and they are also immigrants, we understand each other, but there is a situation where immigrants do not want each other. ... Municipality, municipal officials told us that there were many Romanian citizens and Syrians in that district, but this situation caused violence in many more districts. So not only the exclusion of Romans who are Turkish citizens, so by all Turkish citizens have systematic racism against the Syrians. Unfortunately, we witnessed too many such acts of violence in the local area of Bursa. It seems too much to us, "my child was going to school, he doesn't want to go to school anymore because of his peer bullying". Here we changed three schools, it is always the same thing, my children do not go to school anymore. Or here we are, not one, not two, but five or six times, we changed addresses, moved from home; Unfortunately, in Bursa, we come across the statements that we were systematically subjected to psychological or physical violence in every neighbourhood we visited, we cannot stand it anymore." (National & Regional levels, NGO, Informant 9a)

The immigrants who came in the eighties and nineties from the Balkans, mostly have Turkish origin:

"We were different, we came from nothing. We worked, but these people are not working. They are lazy, they are a burden on the state. They love enjoyment, entertainment" etc. Such prejudices are very common. As they also compare with themselves. Or "the state did not do these things when we came. Thus, now it is treating Syrians like its own citizens. Syrians are able to do more things, they have higher status, e.g. in the hospital more than us" ... By the way, all of these rumours are actually not true; but they believe so. That is, "they are primary citizens, we have become secondary citizens in our own country." I hear this very often in field studies I go to. So there is a situation of prejudice, a situation of rumour and an inability to empathize. Actually, there is a hidden anger, but I think we see this in a somewhat moderate way. In other words, hot confrontation, fighting and so on do not happen much." (Regional level, asylum and refugee care, Informant 11a)

Thus, two of our informants who are actively working for Syrians also use the same wording as "while my citizen/my people are looking for a job" ...The question "why are you serving them?" is asked to our informants:

"Of course, there are places where they are subjected to a lot of discrimination, we witness this on the field, for example, when we go to the health field, families are visited and a need assessment area is built to see what kind of need is needed, even in these areas we meet, including us. why are you serving them?" (Regional level, Asylum and refugee care, Informant 17)

Thus, there is also the view that these reactions have decreased in the last 1-1.5 years, that there is progress:

"but if you ask whether it has been fully resolved, ...I think this issue of language still continues as a problem especially for women. In the meetings we held – let's not only consider women but also men – it has been 8-9 years since I came here, but I observed that they still have resistance in Turkish. I think the issue of language still seems to be an obstacle before us in the framework of harmony. But I also see little progress. At least we do not encounter such reactions anymore, you give Syrians, you do not give them to us, I see a serious decrease in their reactions. (Regional level, public administration, Informant 13a)

However, the anti-immigrant attitude is not only a result of this economic threat perception, but also noted as a threat to lifestyle of the population. The use of the Arabic language has created tension:

"We observed that Arabic texts were written in the shops of our Turkish tradesmen just to attract Syrian customers, and this disturbed our people about using Turkish. I mean, everyone wants to use Turkish, they want to see it. Actually, it is not racism but nationalism, we have a spirit of nationalism. There were minor reactions about this, and we had two or three shops, if I remember correctly, about three or four shops, as far as I know from the police for licensing. Others did not have a license; they were easily intervened. In others, it has been edited and translated into Turkish and such a reaction has actually been prevented." (Local level, public administration, Informant 14)

The overcrowded house which is most of the time due to economic difficulties is explained as cultural difference:

"Perhaps this is due to a cultural difference. They are more together and unfortunately, they have many children. Fifteen or twenty people can be very comfortable in a house and in these conditions, nobody wants to give a house, we had difficulty finding a house for them. We became intermediaries. There are a few events that I have also experienced. That degree, I went and talked to the landlord, because they cannot find a house. They have money but cannot find a house." (Informant 14)

The activities that are organized for both communities contribute to overcoming social distance:

"For example, one day, we organized an event with great participation on women's day. We rented a wedding hall. It was a women's group of almost eight hundred, nine, and mixed Turkish and Syrian. I was dealing with the arrivals at the door. A group of Syrian and Turkish women started bickering

with each other. They said, why did you call us, if Syrians would come, if we knew, we wouldn't be here?" And there we intervened with a female friend. 1-1.5 hours after "Those who just fought at the door are now dancing on the table." So seeing this, actually makes us feel good, and it shows that the issue is actually not having a dialogue. In other words, when people get to know each other when dialogue is established, this prejudice disappears. (Regional level, asylum and refugee care, Informant 11c)

Although the enrolment rate for schools was increasing, Covid-19 has negatively affected school participation. Education, an important policy area for social cohesion, may contribute to social polarization as discriminatory practices, such as bullying, can lead to school dropouts:

"One of the most fundamental issues we encounter in education is peer bullying. So yes, in Turkey also there has been peer bullying among children. But here, when it comes to Syrians, it is also bullying combined with discrimination and racism. It is a problem in itself for the children to attend school, to go and to be successful in the schools." (National & Regional levels, international umbrella organization, Informant 3a)

Noting that this is definitely not reflecting the complete picture, one informant underlines the targeted policies to Syrian students is the main cause for bullying:

"I observe the most in the field is serious peer bullying and therefore dropouts ... Because the supports to this time, only given to foreigners, as the funds have always been international funds and they may not focus on locals. Imagine a school, a book is sent to the school; but they say that you will only give it to Syrian students. This is something that directly affects harmony very negatively. Both their teachers and the Turkish students there ... Now, when you go to this school and ask why there is peer bullying here, why there are conflicts, the problem actually starts from here. Perhaps it may be beneficial for the Provincial Directorate of National Education and the ministries to pursue such a policy in terms of delivering support to both local and foreign communities. These aids should be distributed equally, not only to foreigners. Because this always comes back to us as a problem of adaptation." (Informant 11a)

Informant 16 is a consultant, trainer, and researcher on "inclusive education" and based on her experiences in the field, she summarizes the importance of school not only for academic purposes but the role it plays in socialization, noting that online education, as part of Covid-19 measures, has created further problems:

"After the temporary education centres disappear, they enter an unfamiliar cultural environment and there were serious cases of discrimination, and there are still cases, so discrimination is at the forefront, in schools. Therefore, there is not such a school environment where they love to go. However, school is very important, of course, in the lives of children. ... There were some advantages of inclusion efforts at school. Of course, online education limits them very much. As such, the anxiety of being behind academically came to the fore... What the school offers is also very important, so it is not just an academic environment, socialization is very important in the lives of children... For example, the school has a very important role in health follow-up. When all these disappeared, the support mechanism around the children became very weak. That's why the role of the school was so important. You know, I can say that for the pandemic. School plays a very dominant role in children's lives, from every angle." (National level, research facility, Informant 16)

There are projects that are particularly designed for preventing dropouts from school and also to prevent child labour (Informant 11c), nevertheless the follow-ups are a lot harder in the current pandemic conditions.

3. SOCIAL COHESION

The stated problems with respect to social polarization are crucial to understanding social cohesion, namely social mobility, social inclusion, and social capital. The “temporary” protection, legal status of Syrians in Turkey, is the key to understand the main cause of the difficulties one faces with respect to social cohesion:

“... thinking that they came here temporarily, and they will return one day. Be it in terms of learning the language or learning the lifestyle. Since they have thoughts like “We are not permanent here, we will return”, this has greatly affected their relations with the local population. ...They have trouble with a sense of belonging and they are anxious because of the reactions, attitudes, difficulties they will face, they come here with a lot of anxiety problems such as a future concern.” (Regional level, Asylum and refugee care, Informant 17)

Although there are projects and programs aimed at “harmonization”, the term that is preferred in Turkey, the obstacles in the field still continue. “Language” and “living in two separate communities” are stated as the main problems. The projects are designed to overcome these problems however with the pandemic, the projects face many challenges as the main goal is to get locals and Syrians together and to create ways of intimate contact, which is against the Covid-19 measures. One of the most stated obstacles to social cohesion which also affects access to rights is the lack of language (Informant 4) (Informant 3a):

“..there are a lot of people who have stayed here for 5-6 years and cannot learn Turkish. This is a huge problem of adaptation, I think, it is still a problem of adaptation that we are struggling with, that is, not being able to overcome the language barrier, not being able to teach this language, and at the same time, people's own resistance. We still have language-related problems such as “Our children already speak this language, we do not need to learn it. We already find a job, the state gives us a job under these conditions, we do not need to learn”. When you look at it, there are people who have been living here since 2013, how many years have been but still haven't learned the language. ...you see that there is a serious acceptance problem by the local people. In other words, they are still not accepted, people also have this fear, “they have become permanent here, they are no longer guests, we no longer think they will go. This makes it difficult to accept more with the economic difficulties coming. Their prejudices are also increasing. A little bit of hate is also growing.” (Informant 11a)

The lack of contact is also stated as “living as two separate groups”, they live in the same locality, region, country but with very limited contact:

“There is no such thing as getting used to them. Everyone is for her own interest. We are living as two separate groups, they are in their own way, we live in our own way. They were being helped in the beginning, now everyone has stepped away” (Local level, public administration, Informant 5).

The following quote which underlines the importance of inclusion of the Syrians as registered workers and/or taxpayers is important. However, the existence of a huge informal economy makes things a lot harder. As in the case of seasonal agricultural workers, neither Turkish citizens nor TNCs are registered workers:

“The impact on the local community can be in the context of; People usually say that Syrians work illegally in jobs where we can work, they work for less money at work. Entrepreneurship and employment in the state administration mean that these people are included in a tax system, they can be included in the insurance system in two controlled ways and work under the state supervision. So this system is able to work through legal ways, including as citizens of Turkey and who are these people who will receive if he deserves. Whether they are Syrian or illegal workers will not affect the

situation. So I think the hate there will be a little more rubbed down, it affects it that way.” (National level, NGO, Informant 10)

NGOs and various institutions of public administration work on “harmonization” which basically aims at social cohesion. Harmonization with sports and music (bands/chorus) are used as a tool for social interaction (Regional level, public administration, Informant 13a).

“(…) we organized many adaptation activities under the titles of “…” and “… Activities”. These adaptation activities were generally about dialogue, sharing, common culture, common language, common things we could have fun and learn. These include conflict resolution and mediation workshops, empathy workshops, drama workshops; We have produced and implemented formats where they can understand each other as human beings, in fact, without needing too much language, perceive each other as human being and understand what they are experiencing as well. For example, in the social cohesion camps, two groups were divided in the empathy workshop, we organized an activity for the group of Syrians, “You are completely nationalist in this event, Turks who do not want Syrians in this country”, and Turks “you are refugees who were displaced in the war”. It was very impressive. Many things came to light here, people actually perceived how silly they were reacting to each other like that, and there was a very nice ambiance there. Apart from that, these were again carried out with mute drama workshops, which were never spoken, people could see that they could perceive each other without speaking a language. We did art workshops, with children and women. We did glass painting workshops; we did a rap music workshop with children. They revealed in their own words how bad racism and discrimination are, that people should be judged by their own character, not by where they were born. We also had Turkish friends in the … event, who were included in the bands. It was one of these activities and it was very nice to see that Turks, Syrians, Iranians and Afghans can sing the same song and keep the same rhythm in the same group” (National level, NGO, Informant 10).

Harmonization is an area that has been prioritized in the last two years, but as already stated by the experts in the field it cannot be considered a real social cohesion program (Informant 3a). Hence comparatively, there is progress:

“Maybe when we compare 2014-2015 with 2019-2020, at least it is a bit more like “we have to make adaptation policies” before public institutions and “we are establishing units for this” or “we are starting to work like this”. Maybe I can tell by comparing it in the last 5 years. In that respect, I can say that it was easier for us to do common things with public institutions, at least compared to a few years ago.” (National & Regional Levels, NGO, Informant 9c)

The last two years’ positive developments have also been delayed due to the pandemic. The delay of social cohesion programs as the main purpose to come together and contact, the very existence of COVID 19 threatens the main goal:

“We have a district municipality, … They give the citizens who come to their districts there an integration brochure. In other words, in the sense of what cultural values are there in Bursa. The Provincial Migration Board also prepared a booklet called Harmony in Bursa when it was first established at that time. inspirational way. Just a week ago, we received an integration program training with the Provincial Directorate of Immigration. Our head of department and directors also attended. The implementation was to start but was delayed due to the pandemic.” (Regional Level, Public Administration, Informant 13b)

4. Active participation and citizenship rights

Despite the improvements especially over the past five years, Turkey has been evaluated to go halfway to guarantee migrants basic rights and opportunities while living in the country (MIPEX, 2020). Following the Law 6458 on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP) of 2016 and follow-up regulations, although there are major improvements in the fields of basic access to education and healthcare services along with small procedural improvements to access labour market, there is no way for political participation for foreign citizens and access to nationality is called as halfway favourable (Ibid).

Considering access to nationality, Turkish citizenship is primarily based on the principle of *jus sanguinis* (by descent). A foreigner or stateless person can acquire Turkish citizenship after birth by the decision of competent authority based on several conditions. After five years, immigrants can apply for naturalization, by completing language, economic and other requirements. Although dual nationality has been allowed since 2017, it has still been criticized with discretionary and complex requirements (MIPEX, 2020)

In Turkey, all legally resident foreign nationals are assigned Foreigners Identification Number (*Yabancı Kimlik Numarası*, YKN) which serve to facilitate their access to all government services. International protection applicants and status holders within the framework of LFIP are also given such YKN. Currently, YKN assigned to all categories of legally resident foreign nationals, including Syrians who are under Temporary Protection Status (TPS). The Temporary Protection Regulation of 2014 envisages the issuing of Temporary Protection Identification Documents (TPID), categorically with a number starting with 99, to beneficiaries upon registration. Still, TPR (Art. 25) explicitly states that the TPID cards issued to beneficiaries does not serve as residence permit as such, may not lead to long-term residence permit in Turkey (AIDA).

For accessing services through TPID cards, residence location is an important determinant. The beneficiaries of TPS can only access the services in their province of residence. This conditionality is a major issue currently for Syrians under TPS in Turkey to enjoy their basic rights and to have full access to education, health, and employment. Almost all interviews mentioned the difficulties raised by requirement of registration in the province of residence in order to provide services to those under TPS, mainly Syrians. In particular, Bursa, the Matilde region, is among the provinces in Turkey where permanent stay are no longer allowed under the legislation for any new international protection applications:

"You know, the first condition for access to all public services and rights is being registered in that province. Bursa is a province that is already closed for registration. Namely, only in very delicate situations, in extraordinary situations, the Directorate of Migration Management can provide registration to Bursa, with the direction of us or other non-governmental organizations." (National & Regional Levels, NGO, Informant 9c)

"We only serve foreigners residing in Bursa. If he/she has a residence in a different city, he/she is supposed to be illegal in Bursa. We have an obligation to report. This is sometimes difficult." (Regional Level, Public Administration, Informant 13b)

The requirement of registration in the province of residence has caused unregistered residence in many provinces throughout Turkey, including Bursa. Also, it has a direct effect on the scope and extensity of informal migrant labour. Since Bursa has a labour potential owing to its diversity of industrial, agricultural, and service sectors providing jobs, many migrants, although unregistered in the province, prefer to stay in Bursa. This does not only cause migrants to be employed as informal and makes them remain out of enjoying their rights to reach public education and health services.

"One of the things that has placed them in a disadvantaged situation is these procedures. For example, Bursa has not received the first registration for a long time, as other fifteen provinces do. If he's not registered here anymore, he has to officially leave here. However, there are a lot of people who are

not registered here, but who have to continue their education here, who have to live here due to health problems. (...) They have to return to work, but they cannot. There is considerable labour potential here compared to other cities. Then, they start working informally and so at first this directly turns them into a cheap labour force, they cannot get their labour compensated. They cannot benefit from social rights and social guarantees in any way. (Regional level, asylum and refugee care, Informant 11a)

As procedural, those meeting certain criteria are considered to have the same rights as the local citizens (*Regional level, public administrations, Informant 12; and Informant 15*). In accessing the social assistance, it seems that the municipalities are more flexible in applying the rules and takes initiatives to provide social assistance to the migrants, especially to the Syrians not registered in the province where they have asked for social support:

"(...) when he [a migrant] comes to us, I can't refuse to give a box of food supply to him because he doesn't have an identity card [registered in Karacabey, Bursa]. It is just 100/150 Turkish Lira-package of food. The situation is already obvious. You know, you go to his house and do social research. We already solved the problem [of providing social support] with the help of benevolent by taking the initiative. Municipalities are more flexible in this regard." (Local level, public administration, Informant 14)

The Turkish education system, through several regulations especially since 2013, started to eliminate the barriers in front of the foreigners in accessing formal and non-formal education services, especially for the Syrians under TPS. Also, there are several projects concerning educational support for the Syrian children, e.g. PIKTES. Public Education Centres operates across the country and conducting age-specific Turkish language modules for foreigners as well as free vocational trainings. The health system in Turkey also guarantees primary healthcare services for all foreign residents, including the undocumented, asylum-seekers and persons under international protection status. By the adaptation of TPR in 2014, all Syrian migrants can also have free access to medical treatment, but only on the condition that they must be registered. Finally, to access the Turkish labour market, some improvements was made to grant Syrians under TPS increased access to labour markets by 2016, with a quota on temporary protection beneficiaries based on the needs of the sectors and provinces.

However, the main issue is how the existing rights and provided facilities turn into actual capabilities. The language barrier is among the serious obstacles to enjoying the rights for migrants. Either migrant students stay behind compared to the locals at the same age (*Regional, education and training institution, Informant 15*), or the decrease in schooling rate as well as school dropouts among migrant children are common cases due to the language barrier (*National level, research facility, Informant 16*). Although the migrants have somehow similar rights and opportunities with the local resident population, the interviews point out the disadvantages in utilizing these opportunities also in the employment sector in practice:

"I think they have disadvantages. That is to say, I think they are more disadvantaged in the trainings and activities I conduct in my field [of expertise]. I have witnessed a lot of people working here as laborers in the textile sector, although they have a very strong background with sufficient career and [foreign] language [skills]. (Regional, asylum and refugee care, Informant 11b)

Especially for elder migrants (age 50+), finding a job in the labour market and competing with the locals are getting harder. Their age and language seem to be the major barriers:

"In particular [migrant] people in the age group of 50+ are much more disadvantaged, it is much more difficult for them to find a job and to continue their jobs, which they experienced in Syria, here. Young migrants can somehow work in a workshop, but it is very difficult for others to even get a job and work in a factory. And it is difficult for us to integrate these people with local communities in terms of social cohesion. Because it is not easy for these people to learn a language or a new profession

after a certain age. There are big differences between local communities and the migrant groups at this age in particular.” (Informant 11b)

Beside to the obstacles raised by mainly residence location and language barrier among others in enjoying the rights properly, there seems to be found some alternative implementations to substitute the disadvantages and to facilitate in accessing services, especially in healthcare. There are health mediators who provide mobile services, especially in rural areas, with the coordination of the Ministry of Health and international umbrella organizations. They provide health services both local citizens and migrants, including undocumented and unregistered.

“We do not have a system like Migrant Health Centre or any other institutions. It [the status of the people] doesn't matter to us, it's enough for us to see [the case] and hear about that person. We do not have any control mechanism.” (Regional, health worker, Focus group 1a)

In terms of education, in order to have public education, as mentioned above, there is a strict regulation that obliges migrants under TPS, mainly Syrians, to be registered in the same province. Although there seem no alternative opportunities to access their education rights for those who do not have TPID registered in Bursa, Provincial Directorate of National Education still provide facilitating implementations for Syrian children whose families come to Bursa and Karacabey, the Matilde local region, as seasonal migrant workers:

“The population of Karacabey increases during the summer holidays. (...) the foreign population increases; they work in the fields there. When Syrians work there, so that their children may need education, we send school desks to Karacabey, we set up big tents similar to schools close to the fields, we assign teachers. We have been planning for this summer too, there will be lessons for the children of those workers.” (Informant 15)

Besides all the rights and facilities mentioned above with its pros and cons, the certain deficiency in having the right to access social services is mentioned about special education and rehabilitation facilities. Foreigners cannot benefit from the social assistance provided for those in need of special education and rehabilitation.

“For Turkish citizens who need special education and rehabilitation, this is covered by the state. But for foreigners, it [the state] does not meet in any way. You see the family cannot afford it. It has no financial situation that will ensure its continuity. We look at ourselves, we do not have any funds, no NGOs have any funding for special education and rehabilitation. Even if it does, it may meet just a month or two, but it is not sustainable.” (Regional level, asylum and refugee care, Informant 11c)

5. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF SERVICES

The quality of services provided to the migrant population is primarily related to the available sources. Although the policy implementers seem trying to do their best and putting many efforts to meet the needs of the migrant population residing in locations in their responsibility, the scarcity of the resources is an issue pointed out during the interviews especially at the municipality levels. The problem is not only the limitations on the financial resources (Informant 12), but also it is related to human resources, i.e. scarcity of human resources delivering services (Informant 11a; Informant 13a; and Informant 17).

“It [the resource] was always scarce. But we have tried to provide high service despite scarce resources. If there are, for example, 100 garbage trucks in the municipality, it became 150 after this process [arrival of Syrians]. Cleaning, staff, plus the cost of the truck tour... The city's infrastructure is also like that. (...) The budget is limited. (...) There is also an exhaustion issue. Our own staff are also

getting exhausted. They have also experienced psychological and financial problems. You cannot allocate extra resources [to the newcomers]; resource is the common resource.” (Regional level, public administration, Informant 12)

“I look critically, in fact, we still do not have many resources in terms of budget, and we have limited personnel as staff, so I think it should be increased in this regard. (...) We have seen that we can meet very little of the need here.” (Regional level, public administration, Informant 13a)

Apart from the quality of services provided by the municipalities, in terms of civil society organizations engaging in immigration issues, the real problem is not the scarcity of resources, but the implementation and the methods. There must be an approach aiming at long-term solutions and root causes (*Informant 3a and Informant 10*) and allocating resources to the sustainable projects (*Informant 11c*) or to the right (efficient) ones (*Informant 9a*).

“I think the resources are sufficient. I think some situations and methods should be changed in terms of implementation. In our country, daily solutions are being produced. (...) these solutions and applications do not shed light on the future. So, there are problems related to the efficient use of resources rather than resource adequacy.” (Informant 10)

Regarding access to the services, the most important disadvantage for the migrants is mentioned as the language barrier, mainly for Syrians, beside to being undocumented or unregistered in the same province they reside.

“With regard to bureaucracy and access to rights and services in general, being a foreigner is of course a very disadvantageous thing. It's very disadvantageous, especially if you don't know the language. (...) Not only being a refugee, generally speaking, to be a foreigner is very difficult in Turkey. Because it is very difficult to find someone who speaks your language once. (...) The issue of accessing services only in the place where you are registered is again the most important issue. There are especially a significant number of those unregistered, who live in provinces such as Istanbul and Bursa where registration is closed, because of the opportunities in the labour market. Therefore, they cannot access rights and services in any way.” (Informant 9c)

At the regional level, in terms of the services, a livelihood development program officer engaging in asylum and refugee care also pointed to the fragmented structure of the social and other services:

“The scarcity of NGOs [operating in Bursa] is also a problem, but [the real problem is] there is no standard in Bursa. We need to run a standard education policy, health policy and cohesion policy.” (Informant 11b)

Moreover, the main issue regarding accessing the services particularly does not seem about those who apply to the relevant stakeholders for their needs. Rather, it seems about those to whom the stakeholders cannot reach. Most of the services have been provided upon applications to migrants or newcomers. Many interviewees have a common notion that migrants, regardless their status but mainly Syrians, have no problem with reaching out the information about services largely owing to the informal channels such as WhatsApp or Facebook groups. Especially about the social aids, basic services like food supply, the news spreads so easily within the migrant communities. Particularly, for those residing in remote and rural places, informal communication channels make their access to the information about the services easier (*Informant 11b*). Nevertheless, there is a migrant population that still does not have any access to crucial services.

“Of course, we can evaluate this [access the services] through the applications we receive, or through the groups we can reach. There is also a group we cannot reach; we do not know anything about

them. That is because we cannot reach them, nor do we know how to reach them. Therefore, if we examine the process in terms of access, yes, anyone who want to access they can access, but there are also people in this country who do not have an idea about access [the services], do not want to access, have not taken any action about access. And their number is not small.” (National level, NGO, Informant 10)

In access to the specific services, e.g. education, health and employment, there have been several steps taken and regulations issued to eliminate the barriers in front of the foreigners in accessing formal and non-formal services.²⁵ Regarding the implementation, many different elements negatively affect the immigrants accessing the services and enjoying their rights. Beside the material conditions such as income and education levels of Syrian families, employment status of parents and language ability which play a role immigrant children’s school access and participation to the education services, peer bullying has also a considerable impact on decrease in schooling (*Informant 11a*). According to the figures, obtained during the field research (*Informant 15*), as of March 2021, whereas an average of 4,000 foreign students, mainly Syrians, is enrolled in each grade at primary school level in Bursa province, it decreases considerably in the upper levels, which corresponds to the number below 500 for each grade in the high school level.

It is also stated that the main problem in terms of the education of migrant children is attendance rather than their enrolment. Therefore, it is a recommendation to take measures to change the conditions that weaken the children’s ties with school after their enrolment in the education system (*Informant 16*). Another issue to be considered is then “the lost generation” (*Informant 11a*), i.e. a group of Syrian children who are between the age of 7-15:

“Especially there is a lost generation here. That is, there are youngsters who left their education in Syria or did not complete their school, who are seven to fifteen years old, and came to Turkey somehow, who can speak their native language but do not have a graduation. Our target group should be these people to a degree, it's time to think about the socioeconomic situation. Because this person knows both Arabic and Turkish, but he does not have any competence, graduation, and profession. Because this person was a student in his own country. How can we give training for this age group, how can we adapt them to vocational training and then employ them? I think our aim should shift in this direction a little more now. Because I call this in some way 'lost generation'.” (Informant 11a)

In access to health services, it is also the fact that the health care for foreign nationals has gone through a comprehensive change over the last ten years with several regulations specifically for Syrian migrants. In this sense, the establishment of the Migrant Health Centres (MHC) has been an important step. However, residence location, lack of information, language barrier, mobility of the immigrants and some legal restrictions are among the factors that affect immigrants staying out of health services in some ways. Besides, rural areas have their own specific challenges for migrants having access to proper health services. Although there are some initiatives, such as mobile health service mentioned in title 4, sustainable treatment for chronic diseases is a big challenge for the immigrant population in remote places, particularly for the seasonal migrant workers (*Regional level, health mediator, Focus group 1e*). It is stated that any initiatives by civil society remain limited. The function of a state mechanism and civil society is not equal at that point. This problem can be overcome only if public institutions take the initiative through common means (*Focus group 1e*).

For the rural and remote places, especially regarding the places where seasonal agriculture activities are carried out, there are several factors affecting migrants’ health such as electricity problem, environmental pollution, and special conditions like having a stream very close to the living area that can cause malaria. They all wait for solutions at the administrative levels (*Focus group 1a*). In addition, there are some issues such as family planning or birth control which stuck in the cultural barriers preventing

²⁵ For the details please see the previous report: Baglioni S., Caputo M. L., Laine J., Membretti A. (eds.), The impact of social and economic policies on migrants in Europe, MATILDE Deliverable 3.1 and 4.1, January 2021. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.4483950

healthcare professionals from bringing healthcare services to these people (*Focus group 1a; Focus group 1b, Focus group 1d*).

In terms of employment, residence location is the main issue in front of accessing formal employment. In addition to the limitations on employment of migrants in labour market, it seems to be even more difficult to employ immigrants with the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic especially in the civil society (*Informant 10*). Also, during the pandemic, even if some regulations are made, that is, layoffs have been suspended or banned, since most migrants work in irregular jobs, they have faced layoffs primarily and been unable to access even informal sectors (*Informant 9c*). Besides, what else was emphasized during the field research is the vulnerable groups and the need to do something especially for the singular women having children at home in need of care (*Informant 13b*).

If it is necessary to make a general evaluation and a short analysis about the access to resources regarding the period after Covid-19 pandemic, the main issue emphasized in terms of all kinds of services is having no access to internet service, lack of smart devices such as phones and tablets. Especially for those in need of psychological support, it has been very challenging due to lack of privacy at home:

"I am talking about foreign nationals, because they live in crowded houses and small houses, they could not create a suitable environment and the time period for these meetings to be healthy. There was always someone with them, it was disturbing, there were people accompanying and warning them. Therefore, the interviews could not be carried out properly, as I said, most of them did not have internet and devices." (*Informant 17*)

However, it also requires making special reference to the education of migrant children during the pandemic. Children already represent a sensitive group, when the situation of being immigration or refugee is added, it becomes more vulnerable basically:

"Families with limited socio-economic resources especially say that they do not have the necessary materials for their children to need distance education. The attendance of the children was also interrupted. The fact that their mother tongue is Arabic and learning a different language already indicates a difficult process. This also expresses inequality." (*Informant 9a*)

As the gap between local children and refugee children has widened due to the pandemic, it is worrying that the school, which has an important role in the socialization of immigrant children, is out of their lives. In addition, the fact that the support mechanism for children was weakened in matters such as obtaining guidance service, detecting negligence or abuse, and health monitoring were also emphasized in the field study (*Informant 16*).

6. CONCLUSION

Syrians are still not regarded as a permanent part of the current and future society in Turkey. Difficulties experienced in the field vary with respect to age, gender, and previous experience. Thus, with the pandemic, existent economic difficulties in Turkey increased and Syrians are there to be used as a scapegoat for continuous problems (Uyan-Semerçi and Erdoğan, 2020). The anxiety and the fear of the pandemic is no help.

Despite the improvements especially over the last five years in the fields of providing basic access to education, healthcare services, and to the labour market, the field research primarily points out the challenges caused by the "residence location" in implementation. Especially for the Syrians to whom foreign identification numbers are assigned, like all other legally resident foreign nationals, can utilize formal services only in their residence location. The interviews indicate the difficulties raised by the requirement of registration in the province of residence to provide services to those under TPS, mainly Syrians. This basic requirement primarily has a direct effect on the scope of informal migrant labour. Since Bursa is an

important hub for agricultural, industrial, and service sectors, many migrants prefer to stay unregistered in the province to find a job. This then also causes immigrants to remain out of enjoying their rights to reach public education and health services.

Some alternative implementations have been applied to substitute the disadvantages and to facilitate accessing services, especially in healthcare and social support. Health mediators who provide mobile services, especially in rural areas, with the coordination of international umbrella organizations is among these implementations. They do not only provide health services to registered migrants living in remote places and working in rural areas, but also services to those unregistered in the province and even undocumented. In terms of social assistance, particularly municipalities at both regional and local levels, rather than public administrations affiliated with central administration, seem to be more flexible to meet the needs of the migrant population residing in locations in their responsibility, sometimes by putting aside the formal procedures to help especially those in more fragile situations. However, according to data provided in the field, the municipalities are still in need of additional resources to compensate for the burden which puts extra pressure on their budget due to the increase in the regional and/or local population they have to provide public services. Thus, the quality of services provided to the migrant population is primarily related to the available sources.

Nevertheless, the language barrier is still a considerable challenge for migrant children at school age to enjoy their given rights. This both seem to cause them to stay behind the locals at the same age, and to have an impact on the schooling rate as well as being bullied in the schools. With the emergence of the pandemic, the gap between local children and refugee children has widened. The pandemic has also had a dramatic effect on migrant children who do not attend school in different regards. The support mechanism for children has been weakened in matters such as obtaining guidance service, detecting negligence or abuse, and health monitoring; these all were emphasized in the field of study.

One of the main conclusions to be drawn from the field study is also there is a special need to consider the migrant population which still does not have any access to crucial services. It is obvious that particularly for those residing in remote and rural places, informal communication channels make their access to information about the services easier. However, some interviewees have still been worried about the groups they cannot reach. So, this somehow brings the issue to the subject of the implementation and the methods as well as the allocation of available resources to more comprehensive and sustainable projects. To imagine one's future in the society one is living in is vital for feeling secure and to imagine a common future for all the members who are living in that society is a symbol of social cohesion. However, in the case of Turkey, there is still a long way ahead, and acknowledging the political, social, and economic restrictions, mainstreaming the social cohesion for any and every project that is planned is necessary.

SWOT ASSESSMENT

In the Turkish case, the country is home to the world's largest refugee population regarding the presence of the high number of Syrians. However, the registered Syrian population, more than 3,6 million in figures, is considered under temporary protection in legal terms due to the country's maintaining the geographical limitation to the 1951 Convention. Therefore, the intensive policy-making process in the last ten years has focused mostly upon the policies and regulations on the Syrian population.

Although the social policies are based on a rights-based perspective, it does not result in social cohesion in the long run because of the logic of "temporariness". Many programs and projects and their implementation are still provided with the logic of emergency support. Such perspective is the most important hindrance to regard Syrians as a permanent part of the current and future society in Turkey. Besides, the difficulties raised by the requirement of registration in the province of residence to provide services to those under TPS, mainly Syrians, creates a considerable weakness and has a direct effect in enjoying their rights to reach social services, primarily public education and healthcare.

Concerning social inclusion, the design of public education can be regarded as a facilitator. Yet, this somewhat depends on individual endeavours and good intentions, whereas the difficulty is not only about learning the language, but rather, poverty, bullying, and exclusion. Social inclusion and active participation

in some areas are better exemplified; still, in some areas, the lack of contact result in a situation as “living as two separate groups”, where the locals and immigrants live in the same locality, region, country but with very limited contact.

Competition among the most vulnerable groups concerning social assistance and job opportunities carries the risks of further tensions. Whereas the fragile economic situation of the country has already been an important source of this competition, the pandemic makes the situation more complicated and makes social assistance to immigrants more visible in a negative sense.

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1. METHODOLOGY

Interviews have been carried out from January 19th to April 1st 2021. The focus group took place on March 18th. A second focus group was changed in an interview as one participant cancelled, and another was absent. As the Covid-19 pandemic did not allow us to travel to Scotland and meet the interviewees personally, the interviews as well as the focus groups have been carried through Teams video calls. Fourteen out of fifteen interviewees consented to being recorded and agreed to us using their anonymised transcript, the remaining one preferred the researcher to take notes. Their decision to be recorded has been often related to the wish of facilitating the researchers who are non-English mother tongue speakers. Twelve interviews have been carried out by Dr Maria Luisa Caputo with the support of Dr Martina Lo Cascio and three interviews jointly by Prof. Baglioni and Dr Caputo. The three researchers were present in the focus group. The summaries have been compiled by Dr Lo Cascio and Dr Caputo.

The profiles of the interviewees were differentiated: three interviewees were migrants, two from an EU country (non-EU at the time of their migration), one a Syrian refugee from the Resettlement program; two interviewees were representatives of the Local Authorities, and one was employed by the local authorities for the Syrian Resettlement program; two were English teachers; an interviewee was a representative of a union; another was a worker in the third sector; two were representatives of an organisation of local enterprise; and, finally, three were experts, one of them an academic, the two others from a local think tank.

The interviewees were chosen to include different types of actors – migrant/non-migrants; different types of migrants; people who work with migrants in different fields; economic actors. The impossibility of accessing the field significantly limited our possibility of reaching the interviewees through informal channels making particularly challenging reaching migrants, community organisations and informal networks. Seven interviewees were based in the Outer Hebrides or their work had an impact there; two – an expert and a unionist – had respectively a Scottish and a UK perspective; six interviewees were based or working in North Ayrshire, in the mainland. Very few information was unfortunately collected about the island of Arran or the other islands of North Ayrshire. At the time of the fieldwork, the interviewees were living under a Covid-19 determined lockdown and many of them were remote working.

Interviewees had varied familiarity with interviews or focus groups as research tools. Most of them fully understood the aim and the structure of the performance, some insisted on participating in the interviews as a ‘group’ (multi-respondents), with different outcomes. In one case, the participants were professionally hierarchal related and therefore we assume there were limits to some of them willingness to freely talk. In the other case, we had the impression that the two persons were enriching the information with complementary knowledge and perspectives. All the interviewees provided their informed consent and were aware that their transcript or notes were going to be anonymised. Both focus groups had missing participants. The first one is because of an emergency. A second one was scheduled around Easter, and we suppose this was an issue, two out of three confirmed participants did not attend. The only attendant accepted in being interviewed and provided us with rich information.

Remote fieldwork seemed to provide easier access to more structured actors and organisations while hiding informality and making less structured actors very difficult to reach. Accordingly, the access to the actors was following this structured vs informal dynamic, so that Syrian refugees – whose path into the new society is supported by the public authorities and therefore is more ‘structured’ – and the actors who work with them were the most accessible. We think that such an outcome in accessing the fieldwork created a rapid interview saturation situation for most topics except the question of civic participation, citizenship rights and political participation. Some additional topics and notably the migrant entrepreneurship and the

role of social economy were also explored at this stage to bridge this fieldwork with the incoming one (WP4 4.3 – Migrants' economic impact).

Remote fieldwork also meant that we did not experience our two fields – North Ayrshire and the Western Islands – in terms of accessibility and we could not have a personal appraisal of how this impacted the actors interviewed. Not carrying face-to-face interviews, we partially neglected the impact of the physical space in our analysis, notably in relation to migrants' mobility challenges. Those challenges are particularly significant in the insular areas. North Ayrshire mainland is distant less than one hour from Glasgow by car or public transport, nevertheless it also includes the large island of Arran connected by ferry and other smaller islands. The Outer Hebrides are a group of islands spread along more than 200 km and connected by ferries and bridges. This spatial dimension is discussed in this report notably in relation to social inclusion and services provisions.

2. SOCIAL INCLUSION/POLARIZATION BETWEEN TCNS AND LOCALS IN SCOTTISH RURAL AND REMOTE AREAS

Inclusion of newcomers in small communities such as rural and remote ones may take advantage from the small size which facilitates sense of belonging and engagement, developing social connections while also easing the intervention of public actors to solve local problems as community members can have a quicker and more direct access to them (Dahl and Tufte 1973). James Coleman (1998), in his seminal book on social theory and social capital has discussed the role that 'closed' communities play to maintain people committed to common goals and practicing in-group trust.

However, the same 'bounded community' mechanisms that nurture in-group trust, loyalty, and reciprocity can obstruct the inclusion of new members, such as newcomers or immigrants. For them to become part of the new community there have to be opportunities available which are either offered by public authorities or/and by social groups (which can be part of the migrants' diaspora or locals). Both are important vehicles of inclusion and therefore of social cohesion, given that they serve as buffers securing that the novelty brought in by the new arrivals does not disrupt the hosting community, while also encouraging the 'rooting' of the 'new' segment of the population in the host settlement.

In other circumstances, such as when the remote area is an island, there could also be specific mechanisms at play which facilitate social inclusion of newcomers: contrary to the prejudicial assumption according to which the remote nature of an island speaks of its inhabitants reluctance to accept newcomers, islands are by geographical connotation lands 'open to visitors', and islanders – as one of our interviewees said – for their everyday needs or for their profession (e.g. fishery) are used to deal with people from 'elsewhere'. Hence, there could also be a 'positive' island effect on social inclusion.

To explore this potential 'island effect' on social inclusion we will focus here on the Outer Hebrides, a group of islands distant more than five hours from the mainland, their inhabitants – apart from a small concentration in Stornoway where about one/fifth of the total population live – are dispersed among the 15 inhabited islands.

In addition, we will explore potential processes of social polarisation – understood as a situation in which the extremes of a distribution – in terms of incomes, access to housing, etc. – are growing and where there is a missing or shrinking 'middle' (Koch et al., 2019). Social polarisation also invokes the notion of spatial segregation and the increasing retraction of the population into two (or more) groups that live essentially parallel lives (ibid.).

SOCIAL INCLUSION AND POLARISATION BETWEEN MIGRANT AND LOCAL POPULATION IN THE WESTERN ISLANDS

A cultural and historical meaning seems to us to be deeply enrooted in the definition of 'us' in the Outer Hebrides: being born on the islands, or living there for generations, and being able to speak Gaelic and to

participate in the local culture. In this sense, non-islanders include a wide range of the migrant population – British and European migrants as well as TCNs.

“It depends how we define migrants, are we saying migrants across Europe or other parts of the world or migrants from the south of England. Is a migrant someone who has another cultural experience?”
(WP3SCOT15)

In our interviews this wide notion of otherness prevailed on more specific ones based e.g. on nationality, religion, or ethnicity. This has been highlighted through the example of the Gaelic speaking Muslim “Pakistani” community – descendent of Pakistani migrants arrived in the islands after the WWII – who are fully part of the local community (WP3SCOT11; WP3SCOT09). On the one side, such a comprehensive notion of otherness seems to define a nonporous border between local and non-local, as stated by an interviewee: *“There is a clear line between the people of the island and the others”* (WP3SCOT05). On the other side, it seems to lead to an inclusive approach to diversity that may help us to understand why, for example, the Outer Hebrides communities – described as religious oriented (WP3SCOT05), notably Presbyterian and Catholic in Benbecula and the southern islands – supported the creation of a mosque in Stornoway. The mosque was an existing project aimed at the local Muslim community that has been achieved after the arrival of the refugee population, on the push of this new population’s needs (WP3SCOT09). The support of the non-Muslim population included also concrete help in building and painting the mosque (ibid.).

Coherently, the Western Islands have been portrayed by the interviewees as a region where xenophobia is not present (WP3SCOT02, WP3SCOT05, WP3SCOT09, WP3SCOT11, WP3SCOT15) and where there is a shared understanding of the importance of working age migrants and of migrant families – internal and international – for the sustainability of the local communities (WP3WP4UK11, WP3WP4UK15). Nevertheless, prejudices toward migrant groups (WP3SCOT05, WP3SCOT11), including UK nationals (WP3SCOT11), and infrequent xenophobic incidents have been described by some interviewees (WP3SCOT02 and WP3SCOT05). Appreciation for the response of the authorities – on an official as well as on personal basis – to an episode of xenophobic verbal violence has been highlighted by an interviewee (WP3SCOT02), showing how those events are strongly condemned by the community. These episodes did not increase in 2016, such as the Brexit referendum did not result in the Outer Hebrides – who predominantly voted for remaining in the European Union – in a rise of xenophobia against EU citizens (ibid.). Nevertheless, an interview noticed how the Brexit vote had a strong impact on the local European population:

“Brexit put a sense of fear in them (...) It took a lot of work to convince them they are welcome”
(WP3SCOT16)

In the general framework of a family-oriented society (WP3WP4UK04), *“the main route to integration is through family”* (WP3SCOT11). In this sense, migrant children or children of migrant families have been described facilitators and school – and notably Gaelic schools (ibid.) – and playgroups (WP3SCOT05) as playing a key role. As remarked by Stachowski (2020) “For families with children, family life played an important role in creating different conditions for participation in various social areas, other than one’s own ethnic group. (...) The introduction of children into local educational and extracurricular institutions allowed the children to function as gate-openers for the adult migrants, granting them access into previously inaccessible social environments of the local community”.

Coherently, maternity and childcare emerge in the accounts of different interviewees as opportunities for inclusion (WP3SCOT02, WP3SCOT05, WP3SCOT09). According to an interviewee, among refugees the women are the fastest learners in ESOL classes, because of their opportunity to interact through their children’s activities e.g. in schools, sport events, etc. This different speed in learning English was at the basis of the decision of dividing classes by gender (WP3SCOT09). Maternity has also been described as a facilitator for relationships. In particular, a migrant described how difficult it was interacting with anyone else apart from her colleagues – mostly TCNs and EU migrants themselves – while working

from 8am to 8pm, and how after becoming an expecting mother she could meet and become friend with other women through the antenatal classes (WP3SCOT05). The birth of a child from a migrant mother as significant driver of friendship ties and social network variation has been explored before (Facchini, Patacchini, Steinhardt 2015). Yet, considering the small number of interviews, we cannot determine here if gender has a positive impact on migrant integration in the Outer Hebrides, we can only affirm that the intersection of gender and migration status were not described by the interviewees as overlapping exclusion factors.

To support a positive demographic trend in Western Islands and to make the communities sustainable also in term of dependency ratio, two key factors have been highlighted: the availability of work opportunities – in term of available positions and entrepreneurship opportunities – and affordable housing (WP3SCOT01, WP3SCOT07, WP3SCOT08 WP3SCOT14, WP3SCOT15) as those are essential preconditions to allow a new or returning population to settle in this region. Therefore, in the next paragraphs, we will explore migrants' access to work opportunities and housing.

In the general context of scarcity of new job opportunities, social capital seems to be a key factor in differentiating opportunities for locals and migrants. An interviewee observed how personal connections are relevant: positions may be created according to a specific person profile and overqualified migrants may not obtain a position (WP3SCOT02). The request of being able to speak Gaelic – notably in the public sector – can also act as a barrier to employment for the migrant population and as a means to prioritise the access of locals to those positions (WP3SCOT05).

Nevertheless, the interviewees succeeded in finding their path through social mobility and substantially improved their economic condition over the years (WP3SCOT02, WP3SCOT05). Migrant agency is appreciated by the locals according to an interviewee who notably remarked that "migrants are very welcome in the community because they are very industrious" (WP3SCOT16) They tend to improve their working position becoming managers and have ability to introduce innovation in local enterprises, like remarketing crab claws (ibid.).

Regarding the access to housing, strong competition exists on the islands between houses aimed at tourist purposes – both second homes and rental accommodation – and propriety available for inhabitants (locals and migrants). Furthermore, another relevant feature emerged from our interviews, such as the increasing attractiveness of the islands for a wealthy urban population over 50 years old or retired who wish for a change in their lives (WP3SCOT07, WP3SCOT08, WP3SCOT15). In this general context, the availability of affordable houses is scarce. The Local council is currently increasing its stock of social housing and the Trusts who oversee the community owned land, representing about three quarters of the surface of the islands (WP3SCOT10), are building affordable accommodations (WP3SCOT08, WP3SCOT10). No competition or conflict have been described between locals and migrants concerning public housing, many migrants live in council houses, and notably Syrian resettled refugees (WP3WP4UK07), and many Eastern Europeans (WP3WP4UK05). According to an interviewee, migrants are generally better than locals at saving money – that can be expected if we think to the remittances – and half of them had the opportunity to buy a house (WP3WP4UK03).

Finally, it is important to mention a relevant counter-narrative built at the microscale according to which the region is now at a turning point from degrowth to the incipit of a new growing (migrant) population – both locals returning and new migrants (WP3SCOT14, WP3SCOT15). This recent change would not be yet portrait by the data (currently estimations, as the past census was in 2011 and the next census will be held in 2022) or represented in the government policies. A study on this trend has been developed by a local research centre through an inquiry among the young population (people aged less than 40yo) living on the islands of Uist (CODEL 2019). No data exists to our knowledge for the remaining islands.

This change of direction seems to be linked to the Community Land Ownership initiatives – where 70 percent of the Western Islands population live (WP3SCOT15) – and their benefits on local communities in term of services, housing, opportunity, community life – as well as to a growing entrepreneurship deeply rooted in the community and for this reason more resilient e.g. to Covid-19 (ibid.). These very relevant changes, according to our interviewees, are only marginally impacted by migrants: their participation in the Community Trusts that managed the Land community owned or in the social enterprises is irrelevant

– either they do not participate at all, or the number are very small (WP3SCOT07, WP3SCOT08, WP3SCOT14, WP3SCOT15).

3. SOCIAL COHESION, SOCIAL CAPITAL AND SOCIAL INCLUSION: MIGRANTS IN SCOTTISH RURAL AND REMOTE AREAS

Having defined our understanding of social inclusion in the particular setting of remote Scottish islands, we will discuss here in more general terms how does social inclusion occur, and which opportunities are made available to facilitate the meeting of locals and immigrants. Firstly, however, we need to make a distinction in the multi-faceted category of migrants, given that their ‘inclusion’ needs differ among types of migrants.

To simplify our understanding, we propose to distinguish between migrants who have joined the UK and Scotland for economic purposes (economic migrants) and those whose reason for migration stems from the need to find protection from violence and persecution suffered at home (refugees or humanitarian-permit based immigrants). The former usually form parts of family and diasporic networks which in part do also account for migration, and therefore when arriving in Scotland can count on a robust set of ties and connections which do promote their social integration. Moreover, economic migrants normally have a job arranged before they reach Scotland or soon after their arrival, hence their social connections can also benefit from their working position. Furthermore, having migrated for economic reason, very often these migrants have had the time and opportunity to learn English at some degree before reaching the country, and hence are more capable of establishing connections on their own.

Refugees and migrants seeking humanitarian protection, and notably in the case of resettled refugees (as it is the case in our remote areas), do need to be furtherly supported in their seeking inclusion: they need to learn the language and they often lack literacy (WP3SCOT09, WP3SCOT13), their social connections of diasporic origin are more limited (also due to the dispersal scheme, even if they have relatives or friends in the country do not necessarily end up in the same place), and have usually not direct access to employment as soon as they enter the country.

SYRIAN REFUGEES’ SOCIAL INCLUSION IN SCOTTISH RURAL AND REMOTE AREAS

In this section, we focus our attention on refugee migrants from the Syrian Vulnerable Person Resettlement Scheme and their social inclusion in host communities. Asylum seekers are not considered here as they are dispersed by the Home Office in willing local authorities and none of them live in North Ayrshire nor in the Outer Hebrides according to the Home Office data for 2020²⁶. The Syrian refugees resettled in our regions are 201 in North Ayrshire and 34 in the Outer Hebrides. Very few people moved out. We know from our interviews that there are currently thirty-eight and six families (WP3WP4UK02, WP3SCOT09).

Overall, our interviews and the focus group portray a reality which seems to support the idea that the small size of a community and in some cases its ‘island’ nature favour social inclusion of newcomers, and in particular of refugees. An expert shared with us that the outcome of the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme in the Outer Hebrides made them change their mind on the possibility of resettling refugees in remotes areas (WP3SCOT01). While interviewees do not hide that the resettlement programme could encounter scepticism and even opposition from the local population (WP3SCOT06), a sense of proud as a community for being able to welcome those families in need was predominant in some regions, like in the Western islands (WP3WP4UK07). Obstructionist positions could be mitigated and contrasted by explaining to the most vocal opponents who the refugees were, and what sufferance they had to endure (WP3SCOT06). For example, in the case of a child running to hide after seeing an aeroplane particularly touched the local community, the whole neighbourhood was touched and tried to help.

²⁶ Asy_D11: Asylum seekers in receipt of section 95 support by local authority. Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets#local-authority-data>

“When [local] people know what people [refugees] have come from they are very welcoming (...) We had a child who saw an aeroplane coming over his head and he run to hide. It became an all-neighbourhood story. And this child did it very automatically. He got very feral and hid in the garden. All the neighbourhood asked: what can we do? How can we help? There is a lot of genuine affection” (WP3SCOT10).

But even small communities need organized efforts to facilitate social inclusion. Such organized efforts can be primarily led by public bodies, such as local authorities, or by civil society organisations, or realized jointly by the two types of actors. In addition to institutional or formal opportunities of socialisation and connections, newcomers can use also their own family or diasporic ties. Figure 1 summarises the different types of socialization opportunities available in our rural and remote places.

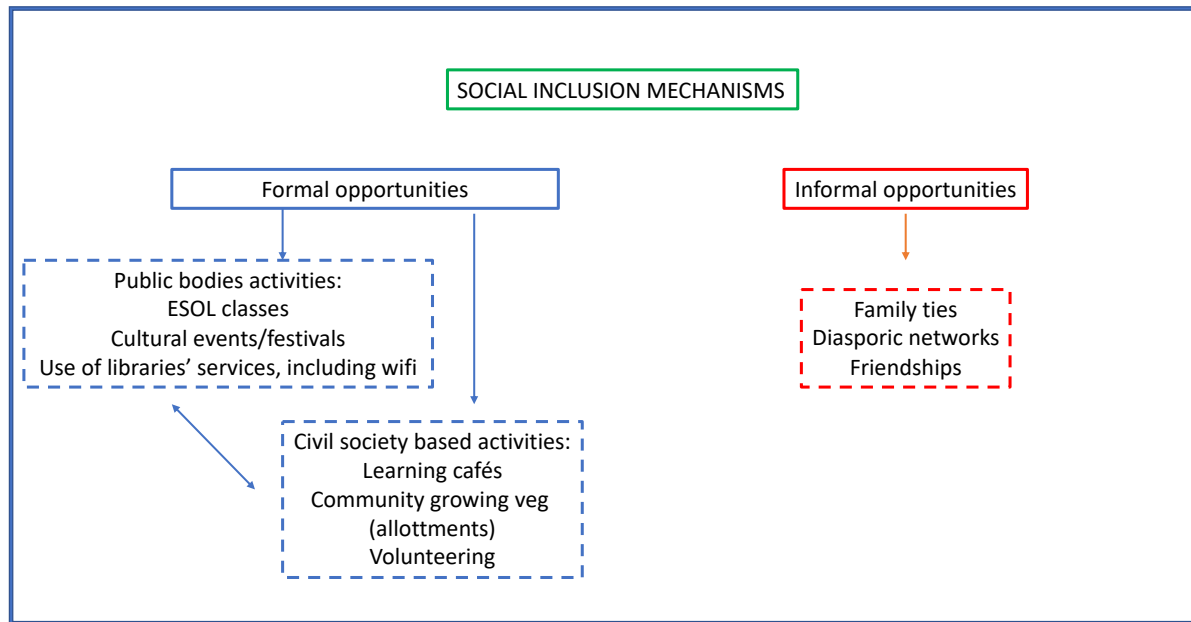


Figure 3. Social inclusion mechanisms in our rural and remote areas (Northern Ayrshire and the Outer Hebrides)

Formal opportunities are the result of the joint work of both public institutions, and in particular local authorities, and civil society organisations. Important opportunities to build trust and social capital among newcomers and locals are events which aim to promote the cultural encounter of the two groups, such as art and cultural festivals. Creativity is used by local authorities as an inclusion programme that treats traumatic experiences, as it offers refugees a space of self-expression, relaxation and creation which contributes to easing pain.

Culinary traditions notably serve as a tool to connect two diverse universes. As expressed by our interviewees, if given the opportunity, immigrants take proud to showcase their national food delicatessen, their hosting habits, in what becomes for them an occasion to promote the ‘good’ that there is in their homeland and in their own culture. While for the locals such occasions offer an important opportunity to publicly praise the newcomers and to symbolically make them feel part of the community. Finally, food exchange is recognized as a crucial vector of inclusion, as one of our interviewees said: *“there is always food involved [when you get together]”* (WP3SCOT14). An interviewee described how in an allotment, *“what do you eat?”* (WP3SCOT06) at lunch time break was a common way to start a conversation and explore each other’s culture (WP3SCOT06). Lunch invitations before Covid-19 were also a very common activity in a befriend scheme between locals and refugees organised by an interviewed ESOL team (WP3SCOT09). The pandemic deprived migrants and locals of those opportunities.

The local authority and community efforts to go at the encounter of the newcomers also include the organization of events in which local historic and cultural traditions are used to bridge with the immigrants: for example, when newcomers are presented with the characteristics of the Scottish tribes and castles and are asked to recount their own tribes and castles features (WP3SCOT14).

Another important formal opportunity to create connections are the ESOL classes, where newcomers make the invaluable skill of learning the country language, which is key to proper societal inclusion, but where they do also make social connections among them and between them and their teachers. The latter often keeps in contact with ESOL classes students also out of the class time. During the COVID pandemic, for example, when teaching moved to online delivery, with the by now well-known problem of lack of digital literacy and disengagement (WP3SCOT14), some of the ESOL lecturers also checked their students' wellbeing and could serve as contact points in case of need. From a refugee perspective learning English is viewed as the main key to enter the new society (WP3SCOT04) and not advancing as fast as expected is a common feeling among ESOL students. This is experienced with a high level of frustration and may cause disengagement from classes (WP3SCOT09).

In our rural and remote communities, the social encounters of locals and newcomers do also happen through the use of public allotments for growing community vegetables, fruits and flowers. The cultivation of public land side by side is an opportunity to simultaneously meet people and increase one's social capital while also acquiring growing skills which can be usefully repurposed also in a professional environment (WP3SCOT06). It does not require good language skills as *"it is always possible to explain by doing"* (WP3SCOT06). Moreover, according to our interviews the use of allotments has turned out to be an important instrument to cope with the social isolation and confinement regulations during the COVID pandemic (WP3SCOT12). In some cases—which we are planning to explore more in depth for WP5 fieldwork—growing groups and gardening take the form of social enterprises which are interested in hiring or working with migrants, coupling an economic profitability purpose with a social one (WP3SCOT14).

Civil society organisations also offer opportunities for socialisation through volunteering, which combines socialisation with skills' acquisition. Among the outcomes of volunteering the possibility of improving one's English is particularly appreciated along with the opportunity of supporting the refugee community, e.g. *"there was only two interpreters for fifty families"*²⁷ (WP3SCOT04); and to *"give something back"* to the local community (ibid.). However, when discussing how volunteering helps social inclusion, our interviews provide a more nuanced picture. Volunteering is sometimes a practice unknown to immigrants, one upon which cultural diversity represents a barrier, which can or cannot be overcome by explaining its meaning and social usefulness in the Scottish setting (WP3SCOT06). Nevertheless, as a volunteering is a key opportunity in studied region to enter the labour market (WP3SCOT02, WP3SCOT03, WP3SCOT06), volunteering programmes specifically aimed at New Scots are under consideration (WP3SCOT14) (see also Section 4).

The possibility of restarting working in the new country is a fundamental component of social inclusion (de Lima 2009; Zimmermann 2014, Kahanec and Zimmermann 2016). Our assessment of refugee participation in the labour market is very differentiated according to the regions. In the Western Islands, according to an interviewee, four men out of six families are currently in work – two of them in a field coherent with their previous work experience in Syria (WP3SCOT09). About the women, none is currently employed, one restarted high education in the local college but did not continue for personal reasons. In North Ayrshire, to our knowledge out of thirty-eight families only one person is employed full time (WP3SCOT04) while a few others work part-time in takeaways while being still on the benefit system (WP3SCOT10). Larger families and potential health problems among their members – they have been resettled in North Ayrshire notably because of the availability of larger accommodation and the proximity to hospitals (WP3WP4UK02) – can have an influence on this disparity. Additionally, according to an interviewee, state support seemed considered sufficient – especially for large families. Their choice to go back to work was not money driven but more ethically related to a position of dependence

²⁷ The actual number of the refugee families currently living in North Ayrshire is thirty-eight (WP3SCOT10).

“Benefits for me and my children were good (...) But after one year and half, one day I was walking, I noticed an old man, he was in 65 years old, I think. He was pushing a wheel bar on a building site. I thought, I am still X years old. And this old man is working, and he pays tax to the government and the government gives this money to me to stay at home. That is unfair, I have to work, I have to pay tax” (WP3SCOT04).

Several of the resettled refugees are families. Hence, social inclusion also needs to consider the needs of family components’ gender but also age. Activities that can speak to parents such as those mentioned earlier like cooking, growing vegetables, or knitting are less attractive to young people. Socialisation for them occurs, notably at school and after school. While more on the informal-civil society side are sports activities like football which offer social connections and fun to teenagers and children. A gender difference has been noticed by public bodies with girls going directly at home after school (WP3WP4UK07) and activities have been organised in order to support their opportunities for socialisation (ibid.). Gender oriented activities for adult – like *Talking men project* – are also offered.

In addition to those publicly provided opportunities that create social bonds among immigrants and locals, newcomers have a social life within their diasporic communities, interviewees depict such forms of infra-diaspora socialisations as very vibrant and persisting even during the COVID pandemic by means of phones (WhatsApp groups) or social media (WP3SCOT04, WP3SCOT09, WP3SCOT10, WP3SCOT14). This may lead soon to a more formal community organisation aimed at promoting Syrian culture and discovering Scottish one (WP3SCOT04).

When speaking about immigrants’ behaviours during the pandemic though, a few the interviewees mention that some of the refugees have a ‘fatalistic approach’ – related probably to the very challenging experiences they already had to overcome, notably war and displacement (WP3SCOT10, WP3SCOT13, WP3SCOT14). Because of this fatalism among some families there has been a weaker compliance with Covid-19 based social rules, causing sometimes the response of the neighbours, and potentially jeopardising the creation of social bonds with the local communities (WP3SCOT10).

Hence, our interview-based analysis of social cohesion and inclusion in our rural and remote areas gives us a picture of a community conscious of the challenges of newcomers’ inclusion, however well-equipped to respond to those challenges. The Syrian resettlement program comes with huge amount of resources²⁸ (WP3SCOT01). It has been well prepared, and the local communities have invested in this program (ibid.). The New Scots Refugee Integration Strategy and coherent local level policies have designed a range of instruments to reach out newcomers, with real opportunities of connection among communities. As pointed out by one of the interviewees from one of the local councils: *“we are aware that we need to develop community cohesion from below, get the community involved”* (WP3SCOT14).

Nevertheless, when asked about what the most important change had been brought in by the refugees in such communities, interviewees could only mention their ‘breaking the monoculture of our places’ and their value to increase cultural diversity. Whether that limited appreciation of immigration is an understanding shared by wider local audiences or not would make the object of our forthcoming investigation.

Obviously, the contribution of newcomers to enriching local cultures, traditions, and values, is an important aspect, yet no reference was made to the local development, to new skills and new professional visions or dynamism to an otherwise quite stagnant economic setting. According to an expert, the New Scots integration strategy is used by local authorities in a broader way and for a larger target group than

²⁸ According to the Home Office (2017): “The first 12 months of a refugee’s resettlement costs are fully funded by central government using the overseas aid budget. The Government has also provided an additional £10m ESOL funding to enhance the English language skills of adults to improve their resettlement and integration experience and employability. • For years 2-5 of the scheme there is £129m of funding available to assist with costs incurred by local authorities providing support to refugees under the VPRS. This is allocated on a tariff basis over four years, tapering from £5,000 per person in their second year in the UK, to £1,000 per person in year five. There is also an exceptional cases fund to assist the most vulnerable refugees. This is a substantial level of funding which enables local authorities to support these vulnerable people as they rebuild their lives in safe and secure surroundings, among supportive communities in the UK”.

refugees (WP3SCOT01), nevertheless none of the interviewees at local level mentioned any potential larger outcome of the rich set of tools and skills developed in the Syrian resettlement program.

ECONOMIC MIGRANTS' SOCIAL INCLUSION IN SCOTTISH RURAL AND REMOTE AREAS

We will explore here economic migrants' social inclusion in rural and remote areas notably through migrants' perspective and with a focus on migrants' agency. Therefore, we choose a biographic approach, and we will follow two women migration experiences.

Migrant A. joined the United Kingdom from a non-EU (now EU) country in the early 2000 with her partner. She found a job through an agency in a food transformation factory, so the location was decided by the job opportunity, not from any personal preference. She left her job when she became pregnant. She did not go back to her earlier employment factory, where her partner still works. She could afford to stay at home with their child and instead used her time to start volunteering for a local charity. Through this activity, she became aware of the services and opportunities available to migrants like her – like ESOL classes – and therefore she could develop a working experience in the UK in addition to the experience in the factory and in a different social and professional environment. Furthermore, the volunteering experience inspired her to restart her studies that later allowed her to access a qualified position in the public sector. Moreover, she and her partner helped some compatriots to find a job in the same factory and to move to Scotland acting in a sort of informal brokerage role between newcomers and a prospective employer and therefore they did play a positive 'integration' role. From a more personal viewpoint, they could also buy a house.

Migrant B. arrived in Scotland through a similar path such as from a non-EU (now EU) country, through an agency and to work for a food processing factory, although she had a university degree obtained in her home country. She left her job in Scotland for the same reason of the earlier migrant, pregnancy, and maternity. Her leave lasted only one year as she could not afford to go back to work as she was single mother. She found a position in the public sector as a low skilled worker. She could improve her condition doing internal application. She had many different positions inside the same public body, and she is now in a qualified position. She did not know anyone apart from her colleagues while she was working in the factory and given her long working time (8am-8pm) she did not have opportunities to meet other people. Still, she met a group of expecting mothers through the antenatal classes that are since close friends and other parents through her child activities. She previously lived in a council house, but she now left it for new accommodation.

Those two stories seem to us to be quite successful in terms of social inclusion. The two migrants arrived in a rural Scottish area to work in food processing. As an expert pointed out, there is an overlapping of the importance of some sectors in rural areas – notably agriculture, healthcare; construction; food processing (small manufactures) – and shrinking population (WP3SCOT01). They have been recruited through an agency that recruits abroad as the employers could not hire anyone from the local population. *"They try hard, but local people do not want to do this job"* (ibid.). During the period in the factory, their relationship with the local community was weak. According to an interviewee, the need for migrants to work hard to send remittances to family and community in the country of origin is a main obstacle to inclusion as it prevents them from participating in social events and activities (WP3SCOT16).

The two women worked in lower position compared to their skills and share in their stories the presence of a turning point. For the migrant A this moment corresponded to her volunteering experience that gave her the keys to "enter" the local community in terms of knowledge, relationships, opportunities. Volunteering is a strategic tool for social inclusion in our region, although not all immigrants can afford it as they may need to work, have care duties, or other activities which take priority (WP3SCOT05). For migrant B this turning point started with maternity – that made her quit the job at the factory and allowed her to build her social networks. As for migrant B, a strong will to change their condition (WP3SCOT04, WP3SCOT05) as well as migrants' cultural capital seem to us essential to their possibility to seek work, training or learning opportunities and change their economic status. They finally both acquired a better

position and Migrant A and her partner were also trusted to recruit from their compatriot's networks. They accessed the housing market through the council housing stock (at least in one case) and the change in their socio-economic status corresponded to a change in their habitation, showing a link between social and spatial patterns. Hence, our migrant stories show that individual agency when combined with a set of supportive opportunities play a personal enabling role.

"There is a tendency to present migrant workers as homogenous, lacking in agency and invariably as victims of the system. Their 'migrant labour' identity is privileged over all other forms of identity with little acknowledgement of the ways in which their personal, social and cultural background may be mobilised and shape their experiences in particular circumstances" (Lima, Wright 2007, p.394). In this sense, it is important to remind that migrants are 'multi-positioned', such as they are not simply defined by sets of binary identities – e.g. migrant/local, female/male, foreigner/national, etc. – but they actively mobilise those identities in a particular context, for choice and sometimes for constrain. "Positioning is something strategic, a coalition, a way of resistance, a precursor of agency and yet and at the same time something contingent and relational" (ibid.). This mobilisation may have different outcomes. In those biographies, it resulted in an "empowered ways of understanding and doing" (ibid.) that is generally referred to as migrant agency.

4. ACTIVE PARTICIPATION AND CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS

Migrants' civic participation is seen as a key indicator of social inclusion since it can offer a valuable occasion for network building for migrants as well as it facilitates the formation of social ties with the local population (Lessard-Phillips, 2017). At United Kingdom scale, and for all migrant groups civic participation increases with time spent in the UK and, overall, migrants who have been in the country for more than 10 years have similar rates of civic participation to the UK-born (Lessard-Phillips, Fajth, Fernandez-Reino 2020). We explored in the previous sections the importance of civic participation and notably volunteering for migrants' social inclusion. We will deepen here our understanding by exploring refugees' and economic migrants' participation in different types of groups and projects as well as exploring their potential exclusion.

Some of the Syrian refugees seemed to start volunteering soon after their arrival (the resettlement program started only five years ago). This can be explained by the support of the resettlement program team in finding opportunities but also by resettled refugees generally accessing benefits within a few weeks (WP3WP4UK02) allowing them not to have to urgently look for a job. For example, a refugee interviewed was volunteering both in support of other refugees and for the National Health Service during the Covid-19 pandemic to help delivering drugs at people's homes. For the resettled community, the volunteering consisted in interpreter/cultural mediator activities – e.g. helping with English classes, with administrative tasks. Through volunteering the refugees became a bridge person between the resettled community and the local society – e.g. supporting other refugees in their research for a job.

"I help the council team to support refugees like me, they don't have English, they don't know the rules, the law, the life rules in the UK. I help them with the teaching, English teaching. (I help them) filling in the forms – if someone wants to apply for a professional license or travel documents, I go to their home and help them to apply and translate the letters. (...) Because when I came here, I needed to someone to help me, because a new culture, a new country, a new law, new rules. Europe is not like our culture Here in the UK tis before I came here. (...) In my town I know everyone, what they like, what do they do, we communicate with each other. Here in the UK this communication was not possible to find in the culture. It was hard for somebody to help me when I needed help. So, after I increased my English skills and I started to understand and speak English I said I need to help the people who are like me when I did not understand English, so I started to help them (...). At the end of the day, we are human being we have to help each other" (WP3SCOT04).

Through volunteering the refugees became a bridge person between the resettled community and the local society – e.g. supporting other refugees in their research for a job.

“We cannot stay at home, doing nothing and getting money for others – I mean benefits. We do not like that. It is better to work and pay tax and communicate with the people here. (...) My friend phoned me yesterday, he told me ‘I have been here for X years. I didn’t do anything. I cannot do that; I need to find a job. But I am X years old. I am not a good learner at school I need to mix with the people, I need to hear the people and communicate with them to improve my English. I need to find job’”. I said, “Let me find out if I can help you”. (...) I phone them (a company) and told them my friend story (...) “my friend has X experience, he has only one problem, he cannot understand English very well, there is any chance to find job with you?” (...) I told them “He told me he does need money; he can work for free for one year just to learn English” (...) So, as a volunteer I am going to go to his home to his CV and send to the company email”. (ibid.)

In North Ayrshire, other relevant initiatives among the refugee population include their participation in a large allotment (1.7 hectares) with other volunteers from different organisations. However, the refugees’ participation in this project generated opposition among some other volunteers and therefore it became necessary to openly discuss it. It has been through the discussion of the reasons that brought those Syrian people to the UK that locals became aware about the experiences those refugees passed through and they could therefore understand their long and difficult path. As an outcome of such a discussion the community developed a positive environment nurtured also by ties between local and refugee volunteers (WP3SCOT06). Syrian women from the resettled population participated in the allotment notably during school time. Children come along when they are not in school and they have got a dedicated play area. The organisation of the work is agreed among the volunteers in the morning meeting and personal initiatives are encouraged and supported. The food produced is brought home by the volunteers (ibid.). This practice is aimed at tackling food poverty that is an important issue in Scotland²⁹. Propositions coming from refugees to cultivate vegetables used in Syrian cuisine has been supported, becoming the occasion for them to share their culture and skills. Because of Covid-19 the allotment has been closed to most volunteers for many months.

As previously mentioned, economic migrants have fewer opportunities to volunteer. Nevertheless, many examples of their volunteering-based civic participation emerged from the interviews. For example, we have met with evidence about European migrants volunteering in food banks where they cook meals (WP3SCOT06) or in the local Citizens Advice Bureau (WP3SCOT02). The Citizens advice is a charity aimed at helping people solving common problems related to a large range of issues – benefits, work, money, consumers’ issues, family, housing, law and courts, immigration, and health. One of our migrant interviewees was volunteering in this charity by providing advice on a range of issues for the local population (ibid.). Such an experience provides the migrant volunteer with opportunities to acquire a deeper understanding of the functioning of their ‘new’ society as well as to act as a referent for the local community. Moreover, such a form of volunteering makes newcomers aware of opportunities, allows them to build networks and trust with locals.

The participation at parents-led playgroups emerges from our interviews as another form of civic participation that contributes to the development of networks and trust between migrants and locals. A playgroup is a regular meeting of a group of preschool children at a particular place, organised by parents as supervised playtime (WP3SCOT02 and WP3SCOT02). Playgroups have been described as a way of meeting other parents and building ties with the local community, an essential opportunity for many migrants who do not necessarily have any time to participate in leisure groups or volunteer.

Faith and ethnic groups may also constitute a form of civic participation and a bridge between migrants and the local community in many ways. “Religious identity and participation in public religious life can facilitate the inclusion of recent migrants and strengthen their sense of belonging vis-à-vis the host

²⁹ In 2019-2020 16 percent of people lived in households with marginal, low or very low food security. Data from Scottish Government Statistics on Poverty. <https://data.gov.scot/poverty/#Poverty>

country” (Sarli, Mezzetti 2020). Yet, in European literature, religious affiliation tends to be considered a marker of social distance and a factor of disadvantage in the interaction with the local population (ibid.). Nevertheless, across European countries, both public institutions and civil society started considering religious communities as potential allies in promoting social cohesion. In our interviews, participation in religious groups seems to act as an enabler of social inclusion. Firstly, volunteering activities are often linked to local churches e.g. in the case of foodbanks or playgroups (WP3WP4UK02). Furthermore, occasionally migrants participate in the local religious group as they share the same or similar religious affiliation than locals – it is the case for example of some Polish migrants in the southern part of the Outer Hebrides (WP3SCOT15, WP3SCOT16). Migrants’ participation in the local religious community is also shown by the religious marriages celebrated between locals and migrants (WP3SCOT16). Additionally, in the case of the Western Isles’ Mosque, local co-religionist (local Muslim population) and migrants constituted a group and worked together with the support of non-Muslim locals to the creation of a religious space (WP3SCOT09). All those activities allowed migrants and the local population to encounter and to build a relation of trust.

Finally, two caveats must be mentioned. Firstly, our assessment of migrants’ inclusion in our two case study areas is not comprehensive. This is a result of having to carry out this fieldwork from remote due to the Covid pandemic travel limitations (see Methodology). In fact, we are aware that other migrant communities follow different paths of civic participation from what we have illustrated in this report, and we are aware as well that a large component of civic engagement occurs informally (e.g. among ethnic diasporas’ meetings on face to face or on social platforms) which is difficult to detect in a fieldwork from remote. For example, according to one of our interviewees the creation of a local Syrian organisation aimed at promoting both Syrian culture among non-refugee local population and Scottish culture among refugees is in progress.

“Two weeks ago, we started a small Syrian community group in Ayrshire. Every Saturday it has its own meeting. So, we are thinking to register this community group with the government (...) The main thing is to help them (the other refugees) to increase their English (...) Visiting the historical places in Scotland and UK (...) and Arabic food, invite Scottish people to try it”. (WP3SCOT04)

Moreover, further ethnic or national organisations that likely involve migrants are present in North Ayrshire according to our interviewees (WP3SCOT12, WP3SCOT14) – a Polish community group, Thai women community group and a Cantonese one – but their activities, migrants’ participation and their impact could not be captured during this fieldwork and need to be further investigated.

Finally, notably in the Outer Hebrides, civic participation takes the form of communities-lead organisations aimed at reclaiming the ownership of the land and organising its use – those organisations, often in the form of trusts, own more than three quarter of the Outer Hebrides. *“Community landowners see their function as bringing about the renewal of their place, its people, its built and natural heritage. Renewal embraces the social and economic development of the place, and the enrichment of the life, environment, and culture of that place. This happens under the direction of the people of that place, through their participation and ownership of key decisions”* (representative of the Community Landowners in Scotland, cit. in Rennie 2019 p.1). According to our interviewees, migrants do not seem to actively participate in those very prominent community projects (WP3SCOT07, WP3SCOT08, WP3SCOT11, WP3SCOT15). However, this information will be further investigated in WP4 when we hope to discuss this important point – also from a symbolic point of view – directly with those organisations.

5. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF SERVICES

In this section, we will explore the access to services for migrants, notably social and health services with lens on remote areas and using a two-way approach. On the one side, we will focus on how service provision supports (or not) migrants' settling in rural and remote areas. On the other side, we consider how migrants' presence impact on those services – by working for those services or using them – if they promote changes to the type of service needed, and whether such changes can serve to facilitate the settlement in the same areas of other migrants – including here UK nationals (i.e. infra-UK migration).

Access to services seems an important retention factor and affect migrants' decision to settle in a specific area (de Lima and Wright 2009). In this sense, fundamental aspects are the availability of appropriate services; the provision of accessible information to navigate through services; mechanisms for migrant users' voices and engagement in service planning and provision; access to culturally and gender sensitive services. Nevertheless, more analysis is needed to understand how the social systems will adapt and “the extent to which these ‘new’ areas will mature into places of settlement” (McAreavey 2012, p. 489).

In Scottish rural and remote areas access to services can be challenging. A spread territory largely unpopulated makes it challenging for the local administration to provide coherent access to services for all the population. Community based initiatives try to fill this gap in some sectors. As an interviewee said,

“the further you go, more challenges you will encounter; the more remote the more social enterprises you will find” (WP3SCOT11).

In this sense, space and scale do specially matter here. Our two fields – North Ayrshire and the Western Islands – are very different in terms of accessibility to services, moreover there is also a certain degree of heterogeneity within these areas. North Ayrshire is composed by a large area on Scottish mainland distant less than one hour by car or public transport from Glasgow, the largest Scottish urban centre, and by the large island of Arran and some smaller islands among those Great Cumbraes – Great Cumbraes and Arran being the only inhabited island to our knowledge.

The Outer Hebrides are a group of islands which the inhabited ones are spread around 200 km from North to South. Ferry connections link notably three groups of islands: Lewis and Harris (physically the same island) in the North; North Uist, Benbecula, South Uist and other small islands mostly connected between them by bridges at the centre; and Barra and other small islands in the South. The entire local authority is classified as rural but, according to an interviewed expert, if one lives in Stornoway (that represents the ‘centre’ and is an urban context) or in a peripheral area it does change significantly in terms of opportunities to access services given that those living in peripheral areas must travel much longer even to access basic services. Hence, rightly, that expert suggested that criteria to define rurality would need to be reconsidered (WP3SCOT15). In terms of services, this structuration of the territory means different challenges at a very local level and a different impact on migrants. Migrants in those very remote areas generally contribute to keeping services running both because they work in those services and/or because they use them (WP3SCOT01).

Because of the demographic profile of our regions and notably of the Outer Hebrides – that have the highest dependency ratio, 71.1, among all the Scottish local authorities³⁰ – migrants' presence (including here British nationals, EU nationals and TCNs) contributes to the sustainability of services notably in small and remote communities: e.g. they contribute to keep nurseries and schools open (WP3SCOT01, WP3SCOT15) or to maintain a local based midwife (WP3SCOT15). It also means retaining work positions or eventually allowing the opening of new ones in those strategic sectors such as health and education, positions that are potentially available for both locals and migrants. Keeping those services in the

³⁰ Data from the Convention of the Highlands and Islands, 26 October 2020, *Population and fragile communities. Demographic challenges in the Highlands and Islands – A focus on peripheral and fragile areas* – Paper 6.

community is crucial for maintaining those small communities alive also in cultural terms and for their attractiveness toward new migrants at working age and with children (ibid.).

“in the fishing community, a lot of people came from Poland and Eastern European countries and have settled. Their children are at primary school. The most important thing is the working age of migrants. People who come to a community of a younger working age, it can be seen they bring a real richness and diversity which is beautiful. (...) If they come to a community who they recognise who have a culture of its own, they assimilate very well as well as bringing their own richness and variety. If they settle and have a family, then those children will probably go to Gaelic education, and you will see a fantastic progression” (WP3SCOT15).

Some sectors strategically rely on migrants and since the beginning of the current century notably on EU migrants. According to a unionist interviewed, this is the case notably of the social care sector (WP3SCOT03) – a matter devolved to the Scottish government – that includes among others childcare and youth care, community work, counselling, housing support, occupational therapy, residential cares, supporting independent living.

Migrants in public service help fellow nationals or people in similar situation and the community see them as essential points (WP3SCOT01) – this applies according to our interviews to all categories of migrants, economic migrants, or refugees, TCNs or EU migrants (WP3SCOT02, WP3SCOT04). They may also create a safe space for their fellow nationals to ask for questions or help. It is notably the case where migrants are employed in sensitive sectors and/or for a sensitive public: a clear example is the choice of a refugee woman to work as interpreter to accompany refugee families in health procedures and meetings (WP3SCOT10).

Interpreters are not the only positions in our regions directly opened to provide services for migrants. In the past five years, in the framework of the Syrian Vulnerable People Resettlement Scheme many positions have been opened to follow different aspects of the public support to those migrants – notably in the sector of health, housing and language provision (WP3SCOT10). The number of ESOL teachers were also increased to respond to the specific needs of this population – notably in term of skills (e.g. literacy) but also of orienting the learning process toward the migrant personal goals – more independence in everyday life, employability, etc. (WP3SCOT09). Most of those positions were thought to last for five years, but they are likely to be reconfirmed (WP3SCOT12) in view of a renewal of the resettlement programme.

As previously mentioned, we are not aware of any project building on learned experiences by all Scottish local councils to increase all migrants’ accessibility to key services like health, education, and housing. The main broad effect we are aware of is a change in the public authorities’ communication with an increased use of migrants’ languages that can be related to the implementation of the New Scots strategy (WP3SCOT01). An expert for example observed that public libraries now have leaflets in different languages (ibid.). This is aimed at filling the gap between TCNs and locals in access and fruition of public services.

Nevertheless, our interviewees relate problems with the accessibility of services with the lack of awareness about such services being (WP3SCOT02). This may be related to newcomers’ experience in their country of origin where given services may not exist, or it can be due to the social isolation experienced in the new country, or to their inability to understand leaflets or other tools of communication in the new language. Such unawareness can also affect the accessibility of services directly aimed at migrants like ESOL classes (WP3SCOT01) as in one of the migrant biographies previously explored where the person for six years remained unaware of the possibility of attending an English class. Building relationships with locals and volunteering seemed to be key elements to access information about service provisions.

Additionally, difficulties to access health services because of the language barrier have been described by some interviewees – e.g. with the case of a migrant from a Baltic country needing an interpreter and the local NHS requesting an Eastern European migrant to translate (WP3SCOT02).

“What I do find difficult is to get people to use interpreters (...) In the (health) system, you know it is your responsibility to provide a translator. It is part of your job; it is not the person problem. In the Ayrshire and Arran, you get a lot of notices ‘get your translator’. To get a translator at an optician or dentists’ appointment, it is incredibly difficult for some reason. (...) If you look at NHS policy this is completely incorrect. I am not sure it is related to racism; it is just ignorance; they do not know how to do it” (WP3SCOT10)

In general, the lack of local interpreters in the NHS services – interpreters’ presence needs to be booked in advance through a centralised service across Scotland – may result in challenges for migrants’ accessibility to health services, notably during emergencies and in remote areas. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the importance of guaranteeing migrants’ access to health services including mental health services for the wellbeing of the person but also of the community has been enhanced. Finally, accessibility of public transport needs to be further explored as migrants’ mobility is a key enabler or a barrier for social inclusion. We aim to investigate such an aspect further in the case study work (WP5).

6. CONCLUSIONS

In this report we have discussed how migrants interact with local communities and public services in two rural / remote Scottish communities (North Ayrshire and the Outer Hebrides). We focused on those mechanisms and opportunities that facilitate newcomers’ inclusion in what are to them new societies. We have met with a range of formal (civil society or/and public sector led) and informal (grassroots or religious groups led) opportunities which speaks of a robust social fabric which remote and rural areas are capable to nurture across the time and despite various adverse conditions. But before summarising our key findings on that socially connected fabric, we have to mention an over-arching result of our fieldwork.

Our interviews highlighted how the category of “migrants” need to be questioned and negotiated between the researcher and the actors: what a migrant is very specifically declined in one of our fields with implications for the local community social cohesion. Being born on the islands, or living there for generations, and being able to speak Gaelic and to participate in the local community and culture define the “locals”. Consequently, migrants include a wide range of groups – British and European migrants as well as TCNs – and such a wide notion of otherness prevails on more specific ones based e.g. on nationality, religion, or ethnicity. This approach seems to us a *strength* as it can potentially facilitate social inclusion with some limits that need to be further explored and that we perceived, for example, in the lack of participation of migrants on the community boards. Moreover, having children emerged as a key element facilitating migrants’ inclusion, providing also an unusual (positive) view on how gender (being a woman and a mother) impacts on migrant’s inclusion.

Participation emerged as a key enabler of social inclusion. Playgroups and other forms of parental organisations were frequently mentioned as well as volunteering. Volunteering seems a key turning point for migrant access to the local society in terms of both cultural and social capital. On the other hand, we could see that volunteering was often aimed at the local community wellbeing – as in the case of cooking meals in foodbanks, working for the Citizen advice, etc. – such as migrants’ volunteering activities resulted in a benefit not only on migrants but on the larger society. In this sense, volunteering represents an *opportunity* that can benefit both migrants and the local community.

We could see also how migrants’ civic participation was often challenged by the migrants’ needs – to work, to take care of family members, to participate in other activities like English classes – as well as by hostile environments. We explored how the awareness of migrants’ stories and experiences – directly (in shared moments, like for the allotment’s volunteers) and indirectly (with the refugee children hiding from the plane) changed the local perception, notably in the case of the refugees.

We also explored how participation in religious groups acted as an enabler or an *opportunity* for social inclusion because the volunteering activities were organised by religious organisations, or through migrants’ participation in local religious groups. With the example of the Western Isles’ Mosque, we could

also explore how the arrival of few migrants empowered the local co-religionists' needs (local Muslim population) pushing forward this religious facility project and how migrants worked together with local co-religionists as well as non-Muslims supporting the project, building ties with the local community.

Finally, considering the issue of services we could see how, especially in remote areas, migrants' role in retaining essential services positively reflects on the sustainability of the community both in the short term – by allowing the service to run – and in the long term – by keeping those areas attractive for new potential incomers. Nevertheless, it was not possible to evaluate the proportional weight of TCNs and EU nationals in producing such an impact among all the newcomers.

We could analyse migrants' access and/or exclusion from services and appreciate the important effort made at local authority scale to support vulnerable migrants in their access to health, education, housing. In our understanding the skills built by local actors for the benefit of the Syrian refugees which can benefit other migrant groups and potentially also vulnerable locals are an asset to be preserved.

To sum up, we consider:

- as factors strengthening social cohesion and newcomers' social inclusion, the intertwined deployment of services and actions by local authorities (language provision classes, healthcare, socio-cultural events) and local communities (volunteering opportunities via religious groups and civil society organisations) as well as personal conditions (such as newcomers who are parents and therefore have opportunities to meet other parents at schools and education related events);
- as factors delaying inclusion, newcomers' needs to earn a wage allowing sending remittances (which very often turns in long working hours which leave small space to socialisation); language barriers which sometimes obstruct newcomers' access to locals and services such as specialist medical treatment (e.g. dentistry); unawareness of opportunities and services.

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