



MATILDE

The Impact of Migrants on Rural Development

MATILDE Policy Brief 1

POPULATION & POLICY

BRIEF No. 1

JULY 2022

Authors:

Marika Gruber
Kathrin Zupan



INTRODUCTION

Rural and mountain regions in Europe like the MATILDE regions in Austria (AT), Bulgaria (BG), Germany (DE), Finland (FI), Italy (IT), Norway (NO), Spain (ES), Sweden (SE), Turkey (TR), and United Kingdom (UK)¹ face several challenges such as **labour shortage and demographic change (depopulation, ageing)**. They are often referred to as “places left behind” or “places that do not matter” (Rodriguez-Pose, 2017). However, immigration of migrants can counteract these negative trends (Membretti et. al. 2022) and might contribute to mitigate these challenges, as many of these regions have become “new immigration destinations” during the last years and decades (Winders, 2014; McAreavey, 2018; Kordel & Weidinger, 2020, p. 507). Others, however, are used to deal with immigration due to a long(er) migration history (Weidinger & Kordel, 2022).

In this first policy brief, we present **policy recommendations to strengthen the positive impact of migrants on rural development, aiming to build immigration destinations and to initiate and strengthen rural development by migrant’s integration**. We are going to discuss required framework conditions in order to profit from the benefits immigration can bring to rural areas. Therefore, elaborated measures and governance processes at all political levels in the MATILDE countries and at European level will focus on the possible changes of legal framework on rural development and on suggestions for the private sector (economy, NGOs, associations or the civil society), to make rural development and the use of the benefits from migration a joint project in rural regions.

METHODOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The main problems and policy recommendation of every MATILDE country are the outcomes of a continuing analysis process with a multidimensional approach basing on the results of the previous work packages and policy roundtables with stakeholders at different governmental levels². A **qualitative content analysis after Mayring** (2000) of the policy recommendation reports was conducted with dual control principle of the coding. At this stage of analysis, the focus was to identify the most important problems, based on the quantity of coding, in the MATILDE regions. Out of numerous challenges in the areas of integration, corresponding with the integration model after Ager and Strang (2008), the four with the highest quantity of coding were selected and refer to the integration areas of rural development, economy and employment, rights and citizenship as well as education.

These four topics, which **correspond with the integration model after Ager & Strang (2008)**, as well as the related policy recommendations and solutions were further analysed and clustered in sub topics. Hence, the four policy briefs base on the results of a qualitative content analysis. In the policy briefs, the arguments are linked to the mentioned MATILDE countries and regions, and good practices as well as possible solutions are presented. The first policy brief is dedicated to rural development and the contribution that migration can make to this.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT: PROBLEMS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The aforementioned specific problems of labour shortage and demographic change in rural and mountainous regions were already recognised in the interviews and focus group in previous work packages and broadly discussed in the policy roundtables of the MATILDE countries. These problems often hinder rural development, while immigration might support it. Though other problems in rural regions exist, which in particular affect migrants negatively, and hence hinder migrant’s contribution to rural development: the lack of rural mobility and access to services, challenges in access to public housing and/or affordable housing in combination with social connections, the lack of work and labour shortage in parallel, or the need of cooperation and financing for the revitalisation of rural regions. To meet these challenges, different policy recommendations were elaborated and validated within the policy roundtables. Nevertheless, rural regions have already found ways to tackle these challenges. Those attempts are mentioned as “good practices”, which could be rolled out to other regions and hence have the potential to act as possible “solutions”.

Physical and digital immobility as obstacle to public service access

Above all, the supply of public transport is classified as critical. Most of the analysed MATILDE regions are facing insufficient, ineffective and unreliable **public transport** in rural/mountainous regions, often connected to a limited affordability for economically less privileged people, which increases immobility. This is especially problematic for migrants, who often rely on public transport as driving licenses and cars are quite expensive and linked to bureaucratic hurdles and language barriers. In consequence, limited public transport hinders the **access to essential services**, such as health care, education and training or other public services in many MATILDE countries (AT, BG, DE, ES, IT, NO, SE, TR), as the qualitative content analysis of the roundtable reports has shown. In rural areas facing a population shrinkage, these services of general interest often cannot be maintained. As a consequence, these services are often relocated to urban or metropolitan areas, or offered in a digital way instead, which further impedes accessibility. Additionally, access to **digital services** is lacking. On the one hand, the internet connectivity and broadband does not yet reach all rural and mountainous areas. On the other hand, there is a demand on training in digital technologies, especially among immigrants and elderly locals.

To overcome immobility, the **supply with efficient and regular public transport connections at local and regional level** is central, especially in **Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Italy, Norway, Spain and Sweden**. Hence, as the example of Sweden shows, a better coordination of (public) transport services and school transport is required, as well as mapping the target groups and their needs. An additional positive effect would be generated, as reported by Italy, if municipalities are involved in the planning as they are usually well aware of local needs. The **National Strategy for Inner Areas** (IT) aims to improve the access and provision of essential public services in cooperation with national and regional stakeholders. Especially, intercity transport needs to be considered, in order to provide **access to basic services** (education, health, public administration, etc.) (BG, IT, SE) and to link asylum shelters to municipal/regional centres (AT). In addition, apps for using public transport should be made available in different **languages** and applicable for digital newcomers (AT, DE), where technological businesses in rural regions can force the development. **Financial support** to increase the accessibility of public transport for people at risk of poverty or exclusion, such as asylum seekers, should be considered (AT, DE, SE)



© Sandro Bozzolo

Possible solutions such as **ridesharing, carpooling and carsharing** (AT, DE, IT, NO, SE) to increase the mobility require the willingness of the local population to contribute. As locals more often own driving licences and cars, they can become part of the ridesharing community and announce when they are travelling in order to match with people in need of transportation. In case of the Austrian “Mitfahrbank” (ride-sharing bench), benches are set up near bus stops and interested people are picked up by friendly drivers. In case of successful matching, the **social connection** between migrants and locals also benefits from it, because it also creates a new possibility for communication (VCÖ - Mobilität mit Zukunft 2022). Alternatively, the **access to driving licenses** should be facilitated for migrants or **foreign driving licenses** should be recognised at national level more easily (DE, NO). Therefore, financial support for immigrants should be provided and the (online) theory classes and tests should be **offered in different languages** (NO). In order to **practice driving outside formal driving lessons** and without high costs, migrants can be given the opportunity to practice driving with experienced drivers³ (NO).

An eco-friendly and cost-saving alternative would be to promote **cycling paths** (AT, DE), as mobility should not only be focused on motorised vehicles (see also 11th SDG in “make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” including sustainable transport systems). This way, migrants can be equipped with bicycles.

Another way to facilitate access to services might be to **digitalise bureaucratic procedures** (DE, ES). However, the prerequisite for successful implementation of online services is the connectivity and internet access in rural areas and asylum shelters, as well as training in digital technologies, to be able to carry out public services online. Additionally, the digital services of public administrations need to be expanded. In Aragón (ES), the Government cooperates with the Councils and the telephone companies to improve the **internet connectivity** in rural regions, in order to reach the public administrations at local level.

Either way, **mobility – whether physical or digital – is required to access public services, workplace and training, and health services** (e.g., hospitals, specialised doctors), especially if travel times are long due to the location in rural and peripheral areas. The overall aim should be to ensure equal access to services for all people in rural and mountain regions, in order to counteract isolation and trends of depopulation.

Problematic Housing Conditions as a Hindrance for Social Connections

Even though rural regions face outmigration of local population i.a. due to urbanisation processes, **(social) housing** is assessed as insufficient, restrictive and unequal in the policy roundtables reports of the MATILDE regions in AT, DE, ES, FI, IT, TR, and UK. In addition, private housing often is inaccessible and unaffordable for the population with lower income, e.g. migrants or young families (ES, IT), especially in tourism regions (UK). Social housing is not as profitable as private rents and often not – or not to the needed extent – available in rural areas. Following, the **social connections** might suffer as migrants and locals live separated and ghettoization processes might occur, which is linked to the need of public transport again. Problems increase when housing, residence registration and access to services are linked with each other, in particular if migrants reside unregistered in order to remain their informal jobs, as the example of Turkey shows.

As the qualitative content analysis shows, for the MATILDE regions in DE, ES, IT, there is a **need for new or renewed buildings** at local and regional level, in order to be able to offer (more) social housing. Abandoned municipalities (IT) have started the **initiative “1 Euro for 1 house”**. There, owners offer their properties for a symbolic price of 1 Euro. The participating municipalities promote these offers, aiming to attract people to live in remote areas and to revitalise and reconstruct existing buildings. Interested people get in contact with the municipalities, which commit them to renew the buildings under specific conditions. (Casa a 1 euro 2022). Alternatively, the Huesca Provincial Council (ES) offers **interest-free loans**, in order to enable to invest in (vacant) properties. In this sense, **“Wohnen 500”** is an initiative in the region of Vorarlberg (AT) with a special housing program, that links state subsidies with the condition of the availability of one-third of the apartments for recognised refugees.

It is recommended to ensure **social housing policies with quality and safety standards** (DE, TR). These policies should foster **accessibility and equality** for all population groups (AT, IT). In addition, **cooperation with important economic actors** (employers) should be pursued (DE, TR, UK). This way, the know-how from the public sector can be linked to the resources of the private and third sector, which will support migrants to overcome difficulties in daily life in rural regions and help to increase the access to services. It might also be possible to link social housing with job options in rural areas. In that case, migrants are granted the possibility of **sustainable accommodation facilities** (FI, TR) and whereby new places of living can emerge. The responsibility of employers would be reinforced, which is especially important for foreign workers with temporary contracts.



© Lavonne Bosman

Lack of Work vs. Lack of Work Force

The lack of job opportunities in rural areas is often a driver for depopulation, which in turn leads to a lack of work force at the local level (AT, DE, TR, UK), especially in fishing and agriculture or tourism and care. With the recruitment of international workforce, other problems like temporariness of seasonal workers, lack of encounters with local population, lack of social rights and health issues appear, which were discussed at several policy roundtables.

In addition to depopulation trends, current migration policies often hinder or even do not facilitate the arrival of labour migrants, even though they are of high demand in rural regions. Hence, there is a **need for place-based policies considering local labour shortages**. To mitigate the heavy labour shortages in the different MATILDE regions, the critical review and expansion of the Shortage Occupations List is recommended for the UK, but might be transferable to other MATILDE countries⁴.

Lack of Cooperation and Financing for Rural Development

The linkage of diverse problems related to rural development generates the **need of cooperation** between different actors and the need of funding as well as place-based policies in AT, BL, DE, FI, IT, and TRK, as the qualitative content analysis indicates. Hence, **rural development is interdependent with rural specific problems** such as mobility, access to services, housing, social connection and labour market. It seems fundamental to bring together the **potentials of all involved actors** and to **strengthen regional networks and cooperation** (AT, DE, TR). Local businesses, municipalities, federal and state representatives, NGOs and migrant’s representatives should collaborate and merge (parallel) structures in regional development, economic development and integration work, in order to **bundle the resources**. In consequence, place-based policies, revitalisation projects and reactions on the demographic change can be pushed forward together⁵.

Especially the **cooperation with migrants engaged in promoting the region** is seen as a chance to further initiate the regional marketing and creation of tourist destinations and new immigration destinations (BL, DE). Rural municipalities facing population decline can market themselves with the help of migrants as liveable, multicultural places with a diversity in nature, culture and culinary art. **Welcome hubs** might become first contact points providing free consulting services, while working groups elaborate further strategies to attract tourists and new immigrants. Of course, strategies and projects on rural development that also know how to benefit from immigration, are in the **need of financing** and funding (DE, TRK). On the one hand, the focus on (agri-/eco-) tourism might bring in tourists, whose money can be reinvested in further projects. To start this process, **local/regional stakeholders and federal or state governments** should give financial support. On the other hand, the **administrative burden** with regard to applications and implementations of EU funding should be decreased at EU level. Alternatively, **funding consultants** could be initiated.

CONCLUSIONS

Even though migrants face similar challenges that hinder their contribution to rural development in the rural and mountainous regions of the MATILDE countries, **a one-fits-all policy does not exist for regional development** (Barbera et al. 2022), as the recommendations allocated to different MATILDE countries have shown. For instance, new immigration destinations start with different preconditions than regions with a longer migration history. In addition, there is a difference in the development of migration and integration policies. While for example Scotland and Turkey have strengthened and opened the migration and integration policies, Italy and Austria have tightened them since 2015. Finally, the possibilities for rural development also depend on the competencies and jurisdiction at local and regional level (Gruber et al. 2021). However, by introducing policy recommendations to foster the positive impact of migration on rural development, this policy brief provided **practical solutions for challenges** many of the rural and mountain MATILDE regions face.

⁴ For further information and recommendation, see policy brief “Migration as a Chance for Rural Economies”.
⁵ For further information and recommendation, see policy brief “In the triangle of legal frameworks, migration and rural regions”.



MATILDE

Migration ImpAct assessment To Enhance
Integration and Local Development in
European rural and mountain regions

**CARINTHIA UNIVERSITY
OF APPLIED SCIENCES**
gemeinnützige
Gesellschaft mbH

Europastraße 4, 9524 Villach
+43 (0)5 / 90500 7700
info@fh-kaernten.at
www.fh-kaernten.at

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barbera, F./ Caputo, M. L./ Baglioni, S. (2022):** Thesis 9. The social and economic development, attractiveness and collective well-being of remote, rural and mountain regions closely depend on the foundational economy. In: Membretti, A./ Dax, T./ Krasteva, A. (eds.): The Renaissance of Remote Places. MATILDE Manifesto. London & New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group. DOI: 10.4324/9781003260486-2. P. 84-91.
- Bauchinger, L./ Gruber, M./ Machold, I./ Pöcher, J./ Zupan, K. (2022):** Country Report on Policy Recommendations and Solutions. Country Austria. MATILDE Deliverable 6.3.
- Bianchi, M./ Caputo, M./ Baglioni, S. (2022):** Country Report on Policy Recommendations and Solutions. Country United Kingdom (Scotland). MATILDE Deliverable 6.3.
- Blumenthal, V./ Røhnebak, M./ Akin, D./ Dahl, S. (2022):** Country Report on Policy Recommendations and Solutions. Country Norway. MATILDE Deliverable 6.3.
- Casa a 1 Euro (2022):** How it works. <https://1eurohouses.com/how-it-works-and-benefits/> (accessed last: 14.07.2022).
- Gruber, M. & Zupan, K. (2021):** Cross-country comparative overview. In: Gruber, M. & Zupan, K. (eds.): Report on existing integration-political goals, programmes and strategies in the European Union and the MATILDE countries and rural regions. MATILDE Deliverable 6.2. March 2021. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.4620898. p. 178-184.
- Havukainen, L./ Pöllänen, P./ Rauhut, D. (2022):** Country Report on Policy Recommendations and Solutions. Country Finland. MATILDE Deliverable 6.3.
- Kaya, A. & Yilmaz-Elmas, F. (2022):** Country Report on Policy Recommendations and Solutions. Country Turkey. MATILDE Deliverable 6.3.
- Koleva, C. & Ninova, V. (2022):** Country Report on Policy Recommendations and Solutions. Country Bulgaria. MATILDE Deliverable 6.3.
- Kordel, S. & Weidinger, T. (2020):** 'Patterns of Immigration of TCNs to MATILDE Countries and Regions in the Light of Wider Structural Transformations', in Kordel, S. and Membretti, A. (eds.), Classification of MATILDE Regions. Spatial Specificities and Third Country Nationals Distribution (= D2.1 of MATILDE project), pp. 508-514. <http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3999415>
- Lardiés-Bosque, R. & del Olmo Vicén, N. (2022):** Country Report on Policy Recommendations and Solutions. Country Spain. MATILDE Deliverable 6.3.
- Mayring, P. (2000):** Qualitative Content Analysis. In: Forum: Qualitative Social Research. Volume 1. No. 2. Art 20. June 2000. <https://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1089/2386> (accessed last: 30.06.2022).
- McAreavey, R. (2018):** New Immigration Destinations. Migration to Rural and Peripheral Areas. London: Routledge.
- Membretti, A./ Dax, T./ Krasteva, A. (2022):** The renaissance of rural, mountainous and remote regions in Europe. A call for action. In: Membretti, A./ Dax, T./ Krasteva, A. (eds.): The Renaissance of Remote Places. MATILDE Manifesto. London & New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group. DOI: 10.4324/9781003260486-2. P. 1-14.
- Scotti, M. (2022):** Country Report on Policy Recommendations and Solutions. Country Italy. MATILDE Deliverable 6.3.
- SPIEGEL (2005):** Führerschein mit 17. Die Regelungen in anderen Ländern. 04.02.2005. <https://www.spiegel.de/auto/aktuell/fuehrerschein-mit-17-die-regelungen-in-anderen-laendern-a-295939.html> (accessed last: 21.07.2022).
- Stenbacka, S. & Mathisen, T. (2022):** Country Report on Policy Recommendations and Solutions. Country Sweden. MATILDE Deliverable 6.3.
- VCÖ - Mobilität mit Zukunft (2022):** Die „Mitfahrbank“. <https://mobilitaetsprojekte.vcoe.at/die-mitfahrbank> (accessed last: 13.05.2022).
- Weidinger, T./ Spenger, D./ Kordel, S. (2022):** Country Report on Policy Recommendations and Solutions. Country Germany. MATILDE Deliverable 6.3.
- Weidinger, T. & Kordel, S. (2022):** Thesis 7: International migration has to be considered as just one form among diverse mobilities. In: Membretti, A./ Dax, T./ Krasteva, A. (eds.): The Renaissance of Remote Places. MATILDE Manifesto. London & New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group. DOI: 10.4324/9781003260486-2. P. 68-75.
- Winders, J. (2014):** 'New Immigrant Destinations in Global Context', International Migration Review, 18, pp. 149-179. <http://doi.org/10.1111/imre.12140>.

Call: H2020-SC6-MIGRATION-2019

Work Programme

- H2020-EU.3.6.11. The mechanisms to promote smart, sustainable and inclusive growth
- H2020-EU.3.6.12. Trusted organisations, practices, services and policies that are necessary to build resilient, inclusive, participatory, open and creative societies in Europe, in particular taking into account migration, integration and demographic change

Deliverable 6.3 - Policy briefs for improved governance and policy arrangements

Approved by Work Package Manager of WP6: Marika Gruber, CUAS on July 29th 2022

Approved by Project Coordinator: Jussi Laine, UEF on July, 29th 2022

Layout & Structure: Anna Maria Orasch

Proofreading: Angelika Zupan

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.6912627



MATILDE project has received funding
from the European Union's Horizon 2020
research and innovation programme
under grant agreement No 870831